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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, March 23, 2015

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 23, 2015

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

OTTAWA WEST—NEPEAN

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely.

[*English*]

Mr. Baird, member for the electoral district of Ottawa West—Nepean, by resignation effective Monday, March 16, 2015. Pursuant to subsection 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

JOURNEY TO FREEDOM DAY ACT

The House resumed from February 5 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: There are six minutes left for the hon. member for Thornhill to finish his remarks.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again it is an honour to rise today and speak in strong support of the journey to freedom day act, Bill S-219, which is an important piece of legislation that comes to us from the other place.

As we approach the 40th anniversary of the effective end of the Vietnam War, one might reflect on the broader events that took place across Indochina 40 years ago this month. At that time there was an ominous shadow falling across the entire region, and the U.S. Congress had decided after great agonizing to end funding of the governments of Cambodia and of South Vietnam and to withdraw all further remaining U.S. military support and military advisors.

In March, barely 30 days before that fateful day of April 30, the Khmer Rouge forces had effectively surrounded Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital. The American ambassador, Ambassador Dean, had begun preparations for the final pullout of embassy staff and Americans and third-country nationals, which took place on April 12, and which led to the eventual Cambodian genocide, the brutal murder of more than two million Cambodians, and a dark five years in that Southeast Asian country.

Barely three weeks later, the United States ambassador in Saigon, Ambassador Martin, decided it was time to end the American presence in that country. The musical strains of *White Christmas* were heard on April 29, and on armed forces radio in Saigon a voice said it is 110 degrees in Saigon and rising. This was the signal to all Americans, to all third-country nationals, to all Vietnamese who had worked in various ways for the United States over the previous three decades, to assemble at evacuation points and to leave the country.

As a journalist who was there and had evacuated from Phnom Penh on April 12 with the American ambassador, and again left Saigon on April 30 from the U.S. embassy in Saigon, my memory is saturated with images of the vast movement of humanity. More than 7,000 people were rescued from Saigon on that final day, in addition to some 50,000 people who had been lifted by fixed-wing aircraft in the weeks ahead of them. However, the greater tragedy lay ahead. It was not the two million-plus deaths of the Cambodian genocide, but the millions of Vietnamese who, when the country was partitioned in 1954 under the Geneva Accord, had fled the northern regime looking for a better life in the south. Many of these people had no option but to leave Vietnam. They did not have an aircraft or helicopter support nor connections with departing Americans, so they fled by all manner of marine watercraft

When Saigon did fall on April 30 and the North Vietnamese tanks burst through the gate to the presidential palace in Saigon, barely a few blocks from the American embassy, the beginning of an exodus of more than 1.5 million people began.

• (1105)

They set sail for the South China Sea in hopes that neighbouring countries would take them in. Many countries unfortunately turned them away, forcing them even further from their homeland to seek refuge in the United Kingdom, France, Australia, and the United States. As we know, and as we celebrate in the journey to freedom act before the House today, 60,000 made their way to Canada.

Private Members' Business

I am proud to say that Canadians from all walks of life stepped up to the challenge then, offering whatever help they could to the long-suffering Vietnamese boat people. Approximately 34,000 were sponsored by Canadian families, churches, synagogue groups, and other community organizations, while 26,000 were accepted into the country under a government sponsorship plan.

In 1986, Canada was honoured with the Nansen Medal, which is the refugee equivalent of the Nobel Prize, given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in recognition of major efforts on behalf of refugees. This was the first and the only time that the Nansen Medal has been presented to the entire population of a country.

I will conclude my remarks now in the hope that colleagues will support Bill S-219 and the journey to freedom act.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak to Bill S-219.

I will support this bill at second reading so that it can go to committee. However, I would like to start by explaining why I am so proud to rise today. My colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry and I are the only two people of Vietnamese origin to be elected members of the House of Commons, of Parliament. For us, it is very important to remember what our parents, family members and ancestors lived through. Being able to talk about it in the House today is truly a privilege and an honour. It is a testament both to the great value we place on our origins and to Canada's openness and the fact that the Canadian people opened their arms to us by electing us and asking us to represent them.

It is therefore with great pride and gratitude that I rise today.

Bill S-219 is very short but has several aspects to it. I will read it because I want to talk about it. It has three clauses.

The first clause concerns the short title:

1. *This Act may be cited as the Journey to Freedom Day Act.*

The second clause, which is the core of this bill, reads as follows:

2. Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the thirtieth day of April shall be known as "Journey to Freedom Day".

The third and final clause simply says this:

3. For greater certainty, Journey to Freedom Day is not a legal holiday or a non-judicial day.

• (1110)

[*English*]

The bill before us is a very short and simple one. As I said in French and will repeat in English, there are three clauses in the bill. The main one says:

Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the thirtieth day of April shall be known as "Journey to Freedom Day".

Then the bill specifies:

For greater certainty, Journey to Freedom Day is not a legal holiday or a non-judicial day.

[*Translation*]

Why are we talking about April 30? Many people who had to leave their country attach considerable significance to that date.

For instance, my parents were fortunate to be here in Canada on April 30, 1975. They came here, they met here and they settled here, and I was lucky to be born here.

However, many people unfortunately had to leave their country. We all know this, thanks to the films and news reports that have been made about the Vietnam War, which left its mark not only on an entire generation of Vietnamese people, but also on the entire world.

Everyone is familiar with the Vietnam War. Everyone knows how much a war and the devastation it causes can affect the population and future generations. Still today, development in Vietnam lags behind because of the damage and destruction caused by the war.

I think remembering April 30 is extremely important because April 30 represents a day of commemoration. For many people in Canada and indeed around the world, April 30 is a day for people to come together. Ever since I was elected, for instance, I go to Montreal every year, which is an opportunity for me to remember my roots, my culture and the sacrifices made by many Vietnamese people.

I invite Canadians to watch the very moving speech made by my colleague from Beauharnois—Salaberry, who shared her personal experience and that of her parents. I think it is quite meaningful to many people.

To some, this day signifies the end of the Vietnam War, the end of a devastating war that had tremendous repercussions for the country. To others, this day also serves as a reminder that people had to leave their country.

What is more, many commemorative events are held around April 30 in recognition of the boat people. I invite those who have yet to watch a documentary on this, to do so.

This shows the direct impact that the war had on the population and the sacrifices that people had to make to leave their country in search of a better future. Today, we feel and see the results. New generations like mine and future generations reap the benefits from the fact that people had to leave their country and learn to live in a new society that was foreign to them. Even though Vietnam was a French colony, many Vietnamese did not speak French or English. Coming to Canada meant they had to adapt and integrate.

As an elected member, I am very proud to say that I am well integrated into Canadian society. The community is very proud of all the Vietnamese people who have achieved success at all levels, such as earning a living by becoming a doctor, for example. I am generalizing a bit. We also have writers, such as Kim Thúy, who is very famous in Quebec and around the world. A great number of people have made very significant contributions.

Private Members' Business

I read the bill and it is very simple. Unfortunately, it will not contribute anything new. We could have taken this opportunity to find solutions to current problems. I will come back to that later. I want to mention that there was lack of consultation and debate, and therefore transparency, in the other chamber's process. A great deal of attention was paid to what some people said, but not to what others had to say. I hope that the House of Commons committee will be more open-minded and that we will have a more fulsome debate, because it is important to have this debate.

As I mentioned, I received some 300 emails about this bill. Unfortunately, this bill is divisive at a time when we should be uniting the community. The bill has received criticism from all quarters. Some say that it does not go far enough and that it is not critical enough of the current government. Others, especially those in the business community who are dealing with Vietnam, say that it is not necessarily beneficial to negotiations and that it would be detrimental to discussions with the Government of Vietnam. As this is a Conservative bill from the other place, it is unfortunate that the approach used is not one that brings people together, not just Canadians, but also all Vietnamese Canadians, whether they are the children of boat people or those who were forced to leave their country. Why not unite all these people?

I am proud of the NDP position because we are talking about human rights. It is time to do so. I regret that the bill does not do enough to bring people together.

• (1115)

[English]

I look at what the younger generation has done. A friend of mine, Glenn Hoa has created "generation legacy". Last year thousands of dollars were raised in order to invest in the Vietnamese boat people museum in Ottawa. It was a way for the community to get together behind a project that was unifying, that looked at the heritage of Canadians of Vietnamese origin or even that of the Vietnamese people who came here. It was a way for us to get together; it was different generations coming together.

Unfortunately with the bill, we do not feel this. We feel it is divisive. As I said, I have received hundreds of emails, some supporting the bill and some denouncing the bill. There are many things that need to be done in order to help people in Vietnam. I think we could have done a better job.

[Translation]

Since it is time to negotiate with Vietnam as part of the trans-Pacific partnership, we need to advocate for human rights. Unfortunately, the government is not going in that direction. Nevertheless, I understand that the important thing is to commemorate what happened to the people who had to leave their country. That is why I am going to support the bill at this stage.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Liberal critic for Canadian heritage, I would like to explain to the House why I will be supporting 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, or the Journey to Freedom Day Act.

I would also like to explain why I am insisting that the government allow this bill to be extensively and thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate parliamentary committee. Everyone must have an opportunity to freely express their opinions, unlike what happened in the Senate.

Bill S-219 would designate April 30 as the Journey to Freedom Day and would commemorate Vietnamese refugees and their exodus to Canada. This day would not be a legal holiday or a day off. However, it would provide an opportunity to celebrate how lucky Canada is to have such a vibrant Vietnamese community. As the Liberal leader and member for Papineau always says, Canada's diversity is what makes our country strong. Vietnamese Canadians are a good example of that.

A number of my constituents of Vietnamese origin have shared a different perspective. They see this day as an opportunity to thank Canada for welcoming them with open arms and for giving them a chance at a new life. The Vietnamese are known for their generosity and modesty.

If Canada tells them that it wants to celebrate everything they have contributed, they respond that they would rather celebrate everything that Canada has given them. After all, we are looking at two sides of the same coin. Canada owes a lot to its Vietnamese community, which wants to thank Canada. Let us celebrate together.

• (1120)

[English]

The proposed new national day would commemorate a major historic event. On January 1, 1975, some 1,500 persons of Vietnamese ancestry were living in Canada, mostly in Quebec. Following the 1979 to 1982 boat people crisis, some 59,000 Vietnamese refugees entered Canada. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, after the United States, Canada is the country that welcomed the largest number of Vietnamese refugees from 1975 to 1996.

In 1986, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees awarded the Nansen Refugee Award to the people of Canada for the "major and sustained contribution of the People of Canada to the cause of refugees". Canadians were the first and the only people to have been honoured collectively with this award.

[Translation]

The journey to freedom day will remind us that Canada welcomed tens of thousands of Vietnamese refugees and that Canada must continue to be welcoming. There were millions of victims of the Vietnam War, and unimaginable atrocities were committed on all sides. Since we did not participate, our country could have chosen to ignore these victims. If we are being honest, there were some people in Canada who did not want to get involved in the aftermath and consequences of a conflict we had no part in.

Private Members' Business

However, Canada remembered that although it was not involved in the war, it played an active role in the peace efforts. Canada remembered that every time it has shown generosity, it has become even stronger. Canada listened to its heart and welcomed refugees not only from Vietnam, but also from Cambodia and Laos, saving many lives and transforming broken dreams into renewed hope.

We must never forget the pain of the exodus, those who lost their lives, the unspeakable horrors experienced by the boat people, or the generosity of the Canadian families, communities and religious groups who took them in, clothed and housed them. Nor must we forget the foresight of the Canadian governments of the day, how hard the newcomers worked to learn, in a matter of months, French, English and new customs or how very much Canada benefited from the contributions of these newcomers, their children and the generations that came after them.

That is what we must never forget. That is what we will all be able to celebrate together in harmony, as we bear in mind both the sacrifices people made and the promises of the future, the opportunities available in a Canada that is stronger because of its Vietnamese community. That is how I, as Liberal critic for Canadian heritage, see this commemoration. That is why I support this bill. There is no other reason. The goal is to bring people together, to leave nobody out. The goal is also to strengthen the bond between Canada and Vietnam, to strengthen the trade, cultural and scientific ties between our two countries. Canada must stand up for human rights and justice in Vietnam as it does all over the world.

• (1125)

[English]

In other words, the Liberal Party sees this bill as an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the great contributions of the Vietnamese Canadian people to Canada's diversity and multiculturalism, and to all the elements of Canadian life and society.

The proposed new national day would also celebrate the Canadian families, charities, religious groups and non-governmental organizations that sponsored tens of thousands of Vietnamese refugees and assisted them in their resettlement and adjustment to their new country.

[Translation]

Some Vietnamese Canadians have written to us, their parliamentarians, to tell us that they do not like the date chosen for the commemoration, April 30; others do not like the title; still others are afraid this commemoration will lead to a historical interpretation that makes them uncomfortable. To that I say that it is important for the people of the Vietnamese community to talk to each other. This commemoration must not be a divisive issue. On the contrary, it should be a symbol of unity and the wonderful symbiosis that exists between the Canadian and Vietnamese identities. That is why I think the committee that looks at this bill must take the time needed to listen to all points of view. In the meantime, Vietnamese Canadians must continue talking to each other to reconcile their points of view.

[English]

The Liberal Party of Canada will insist that it is the government's responsibility to invite an inclusive and comprehensive list of witnesses and experts to discuss this bill at committee to ensure a

thorough discussion on the title, date, content and implications of the act.

[Translation]

We, as Canadian parliamentarians, need to clearly understand and send a message that, above all, our intention with this bill is not to dictate an official, unilateral version of the history of another country. We cannot even do that when it comes to Canada. It is not a question of siding with one side or the other after the fact, after a long and bloody war that our country consciously chose not to take part in. No, it is simply a matter of providing an opportunity for us to celebrate the contribution made by Vietnamese Canadians to Canada's rich social fabric, to remember where we come from in order to better understand where we want to go together.

[English]

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill S-219, journey to freedom day bill.

I very much believe that this is a very important piece of legislation regarding a period in history that was a great tragedy for the people of Vietnam, however it also serves as a recognition of an event in which all Canadians should be proud.

On April 30, 1975, when Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese Army, it set off a mass exodus of people, many of whom—

[Disturbance in gallery]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

• (1130)

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, on April 30, 1979, when Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese army, it set off a massive exodus of people, many of whom had only one means of escape, on the water. It was the beginning of a journey that would be fraught with peril and tragedy for millions

In the first few years that followed, a few thousand made their escape from the communist regime, but by 1978 to 1979, those Vietnamese refugees were fleeing from their homeland in the tens of thousands. They arrived in a number of neighbouring countries, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Hong Kong. Their plight created a massive humanitarian crisis across southeast Asia, as many refugees left in overcrowded boats that were, in many cases, unfit to withstand the harsh conditions of the stormy seas.

More than a quarter of a million perished. Some died from illness, some were victims of pirates and kidnappers. It was, by all accounts, a nightmare for all involved.

An influx of so many refugees to those countries was more than they could handle. The “boat people”, as they became known at the time, were sometimes turned away. If they were allowed to land, they were not allowed to integrate into those countries, which led to the creation of several squalid refugee camps.

Private Members' Business

This vast humanitarian crisis required action on a global scale, and the world responded. With the aid of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, government officials in each country began the process of resettling the refugees in a number of developed countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Australia, the United States and, of course, Canada.

Canada played a significant role in aiding tens of thousands of refugees after the fall of Saigon. During the humanitarian disaster that followed, Canadians rallied to offer whatever assistance they could. We ultimately brought more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees here to settle and build new lives across our great country. It is estimated that 34,000 were sponsored by Canadian families, Canadian charities, religious groups and non-governmental organizations, while another 26,000 were assisted by the Canadian government.

The arrival and resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees in Canada is a shining example of how Canadians responded to a global calamity. Canada's compassionate response included families, church groups and community organizations that took the refugees into their homes, helped them find a place to live, to find employment and to get their kids into school.

This exemplary moment in Canada's history of humanitarian protection was a contributing factor in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' awarding its Nansen Refugee Award to the people of Canada in 1986. It was the first and only time that this prestigious medal was awarded to an entire nation.

Canada was forever changed and enhanced by the events following the fall of Saigon and the exodus of the Vietnamese refugees, not just demographically and culturally. In addition to the development of strong and vital Vietnamese-Canadian communities thriving in many cities across Canada, the Government of Canada enshrined its private sponsorship of refugees program as a fundamental part of Canada's refugee and humanitarian resettlement program. The community and church groups that sponsor refugees to come to Canada continue their compassionate work today, to the betterment of Canada, refugees and their families from around the world.

This bill would designate April 30 as "journey to freedom day" in Canada, and it would honour our Vietnamese-Canadian population by showing our support to a community that has flourished in our country economically, culturally and socially. The Vietnamese community in Canada has demonstrated its loyalty and love of Canada.

We are building on a tradition of commemoration well established in communities of displaced Vietnamese people from across the globe. It would also be a significant day for all Canadians, many of whom united in the mid to late 1970s in the face of a humanitarian catastrophe to welcome more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees to a new land and a place to call home. It was an inspiring time as the Government of Canada and the people of Canada exhibited their humanitarian spirit to the world.

All Canadians deserve a day to remember, to show their considerable efforts and to show the world that we are a caring and compassionate nation. Journey to freedom day would not be a legal

holiday nor a judicial day, but a day that would solemnly acknowledge the events of that dark time in history with respect to the sorrows of those refugees who were lost to illness, malfeasance or the cruelty of the turbulent sea. It would also be a day with a deep sense of hope for those who became Canadian, and a strong sense of pride for those who helped make that happen. It would also serve as a fitting way to begin Asian heritage month, which would begin the following day, on May 1.

• (1135)

With the passage of Bill S-219, April 30 will be a special day of commemoration for the Vietnamese-Canadian community, followed directly by a full month of reflection and celebration of the contributions of all Canadians of Asian heritage.

Canada values its relationship with the country of Vietnam. Grounded in mutual respect and partnership, we look forward to building on this very key relationship into the future. We owe it to those who have become Vietnamese-Canadians, however, to also acknowledge their true journey to freedom.

Today, there are more than 220,000 Vietnamese-Canadians who have integrated into and enhanced our country, who contribute to our growth and prosperity as vibrant members of Canadian society. The bonds that they have forged here have been deep and enduring, and Canadians are rightfully proud of our role in their journey to freedom, which began almost 40 years ago.

I strongly encourage all members to join me in supporting Bill S-219.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, this bill was introduced in the Senate, a place that is already undemocratic, where there are no elected officials and no real accountability. The bill comes from a place where there is no accountability for the work being done and, specifically, a very biased process.

I will start by giving a little background of the bill. The short title of the bill is the journey to freedom day act. It would establish April 30 as journey to freedom day to commemorate the capture of Saigon by North Vietnamese forces on April 30, 1975, which ended the Vietnam War and began the emigration of South Vietnamese refugees to Canada.

I started by speaking of what happened in the Senate. That is because people had requested to appear, to be witnesses and provide testimonials in front of the Senate committee but were refused. The ambassador for Vietnam was refused. Anybody who wished to voice dissent and not support the bill was not allowed to speak at the Senate committee, which is a very biased, unfair and undemocratic process.

The NDP proudly recognizes the important contributions of Canadians of Vietnamese heritage and their community in Canada, which includes the people who came to our country as refugees. Tens of thousands more came as economic migrants.

Private Members' Business

As a responsible official opposition, we want to ensure that any legislative attempt to recognize the contributions of Vietnamese Canadians to Canadian cultural heritage will actually unite Canadians of all backgrounds. It would unite Vietnamese Canadians in our country but also ensure that all members of the community would be included. To that extent, we will seek to include as many opinions as possible when the bill gets to committee and ensure that it is an inclusive process. As the deputy spokesperson for the New Democrats on Canadian heritage and as a member of the heritage committee, I look forward to ensuring that all voices and opinions are heard at committee.

I want to mention that when this bill was studied, there was a strong base of support for it and also voices of dissent. We need to ensure that as responsible legislators, we hear all sides of the story. There is a quote by Mr. Can Le, a former secretary general of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation, who stated:

By approving this bill, Parliament will assure newcomers and future generations of their place in this country and will prove that Canada's inclusiveness is the foundation of its strength and prosperity.

It is great that there were positive comments about the bill and there were many more during the Senate hearings, but there were absolutely no voices heard that spoke against this bill. From what I am learning, there are quite a few, because my office has been inundated with emails and phone calls. I have met with members of the Vietnamese community in Toronto who do not support the bill and are very hurt that their voices are not allowed to be heard. They requested to appear before the Senate committee and were refused. They were not allowed to speak before the committee.

I sent a brief to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that I was given by a member of the community in Toronto in the hope that it would be put before the committee. The brief points out that the bill offends and marginalizes most of the people it purports to honour by assuming that they would join former Saigon military officers in commemorating the fall of Saigon on April 30. The majority of Vietnamese Canadians will never join that commemoration. I read this directly from a brief I was given, which clearly shows there is a divide in the community. As responsible legislators, we need to ensure that all voices are heard, and that did not happen in the Senate. I hope that in the committee phase we will be able to ensure that all voices are heard.

● (1140)

The second main point identified in the brief is that the bill exploits the boat people and the Canadians who helped them by using them to justify having a national day to commemorate the fall of the Saigon military regime, a divisive, partisan, political event that most of them will not participate in. Once again, they outline that there is a divide and that they do not want a bill that commemorates the fall of the regime or commemorates something that only part of the community here wants to be part of. It is important that we hear all voices, and that has not happened at the Senate committee. If I seem a little repetitive, it is because I am purposely repeating the fact that the Senate was extremely biased and did not allow all voices to be heard.

The third main point outlined in the brief is that the bill slights the Canadian Forces by falsely claiming that they were involved in the

Vietnam War. The bill does not give credit to Canadian Forces for carrying nearly all of the refugees from Asian camps to Canada.

I tend to agree with that, because Canada was not involved in the war. Canada did not have a participatory role in the war, yet Canada was a country that was a safe haven. Our forces went in and helped people by removing them from the camps when they fled Vietnam and went to other countries. That is not being recognized in the bill.

What I am hearing from members of my community is that the bill is divisive. Why can we not move forward in a way that gives us something that all Vietnamese Canadians can come together around and make sure that it is inclusive for everyone, rather than just a small group of people from Vietnam who live in Canada now, or even many Canadian-born Canadians who are not naturalized Canadians? We are all Canadians, and they are saying they all want to be included.

Further on, the brief mentions that the problem is that there were waves of migrants who came to Canada from Vietnam. The first wave were people who were working for the Saigon regime at the time and fled after the end of the war, which ended on April 30. That date is tied very closely with the war, and many people were affected by it. Whenever a war happens, many people are affected. I know from personal experience. I was born in a war zone and know the personal, lived experience of being in a war. No matter how the idea is spun, life is impacted severely by a war. I am hearing that people do not want this day of commemoration to be about the war or the end of the war; they want it to be about showing gratitude to Canada. That date is not April 30, 1975. They would like to adopt July 27, 1979, because that was the first date that refugees were brought into Canada by the Canadian Forces. Why can we not consider that option?

I wish I had more time to go further into this. I have had petitions sent to my office, and the one I am holding has more than 222 signatures from people all across the country who say that the process was severely biased and seriously flawed because it was undemocratically put forward and there is no transparency in the bill. People suggest that another date, any time in July, be set aside as the date, because that would help the community come together and not be further divided. The community wants to stand together to commemorate and to show their gratitude for Canada.

The bill says it is about giving gratitude, but it is called the journey to freedom day bill. Which journey to freedom does the bill actually talk about? That is the real question.

● (1145)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):
Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to take part in this debate on Bill S-219.

Before I read my notes, I would like to comment on some issues that were raised by the previous speaker. I do not think that she has a full understanding of the issues surrounding that journey to freedom.

Private Members' Business

I will speak on more of a personal note, because I came to Canada from a Communist country and regime. The many people who came before me were escaping or trying to escape a regime that they did not want to live under.

The same thing happened with those poor boat people. They were escaping because they did not want to live in a Communist regime and face oppression. A quarter of a million people died trying to escape from that Communist regime in unsafe boats. Does that not speak for itself? I do not know who would need an explanation.

The comment that was made was that the ambassador of Vietnam was not invited. The ambassador of Vietnam represents the current Government of Vietnam. It is not a democratic government. Let us make that clear. Therefore, I would not be surprised if the ambassador of Vietnam would not be in support of this bill or of creating a day to commemorate those brave people who were trying to escape to find a safe haven here, as many others have.

After the war, Canada opened its arms to a lot of people who came from Polish territories, people who took a terrible journey. They were sent by the Russians to Siberia. Hundreds of thousands of them died. No one ever knew the real number. They joined the army and fought alongside Canadians. After the war they had no country to go back to, so many of them came to Canada. We are very grateful for this. People of our generation, in the 1980s, were able to leave Communist Poland. They were stranded in refugee camps across Europe and other countries in the world. They found a safe refuge here.

We can repeat these stories with many groups from many places in the world. Canada has always been strong in supporting those who are oppressed and denied basic human and democratic rights. That is what this bill is about. Let us not confuse anyone. This is not a bill to divide communities; we have to fully understand who is a part of the community and who is not.

On April 30, Canada's Vietnamese community commemorates the end of the Vietnam War, a day that this legislation would recognize as "journey to freedom day". It was on this day in 1975 that the fall of Saigon led to the exodus of over 840,000 Vietnamese citizens. They were prepared to take great risks. Many were even prepared to die, rather than suffer at the hands of the Communist regime. Many of those who fled the brutal regime had to resort to extreme measures. They fled on crowded, unseaworthy boats in the hope of escaping to their freedom.

Tragically, many of the Vietnamese boat people did not survive the perilous journey. More than a quarter million of them drowned, starved, or were attacked by pirates. Miraculously, more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees did succeed in making their way to Canada. Canadians welcomed these refugees with open arms and even invited the refugees to stay with them in their homes. More than half of the refugees were privately sponsored by generous individuals and groups of Canadians from all walks of life.

• (1150)

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity and support of Canadians, entire refugee families were able to resettle here and build a new and peaceful life.

Resettlement of such a large number of refugees in such a short amount of time was a tremendous achievement, and Canada's humanitarian efforts and compassion were recognized internationally. In response to these efforts in 1986, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees awarded the Canadian people the Nansen Medal, which is the refugee equivalent of the Nobel Prize. This is the only time an entire country has been recognized with this honour, and for this we should all be proud.

Bill S-219 aims to designate April 30 as the journey to freedom day. Not only would it commemorate the perilous journey 40 years ago of Vietnamese refugees to Canada, but it would also pay tribute to an incredible humanitarian role played by thousands of Canadians in community and church groups, who opened up their hearts and found ways to welcome Vietnamese refugees here in our great country.

As April 30 is already recognized by our Vietnamese community, it is appropriate to designate this day as a national day of remembrance. It would serve to commemorate the lives lost and the suffering experienced by people during the exodus. It would also mark their arrival to freedom and the gratitude of the Vietnamese people to Canadians for their generosity.

It is a Canadian tradition to commemorate tragic lessons in history so that they are never repeated. We believe we must not ignore the past, and this includes the shameful past of our country's history. Indeed, perhaps it is the memory of one of our own darkest moments that contributed to such an outpouring of generosity from Canadians toward the Vietnamese refugees.

It is with great shame that Canadians recall the tragic decision to turn away the *MS St. Louis* in 1939. The outcome of that disturbing decision should not be forgotten. After being turned away by Cuba, the United States, and finally by Canada, the ship was forced to return to Europe, where almost one-third of its passengers ultimately perished in the Holocaust.

To memorize and educate Canadians about the *MS St. Louis* incident, a powerful memorial is now located at Pier 21 in Halifax, where the ship should have landed. On this day we would mark a tragic period in history, but we would also commemorate a very important part of our country's proud humanitarian tradition.

The outpouring of support from Canadian people during this time underscores our country's commitment to providing protection to the world's most vulnerable. A memorial would also serve to remind all Canadians of how fortunate we are to live in one of the most free and democratic countries in the world, and that we are proud to stand up for our values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

It should also be noted that this period in Canadian history is one that is not as well known among younger Canadians today. Unlike the First and Second World Wars, the Korean War, and the Cold War, the Canadian connection to the Vietnam War is often overlooked.

Government Orders

In conclusion, I would say that the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees is a very important part in our Canadian history. That is why so many Canadians have voiced their support for the bill and are enthusiastic about the national day of commemoration. For this reason I urge all my colleagues to support the bill. It is a great bill, and we all, as Canadians, will be proud of it.

• (1155)

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to be speaking after my colleague for Mississauga East—Cooksville, who spoke from the heart of his personal experience living under the regime of a communist government and who knows of what he speaks.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, when the forces from the north invaded the south, breaking the Paris agreement negotiated in 1973, and took over South Vietnam with the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975.

We put forward this bill, which originated in the other place, and I am honoured to be the co-sponsor of it in this House.

This bill would serve three purposes. First, the bill would mark April 30 as a day to commemorate the fall of Saigon, when the communist forces of the north invaded the south and took over the country.

Second, it would serve as a celebration of who we are as Canadians. We took in 60,000 boat people, refugees, who under extreme circumstances, made their way to Canada. We made them Canadian citizens, and they are now proud Canadians.

That is the story of Canada. Canada is made up of people from all over the world. We are all immigrants. We are all from some other place. We come here for hope and opportunity. That is what Canada represents to so many people around the world. People come here to escape persecution and hatred. They come here for a better life for themselves, and more importantly, for their children so that they can realize all of their dreams. That is why this bill is so important.

Third, this bill would serve a pedagogical purpose. Canadians, whether they are Vietnamese, Jewish, or Polish does not matter, should all know the history of each other.

April 30 is a significant day for the Vietnamese people. It is also a significant day because it marks a time when freedom ended for a group of people around the world, and our young people need to know that. They need to know that living in Canada bears a certain responsibility. Because we live in such a great country, because we live in the democracy we do, we have responsibilities. We have a responsibility to remember all of the past atrocities that have occurred around the world, from the Holocaust to the Holodomor to the Armenian genocide. These are all important facts of global history, and yes, of Canadian history.

This is why it is so important that all members of this House support Bill S-219. It is because April 30 is a significant day in global history, but more importantly, the symbolic nature of this bill stands tall so that we as Canadians remember and do not forget. That is why when the time comes to show our support in this House, we must all stand in unanimity to support the journey to freedom day act, Bill S-219. I ask all members to join me in supporting this bill.

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 25, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BARBARIC CULTURAL PRACTICES ACT

The House resumed from March 12 consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of purpose that I am participating today in this debate on Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

I am supporting this legislation because I believe that men and women are equal, and our government believes that men and women are equal. Passing this bill is critical to ensuring that immigrant girls and women have the same chances to position themselves for success in Canada as men and boys do.

Canada has opened its doors to many people who have left their home countries to come here for a better life. Many have come for the rich opportunities. Many have fled persecution in search of safety and security. We want to ensure that they can live here in safety and security. We want them to know that they can live freely, because Canada upholds the enduring principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Those apply equally to men and women. We cannot just talk the talk; we have to walk the walk. This bill is an example of that today.

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Even in this House, we can see that immigrant women are making great contributions to Canada. I think of my fellow colleagues who are immigrant women, the MPs for Vancouver South, Richmond, and Fleetwood—Port Kells, just to name a few who were born elsewhere. They have been elected to Parliament, and they work every day toward a better Canada.

As legislators, we all owe it to immigrant girls and women to ensure that they are not hampered from making great contributions to Canada by discriminatory cultural practices and barbaric cultural practices, such as early and forced marriage, polygamy, and yes, so-called honour killings, which have no place in this country. Indeed, we have zero tolerance for such practices, and this bill sends that strong message.

To that end, the Government of Canada is taking concrete steps. Already our government is providing women who are newcomers to Canada with a whole range of services and programs to help them build their skills so they can enter the workforce and get great jobs here. I have had the opportunity to participate in graduations from some of these programs. I have to say that they truly are inspiring. They have such vim and vigour and a desire to get out and make a contribution.

Two great organizations in my community, among many, that are doing this work are the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association and Immigrant Services Calgary. They do things like co-op programs for professional women, job retraining, and mentorship.

However, shockingly, groups that work with many of our immigrant women and girls also report that when they have left countries where barbaric practices are common, they find themselves subjected to them here.

In the most recent Speech from the Throne, our Conservative government committed to ensuring that barbaric cultural practices do not occur here on Canadian soil. The Government of Canada, the people of Canada, will not tolerate barbaric cultural practices that hold women back. That is the bottom line.

It is up to us to ensure that immigrant women and girls are not being subjugated through isolation and violence. This bill codifies that in law. It says that practices like early and forced marriage, like polygamy and honour-based violence, will not be tolerated.

Women and girls seeking a better life for themselves here in Canada should never be subject to living in constant fear under threat of violence or death simply for living their lives, for choosing whom they wish to marry, and for seeking better opportunities for themselves.

These practices are antithetical to the fundamental Canadian values of freedom and gender equality in which I firmly believe. According to Justice Canada, reports from criminal court cases, the media, and refugee decisions, there were at least a dozen killings from 1999 to 2009 committed in the name of so-called honour. These were premeditated killings, killings of girls and women, murders by family members.

I am haunted by a case in my own home town of Calgary in March 1991, when 20-year-old Kulvinder Dulay was gunned down with her husband and a friend in a parking lot outside the mall by a

family member. Ontario was rocked in 2009 when four strong, vivacious women, the Shafias, were murdered by their own family in Kingston.

We are prosecuting such crimes under our current laws, but we know that immigrant and newcomer women and girls face additional barriers when it comes to protecting themselves and seeking assistance compared to women who are born in Canada.

● (1205)

There were a reported 219 cases of forced marriage from 2010 to 2012 just in Ontario, and all of those individuals reported being victims of violence. These practices have a very negative effect on families and on society at large as well as on the communities in which they occur. Bill S-7 is the latest example of this government taking strong action to protect women and girls.

Our government has also recently updated Canada's citizenship guide, called *Discover Canada*, and the newcomers' orientation guide, called *Welcome to Canada*, to clearly state for people coming to Canada and people who want to be citizens that Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to harmful cultural practices like forced marriage or gender-based family violence. This is a great step. I have talked with our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration recently about expanding the scope of the distribution of these guides to all of our embassies worldwide.

However, our efforts do not stop there. Status of Women, a committee on which I am privileged to sit, has also invested \$2.8 million for community-based projects that address harmful cultural practices. Justice Canada and the Status of Women co-chair an interdepartmental working group on early and forced marriage, honour-based violence, and female genital mutilation. Since 2009, Justice Canada has been busy holding workshops. It has held six sector-specific workshops with police, crown prosecutors, victims services, child protection officials, and shelter workers to build capacity among the people who deal with these issues on the front lines.

As I said, we know that more needs to be done to protect girls and women in our immigration system. That is why Bill S-7 is necessary. To ensure the effectiveness of the measures in this bill, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration consulted with immigration advocates and others in this field for many months, across the country, to formulate the policies that would stop violence and abuse. Those experts told us that barbaric practices still occur on Canadian soil and that we need to act. They gave advice and made very important recommendations that were included in this bill. That led us to where we are today.

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The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act would send a clear and unambiguous message to Canadians and newcomers that such practices are verboten. It would strengthen our laws to protect Canadians and newcomers from these harmful practices by ensuring, for example, that people know that it is a crime to participate in these barbaric cultural practices. We would remove the defence of provocation in the case of so-called honour killings. We would declare that the practices of some cultures are not consistent with Canadian laws and that Canadians will not tolerate cultural practices that deprive individuals, girls, and women of their human rights.

To repeat, this bill would support women and girls who have come to Canada for a better life. It would make it clear that under no circumstances do Canadians accept or allow the propagation or enactment of barbaric cultural practices that target women.

Aruna Papp, who was a victim of early and forced marriage, says this about Bill S-7:

The government's Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act recognizes the plight of these women. In presenting this bill, the government of Canada has said, in effect, "as a Canadian citizen, you, too, deserve to live a life free of violence and coercion." For this, I am grateful.

For this, I too am grateful. This bill needs to become law to prevent more young victims like Aruna Papp.

I implore the opposition members who refuse to stand up for those victims and who say that action is not needed for such a small problem to support this bill, to think of Aruna Papp, of Lee Marsh, of the four members of the Shafia family, and of all the victims of these barbaric practices.

I know that members of both opposition parties say that they are in favour of women's rights. Yet both parties voted against Bill S-2, which gave aboriginal women long-denied matrimonial property rights last year. That is a game changer for them.

I encourage all of my hon. colleagues, and especially those members of the opposition who sit with me on the Status of Women committee, to lead their colleagues and stand up for women and girls. I ask them to vote for Bill S-7 and stand up for victims of violence and abuse.

●(1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague's speech.

In her introduction, she outlined the fundamental principle of gender equality in Canada, a principle that we obviously subscribe to.

In that sense, Bill S-7 seems to contain a tremendous number of measures that deal with what happens after the fact, in other words, the way the Canadian government or the court must react once the action we wish to avoid is committed.

Can my colleague explain what measures in Bill S-7 deal with prevention, support or education to ensure that what the bill seeks to criminalize simply does not happen in the first place?

[*English*]

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I take the member at his word and I hope he will show that he and his party do stand for the equality of women by supporting the bill.

One of the most important aspects of the bill is prevention. The bill sends a message to immigrant men and other people in the community at large that these barbaric cultural practices that are sometimes practised in the countries from which our immigrants come, will not be tolerated in Canada. That would be clearly defined in the Criminal Code. They would know that the defence of provocation, which is often used in other places as a way of justifying the horrific act of killing their daughters because they disagree with whom they wish to go out with or marry, is not acceptable in Canada.

That is exactly the message the Immigrant Services Calgary and the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association are telling me. These people need to hear it. They need to hear it in Canada and before they come to Canada so that they are aware that they cannot continue these practices in our country, on Canadian soil.

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill S-7 is a very important piece of legislation because it seeks to protect the most vulnerable, these young girls who in many cases have absolutely no choice. There are children born and raised in our country who at a young age find themselves having to deal with a situation where they are being forced into a marriage in another country. Quite often during a summer break from high school their parents force them to go overseas to marry someone who has been promised from birth.

Could the member tell us what she hears in her communities about the impact on these young ladies who feel powerless today to speak out so these kinds of things do not happen? Bill S-7 clearly puts measures in place that would prevent such atrocious acts from happening in families in Canada.

●(1215)

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Speaker, I really feel grateful that I have colleagues who will stand up for young women, like my fellow colleague who is asking me the question. It is critical that we have the support of men for these sorts of bills.

In the case of forced marriages, I am sure all of us in the House actually know, or have heard of cases close to them, of someone who has been coerced or is fearful of being coerced into a forced marriage. The bill would make it a crime to take a young girl out of the country for the purpose of a forced marriage. It would give the opportunity to have passports revoked in some instances. It would show those young girls, because their friends and other people would tell them, it is not allowed in Canada, it is illegal and that they cannot make them do that in Canada.

My own niece told me of an example of someone in her university class who told her this was the situation she was being placed in. Fortunately, I do not think it happened, but it is something that is happening. There were 219 cases in Ontario alone between 2010 and 2012, and those are just the ones we know about. We must act.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether we count in days or months, but as of May 2, it will be four years that I have been sitting in this House. In four years, I have considered every opportunity to speak as a great privilege. The problem is that today, I have come to consider this not only a matter of privilege, but also a matter of chance since we will soon be approaching the 100th time allocation motion.

This morning, we are having another fundamental debate in the House. We are debating a bill from the Senate instead of from the House of Commons and we are doing so under a time allocation motion. I therefore have just 10 minutes to speak to an issue as important as the one we are addressing this morning.

I am well aware that in taking a minute of introduction to talk about what I call procedural irregularities, I am cutting into my speaking time. However, since I do not have enough time anyway, I think it is important to convey a clear message.

The place for debate is in the House of Commons, and every member of Parliament should have not only the opportunity to speak to issues that are important to them, but also the time to get their point across, which is less and less the case these days.

Let us get to the crux of the matter. Before advancing some well-founded criticisms of Bill S-7, I would like to stress that we are totally opposed to the practices of polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage. I remain firmly convinced that these practices are completely inconsistent with the common values we share, both in Quebec and in Canada.

The NDP strongly condemns these types of violence endured by women, but refuses to associate these practices with specific cultural groups. By associating these crimes and these types of violence with cultural practices, the short title of Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, which I have read for the benefit of everyone following our debate, reminds us of the Conservatives' mediocrity and their ignorance of the realities of cultural communities. By claiming that cultural groups have a monopoly on these types of violence, the Conservatives are engaging in their usual practices of witch hunts, divisiveness and stigmatization.

In addition to playing on racial prejudices, Bill S-7, at best, duplicates provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada and, at worst, has negative effects that exacerbate the exclusion of women and children who are the victims of violence. I will give a few examples of the negative effects of Bill S-7.

This government has a long history of flawed legislation, for example, the measures introduced in March 2012 to supposedly crack down on marriage fraud. Under these measures, sponsored individuals are required to live with their sponsor for two years. If the sponsored person does not meet that requirement, then he or she could face criminal charges and deportation from Canada.

Fear of deportation leads these sponsored individuals to remain silent in the face of domestic violence and other types of discrimination. As a result, sponsored women who are abused become withdrawn, which only serves to further exclude them from society.

In the same vein, Motion No. 505, which was moved by a Conservative member, sought to combat forced marriages by banning distance marriages. Once again, the Conservatives completely missed the mark, since it is mainly refugees who make use of distance marriages. In an attempt to do away with the harmful practice of forced marriage, the Conservatives instead limited family reunification for refugees.

Bill S-7 confirms the Conservatives' reputation as bad legislators.

• (1220)

Bill S-7 deprives women who are conditional permanent residents of provisions that protect them from deportation if their spouse proves to be a polygamist. What is more, the bill imposes criminal sanctions on minors who participate in a forced marriage, which can seriously harm their future since they would have a criminal record for the rest of their lives.

These negative effects show that the Conservatives' repressive approach is quickly reaching its limits and is counterproductive. Rather than dealing with problems at their source, the Conservatives are focusing their efforts on a bill with a sensationalized title that is designed to win votes. Rather than just trying to score points with its voter base, this government should set up a consultation process with stakeholders to truly address the problem of gender-based violence.

Although experts and groups made recommendations as part of the study by the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, the minister chose to ignore their advice and warnings about the negative effects of Bill S-7. The minister chose to base the provisions of his bill on social prejudices and the stigmatization of certain cultural groups. In short, the minister is playing politics by deliberately associating harmful practices with cultural groups. The Conservatives deliberately ignored the opinions of experts and community groups, and their superficial approach in the provisions of this bill is bewildering.

For example, the bill would amend the Civil Marriage Act to make free and enlightened consent legal requirements for marriage. However, these provisions are already part of the Quebec Civil Code and common law provisions in the other provinces. The bill does not add a single new measure. It is nothing but smoke and mirrors. This legislative inflation is compounded by the flaws in this bill. Sponsors are often more familiar with the workings of the immigration and legal systems than the immigrant women they sponsor. This bill denies sponsored immigrant women access to a process that would inform them of the basic immigration rules, which means that these individuals are on their own and are at an increased risk of social and economic exclusion. Once again, education, awareness and support services are being set aside in favour of a largely repressive and election-minded approach.

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The NDP's approach to the matter is much clearer. As I mentioned, the minister's approach is simplistic and focuses above all on the punitive component. To address the problems this bill deals with, the NDP has developed an approach based on awareness and prevention and on providing services to help newcomers integrate more effectively. First of all, we want to amend the bill to ensure that victims of forced or early marriage are exempt from the requirements of conditional permanent residence. This exemption would protect vulnerable women against violence and abuse at the hands of their sponsors. The conditional permanent residence status requires that the person being sponsored live under the same roof as the spouse who is sponsoring them for two years. If the sponsor is being violent or abusing the person being sponsored, that requirement for two years of cohabitation must be removed.

We are also calling on the government to introduce a provision in the bill that guarantees the delivery of prevention and support services for victims of forced or early marriage.

I will close by saying that for all of these reasons and others that I unfortunately did not have time to go over, I will be opposing this bill at second reading. However, I would like to reiterate that we unequivocally condemn forced marriage, polygamy and early marriage.

However, the fact remains that this bill creates more problems than it solves. The Conservatives have managed to fail on three counts in this area. There is the legislative failure, since Bill S-7 has many adverse effects that increase the exclusion of immigrant women and children. They also failed when it comes to consultation, as they have done for almost every other bill, too. Lastly, the Conservatives have failed in terms of their approach when it comes to violence against women by refusing to implement our national action plan to end violence against women in Canada.

I will stop there and I look forward to questions from the members.

● (1225)

[English]

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noticed a fairly glaring omission in the member opposite's speech today, in that he neglected to mention honour killings. He said he was opposed to polygamy, forced marriage, and underage marriage, even though he is voting against them, which is unconscionable, but makes no mention of being against honour killings. This is an extremely serious issue, with girls and women being killed by family members under the guise of them having been dishonoured when the girls and women want to date or marry someone.

Does the member believe he should be denying support for women and girls who are facing these kinds of barbaric practices under the guise that he does not like them being called "cultural practices", which I should point out is what the United Nations calls them?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. It gives me an opportunity to talk about some issues I did not have time to address because of the lack of time. We are under time allocation, so I had to keep my speech to 10 minutes.

It goes without saying that I cannot condone honour killing, but the way I am defending our position shows that the Conservatives' Bill S-7, like so many of this government's bills, is an attempt to create a tough-on-crime image.

Still, what else are we saying? We are saying that after the crime is committed, we will react vigorously. What I would also like to see in the bill, and what we have proposed pretty much every time in connection with this new law, are measures to prevent these crimes from being committed and to give the people who are victims of these crimes the financial resources, knowledge and support to become full Canadian citizens, people who are aware of all of the measures available to them, as quickly as possible.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I understood my colleague's speech correctly, this is a punitive bill. It is not in any way preventive. There is no help for the people affected by this bill. It covers things that other laws already cover, and it could produce consequences such as the deportation of people who have done nothing wrong. Given all of that, what is the purpose of this bill?

● (1230)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I see that my colleague reads the bill exactly the same way I do.

The goal, if we can call it that, is patently clear. This is electioneering based on fear, to shore up support from the Conservative base and, provided people buy this type of speech, to try to broaden that base.

However, I do not see anything in Bill S-7 that deals with prevention and support. We ask our friends across the way the same question every time and the answers are consistent with the bill every time. In other words, the government does not see the problem and does not seem open to amendments that would help improve this bill. Every time, we get rhetoric that is black or white, positive or negative, for or against, when in reality the world we live in is much more nuanced than that and there are many shades of grey that almost never appear in the Conservatives' bills.

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to participate in the second reading debate of Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

I am sure that everyone in the House agrees that all people in Canada have the right to be free from violence and to reach their full potential. It is a sad reality, however, that there are people in Canada, principally women and girls, who are subjected to forced or early marriage. Prior to or within these marriages, the victims experience various forms of violence, and because of these marriages they are hindered in their ability to fully and successfully participate in our free and democratic society.

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I would like to take this opportunity to focus my remarks today on the specific issues of early and forced marriage. An early marriage is a marriage that takes place before one or both individuals involved have reached the minimum legal age of marriage. International studies have shown that a girl married at an early age can face domestic servitude, as well as sexual and domestic violence. Girls are predominately the victims of child marriage, increasing the risk of violence and creating a significant barrier to achieving gender equality, as they are regularly forced to disrupt or abandon their education.

A forced marriage is considered to be a marriage that takes place without the free and enlightened consent of one or both individuals involved. As with early marriages, forced marriages are predominately perpetrated by the victim's own family members. The consequences of a forced marriage are numerous, including repeated sexual violence and possible physical assault and domestic servitude. We have seen tragic cases in Canada and around the world where individuals who have refused to enter into a marriage against their will, or who have left their forced marriage, have been brutally assaulted and even murdered by their family members.

Our government takes the safety and well-being of Canadians, particularly children, very seriously. It is firmly committed to protecting vulnerable Canadians from all types of violence and to holding perpetrators accountable for their acts. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act proposes important legislative measures to better prevent Canadians from being victimized by early or forced marriage. Changes to the Civil Marriage Act would set a new national minimum age for marriage at 16 years. It would formally entrench in federal law the existing requirements that each party to a marriage enter into it with their free and enlightened consent, and that any previous marriage must be officially dissolved before a new marriage is entered into.

There is currently no national minimum age below which a marriage is legally invalid. Under the Constitution, setting an absolute minimum age for marriage is a matter of federal jurisdiction, yet, apart from federal legislation that sets a minimum age of 16 years for marriages in Quebec, the minimum age elsewhere in Canada is set out in the common law or court decisions. Remarkably, this old common law sets the minimum age at 14 years for boys and 12 for girls. It is time that we modernize and set in legislation an absolute national minimum age of 16 years for marriages in Canada.

Many have questioned why this bill proposes an absolute minimum age of 16 years as opposed to 18 years. The short answer is that there are exceptional circumstances where a mature minor wishes to marry and has already engaged in a significant commitment with their partner, for instance, where they have a child in common. This approach is also consistent with the majority of like-minded countries that also have 16 years as an absolute minimum age for marriage, and 18 as the free age for marriage without any additional requirements for consent. Between the age of 16 years and the age of majority, either 18 or 19, depending on the jurisdiction, the provincial and territorial marriage acts provide additional safeguards to help protect young people from marriages that are not in their best interest.

Bill S-7 proposes an amendment to the Criminal Code so that it would be a criminal offence for anyone to solemnize a marriage, whether they have legal authority to do so or not, who does so knowing that one of the parties being married is under the age of 16 years or is marrying against their will. This is a pretty strong deterrent, and it would send a clear message that solemnizing this marriage is not only illegal under civil law but it is also a crime.

• (1235)

To complement the underage marriage offences, Bill S-7 also amends the provisions in the Criminal Code that set out the minimum age for sexual activity. As members will recall, in 2008 this government increased the minimum age of consent to sexual activities from 14 years to 16 years, with exceptions for those who are close in age and where the parties were married. Because there was no national minimum age of marriage at the time, the exception for married couples was retained.

I am proud to say that Bill S-7 will change that. Once this legislation is in force, it will be illegal to marry a person under the age of 16, which corresponds to the age of consent for sexual activity. There will no longer be a need for an exception where the victim is below the age of 16 and married to the accused.

The bill would also amend the Criminal Code to make clear that anyone who actively participates in a marriage ceremony with full knowledge that one or both of the participants is under the age of 16 or is marrying against their will may be criminally liable. This will not apply to a person who is merely present at the ceremony, even if they know that a party to the marriage does not consent. In order to trigger the criminal offence, the individual must play an active role in ensuring that the ceremony takes place while knowing that it involves a child under the age of 16 or a person who is being forced to marry against their will.

Moreover, there have been cases of Canadian children being taken abroad to be married at an early age and forced into a marriage. This is simply unacceptable. The bill would make it a crime for anyone to remove a child who is ordinarily resident in Canada from the country with the intent that the child be subjected to an underage or forced marriage abroad.

Finally, the bill would introduce a new peace bond in the Criminal Code, which would be available where there are reasonable grounds to fear that an underage or forced marriage will occur. The new peace bond would permit a court to impose conditions precluding the defendant from making arrangements related to the marriage of a potential victim, requiring him or her to surrender travel documents, and preventing him or her from leaving the country with a potential victim.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration travelled across Canada, conducting round tables with various cultural communities, and participants told him that early and forced marriage is still a harsh reality in this country. While the opposition refuse to support this legislation, our government is taking a stand and making it clear: forced marriage, honour-based violence, or any other form of harmful cultural practices are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in Canada.

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In closing, the bill would provide individuals, communities, and criminal justice system authorities with the tools that are needed to tackle these issues. I encourage all members of the House to support Bill S-7.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech, and it goes without saying that we share his concerns about violence against women and girls.

Another concern is the title of this bill. We are not saying that these practices are acceptable, but we are very concerned about the language used. This concern was also expressed when this bill was being examined in the Senate, and a number of MPs have spoken about this issue in the House.

Obviously, we want to do everything we can as legislators to protect women and girls and put an end to this violence.

However, does my colleague not think that using words like “barbaric” in the title of the bill is putting us on a slippery slope and is a way of distorting the debate rather than getting to the heart of such an important issue?

• (1240)

[*English*]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, we are not hiding behind words. I want to reiterate that the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act demonstrates that Canada's openness and generosity does not extend to early and forced marriage, polygamy, or other types of barbaric cultural practices.

Canada will not tolerate any type of violence against women nor girls, including spousal abuse, violence in the name of so-called honour, or other, mostly gender-based violence.

Those who are guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada's criminal law.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Pickering—Scarborough East for focusing his speech on forced marriages. I also thank the member for his support of my private member's bill which disallowed forms of forced marriages, those being telephone, fax, Internet and proxy marriages, for the purposes of immigration, and which asked the government to change those regulations so newcomers to Canada and new Canadians would understand clearly that these kinds of practices would not be tolerated.

The Liberal leader stated that the use of the term “barbaric”, in particular, was not warranted when talking about some of these practices. I would like to know what the member for Pickering—Scarborough East thinks about that and, specifically, the government's efforts to acknowledge that these are, in fact, barbaric practices. Should we be doing this and why is it so important for the government to do so?

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Speaker, we are in a great country, a democratic country, and enjoy our freedoms and liberties. Unfortunately, some actions by people who live in our beautiful country are not in line with our history, our country and our democracy.

It is very important not to hide behind the words of barbarians, and there are barbarians in our country. We should look forward, develop legislation to replace outdated legislation, and implement it so we can evolve in the future and not go back to the past.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House to speak to Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This Conservative government calls this Senate bill the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act.

Before I talk about the substance of the bill, I would like to make a few comments about its title, which, when studied in the Senate, was severely criticized by stakeholders, the people who work on the ground and community groups that help women in precarious situations. We find that the short title of the bill is xenophobic because of the use of the term “barbaric”, and that it reinforces existing prejudice against certain cultural groups by targeting racial minorities for certain practices that are in fact found in Canadian society. We know that violence against women occurs throughout Canadian society and that we must address this serious problem. However, as several witnesses and stakeholders pointed out, targeting minority groups and using language that instils fear and reinforces prejudice against cultural groups does absolutely nothing to improve the situation.

This is a very serious issue. Polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage are practices that we must tackle. We must find solutions that help women who find themselves in such situations in Canada. Yes, this does exist and does happen here in Canada. However, we are convinced that this bill is not an appropriate response to the serious problem of gender-based violence, which, I repeat, is not a cultural problem. In fact, we have seen that Bill S-7 could further aggravate the problems that exist in Canadian society with respect to forced marriage and could also jeopardize the safety and autonomy of women in forced marriages. The Conservatives are fearmongering by introducing this bill, which does nothing to solve the problems faced by women in forced marriages.

We have studied Bill S-7 and we believe that it could have some serious consequences. For example, victims of polygamy could be criminalized, children could be deported and families could be separated. The Conservative government claims to want to help women, but it is doing nothing to ensure that women have access to the services they truly need. Groups across Canada that work to help these women are vastly underfunded. I have visited a few of them in Montreal, including the South Asian Women's Community Centre. This group is one of dozens of others across the country that help these women and these families. They work very hard with very few resources.

Government Orders

What do these groups want, so that they can help these women and families, who are often living in precarious situations? They are calling for safe, affordable housing to provide more security for these families and these women. They are also calling for resources to provide psychological help to these families and these women, since, as members will understand, the situations these women are in can sometimes be traumatic. It is important to provide this assistance as well. Groups working on the ground are also calling for assistance for the families, which are often traumatized by having to go through the complicated legal and immigration systems.

● (1245)

Organizations on the ground are also asking for help for families that have, in many cases, been traumatized by complicated processes in the justice and immigration systems. This bill offers none of the much-needed resources to help these families and these women.

This bill will also have some deeply damaging consequences. The Conservative government is used to pushing its bills through without consulting the community or the people who work directly with these women.

On that note, I would like to talk about some of the laws the Conservative government has passed that have had unintended consequences for immigrants to Canada.

In March 2012, the Conservatives introduced new measures to crack down on marriage fraud, including a requirement for a sponsored spouse to live with their sponsor for two years or face deportation and possible criminal charges. Again, witnesses who came to Parliament to offer recommendations criticized this bill because of its negative consequences. It leaves women vulnerable to abuse because they are reluctant to report abuse for fear of losing permanent residency.

What is more, the Conservative member for Mississauga South, who is in the House today, moved Motion No. 505 in April 2014. This motion purported to attack forced marriages by banning marriages by proxy, telephone or fax from qualifying for spousal sponsorship.

Perhaps her intention was good since more measures are needed to address the issue of forced marriage. However, this measure does not help vulnerable individuals, immigrants and refugees, who are often the ones who make use of distance marriages. This measure served to limit family reunification rather than forced marriage.

The measures that I just mentioned thus have a number of negative consequences that put victims of forced marriage, primarily women, at an even greater risk.

I would like to speak about what we would have liked to see in this bill in order to provide real support for women who are victims of forced marriage and abuse.

First of all, we would have liked that the bill allow victims of forced or underage marriages to be exempt from the requirements of conditional permanent residence. This was also recommended by the experts who appeared before the committee. It has become apparent that conditional permanent residence is revoked in such cases. This measure was introduced in October 2012 and applies to spouses, common-law or conjugal partners in a relationship of two years or

less with their sponsor and who have no children in common with the sponsor at the time of the sponsorship application. These sponsored spouses or partners have a condition attached to their permanent residence status for a period of two years from the day they receive their conditional permanent resident status in Canada. Once again, this is the measure that was presented by my colleague.

We are proposing that the spouses and children of a person who is deported for having lied to the authorities about their marital status be allowed to remain in Canada where they have settled. Our approach is focused on protecting victims.

● (1250)

I think that any bill must take into consideration the realities facing victims and help and encourage them to report the abuse. However, that is not what this bill does.

Instead, this is a punitive bill, and that is why we are opposed to Bill S-7.

● (1255)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

She mentioned one issue in particular. I tried to ask a member across the aisle a question about this earlier, but unfortunately, he avoided the question and repeated the government's talking points about zero tolerance for such acts, and so on.

As my colleague put it so well, of course we all oppose violence against women and want to get at the root of the problem. I want to come back to that point, which is one that the Conservative members appear incapable of addressing.

Should we not be concerned about the terms used in the bill's title? Rather than getting at the root of the problem and addressing it properly, the Conservatives chose words that fuel fear and could lead to stereotypes about certain cultural communities by painting everybody with the same brush, when we all know very well that the acts listed in the bill are relatively rare.

Indeed, this calls for zero tolerance. However, does my colleague not find the government's approach problematic in that regard?

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Indeed, the very title of this bill is an indication that the government wants to use it to play politics and spread fear of cultural minorities. We know that violence against women is committed throughout Canadian society, not just within cultural communities.

We also know that the Conservatives have no credibility when it comes to violence against women. They refused to launch a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, and they refuse to take other acts of violence against women elsewhere in Canada seriously.

By rejecting our amendments to this private member's bill, the government is refusing to truly take into account the realities that women are facing.

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[English]

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak during the debate on Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

To begin, I would like to offer a bit of context. Five years ago, the Government of Canada introduced a new citizenship guide called Discover Canada, which is used by prospective new Canadians to learn about Canadian citizenship and to prepare for their mandatory citizenship test.

Since its introduction, the guide has proven to be popular not only with newcomers to Canada but also with many Canadians interested in learning about the rights and responsibilities that come with being a citizen of our great country.

One of the important points made explicit to all readers of Discover Canada is that men and women are equal under Canadian law. The guide states that:

Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, "honour killings," female genital mutilation...or other gender-based violence.

Although the equality of men and women is not only the law but a fundamental Canadian value, unfortunately violence against women and girls continues to affect tens of thousands of Canadians each year. Barbaric cultural practices still exist as a reality for many Canadian women. The effects on victims are devastating and far-reaching, and they impact our children, homes, and communities.

In the most recent Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister unambiguously committed to taking concrete steps to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Canada. Bill S-7 is exactly such a step, and its passage will meet the throne speech commitment by helping to ensure that barbaric cultural practices, including underage and forced marriage, do not occur on Canadian soil.

If and when implemented, the measures in this bill would improve protection and support for vulnerable immigrants, especially women and girls, and indeed all Canadians in a number of different ways. They would render permanent and temporary residents inadmissible for practising polygamy in Canada. They would strengthen Canadian marriage laws by establishing a new national minimum age for marriage of 16 years old and by codifying the existing legal requirements for free and enlightened consent for marriage and for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another.

They would criminalize certain conduct related to underage and forced marriage ceremonies, including the act of removing a child from Canada for the purpose of such marriages. They would help protect potential victims of underage or forced marriages by creating a new specific court-ordered peace bond if there are grounds to fear someone would commit an offence in this area. They would ensure that the defence of provocation would not apply in so-called honour killings and many spousal homicides.

All of these proposed amendments are practical and effective measures that would strengthen the protection of vulnerable individuals in Canada and help address the problems stemming from harmful cultural practices.

In my remaining time, I would like to elaborate on some of these measures. I will start with those that address the practice of polygamy.

While it is against the law in Canada to practise polygamy or to enter into a polygamous union and while that ban has been upheld as constitutional, such is not the case everywhere in the world. Indeed, some newcomers to Canada come from countries where polygamy is legal and culturally acceptable.

To complement existing criminal law and prevent polygamy on Canadian soil within the immigration context, Bill S-7 would create a new inadmissibility in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for anyone practising polygamy in Canada. This would enhance existing immigration tools to render both temporary and permanent residents inadmissible for practising polygamy in Canada, regardless of whether there is a criminal conviction or misrepresentation.

I will now turn my attention to measures in Bill S-7 that would address the problem of early and forced marriage by amending the Civil Marriage Act.

● (1300)

It may surprise some to know that Canada has no national minimum age for marriage. It is only in federal law, applicable in Quebec, that the minimum age is set at 16 years old. In other parts of Canada common law applies, and as such, the minimum age is 14 for boys and 12 for girls, although historically it went as low as age seven. Bill S-7 would set a national minimum age of 16 years old for marriage, which would make it clear that underage marriage is unacceptable in Canada and will not be tolerated.

Other amendments to the Civil Marriage Act proposed in Bill S-7 would codify the requirement that those getting married give their free and enlightened consent to the marriage and would codify the requirement for the dissolution of any previous marriage.

Bill S-7 would also help prevent forced or underage marriage by amending the Criminal Code to criminalize actions that are deliberately taken for the purpose of helping such marriages occur and would create a new peace bond that would give courts the power to impose specific conditions on an individual when there are reasonable grounds to fear that a forced marriage or a marriage under the age 16 would otherwise occur.

Finally, measures in Bill S-7 would also amend the Criminal Code to address honour killings as well as other spousal homicides so that lawful conduct by a victim can no longer be legally considered as a provocation that reduces the seriousness of the murder. This would not only prevent the defence of provocation from being raised in cases of honour killings but would also bring our criminal law in line with Canadian values, which hold people responsible for their murderous rage even where they were verbally insulted or otherwise had their feelings hurt by some lawful conduct of the victim before the killing.

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The opposition to this bill is unfounded. The NDP member for Parkdale—High Park suggested that the government give more resources to front-line agencies. Is the member opposite even aware that since 2006, under this government, settlement funding has been tripled from below \$200 million to almost \$600 million?

In fact, in the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, we heard settlement organizations ask us to give them more tools to help with so-called honour-based violence. It is clear that while the NDP refuses to take any action, our government is taking steps to ensure that so-called honour-based violence does not continue on Canadian soil.

The Liberal Party refuses to even admit that these practices are barbaric. The leader of the Liberal Party believes that the title is too harsh. Here is another example of the Liberal Party not standing up for what is right. As usual, it refuses to stand up for victims.

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act is an important piece of legislation that would send a clear message to individuals coming to this country that harmful and violent traditions are unacceptable in Canada.

I hope all hon. members will support this bill at second reading.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill could cause some women and children to be sent back to their country of origin. If they are happy in Canada, I imagine they will not really feel like returning with their spouse or their father to their country of origin.

Would the hon. member be prepared to make amendments to the bill in order to protect these people and ensure that no victims are deported?

[*English*]

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the NDP refuses to take any action. Since we formed government, some 30 or so bills have been passed. I wonder if the member supported any of those bills, such as the bills that addressed issues to deal with criminals and give victims the rights they deserve.

On the other hand, we are very clear on this side that we will not tolerate any spousal abuse, so-called honour killing, or other gender-based violence in Canadian society. It is also very clear that polygamy is not allowed and must not be allowed on Canadian soil.

This is what the bill is all about, whether it be polygamy, honour killing, or spousal abuse. We on this side strongly believe that spousal abuse should not be allowed and that there should be consequences.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, first, that does not answer my question at all.

Second, does he not think that this legislation will be for naught if women in polygamous marriages dare not speak out against the criminal actions of their husband for fear of being sent back to their country of origin?

[*English*]

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is referring to those spouses who are sponsored and are still under the conditional permanent resident status. Our government has taken action to protect vulnerable Canadians, particularly women and girls, from early and forced marriages and other harmful cultural practices.

I would remind the member that through the information for sponsored spouses and partners, we advise immigrant women that those who are subject to conditional permanent residency and who are victims of abuse or neglect do not have to remain in abusive situations. A brochure, created by CIC, also informs them how to contact CIC and others and where they can find help.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could the member comment on issues that the department is ultimately responsible for? One of the big issues I have found consistently is the issue of the processing time of marriages.

When we talk about different types of arranged marriages, it is important that we recognize that to a certain degree there are arranged marriages that do occur today that are in fact quite acceptable by modern standards. I wonder if he might want to provide some comment on that.

• (1310)

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what this bill has to do with arranged and other marriages.

The Liberal Party does not want to talk about protecting women and girls who are forced to be married under age or are forced to live in polygamous relations. On this side it is very different.

The Liberal Party leader refuses to admit that these practices are barbaric. He believes the term is too harsh. It is another example that the Liberal Party does not stand for what is right, and as usual, refuses to stand up for victims.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in preparing for this brief speech I was not exactly sure how I wanted to begin. However, after reading my background notes I am left to wonder why this piece of legislation has even been introduced. It is becoming evident to me that the current Conservative government really is not interested in making Canada a better place in which to live. In fact, sometimes I think it is the opposite.

We have seen a number of pieces of legislation introduced with sensational titles such as this one, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, that play to the emotions but often lack substance. We have seen this with various so-called tough-on-crime bills introduced in the past years in spite of the fact that our crime rate is falling. In the U.S., which has an alarmingly high rate of incarceration, there are discussions to reject this punitive and primitive approach that is not working and determine which other measures are needed to ensure that those found guilty can return safely and become productive members of society. In other words, that is the approach we have always had in this country, at least until very recently.

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A lot of what is presented by the government I would say is meant to increase fear amongst Canadians with respect to problems that may not even really exist. Let us look at Bill C-51, which gives sweeping powers to the government to infringe upon our rights and freedoms. Thousands of Canadians took to the streets last Saturday to protest against the draconian measures of this bill. The sad truth is that we already have adequate measures to protect us from terrorist threats under existing legislation.

I believe and will venture to say that a lot of these bills are just a simple waste of time. Rather than concentrating on crime and fear, perhaps we could realistically tackle issues that are facing us, such as climate change, poverty, the lack of affordable housing, the erosion of our health care system, and the thousands of working poor we have in this country.

[*Translation*]

Experts who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights explained that criminalization will not solve the problem and instead will exacerbate it. In fact, several Criminal Code provisions already provide legal recourse with regard to the offences targeted by the bill. Instead of politicizing the issue of gender-based violence, the government could strengthen the legislative measures already in place. It must also commit to implementing a national action plan to combat violence against women and invest more in the organizations that provide services to women in forced or underage marriages.

Naturally, we agree that no woman should be subject to gender-based violence, including the practices of forced marriage and underage marriage. The bill could have serious unintended consequences, including the criminalization of the victims of polygamy, criminalization and deportation of children, and separation of families.

• (1315)

[*English*]

As an aside, I sometimes get the impression that a lot of the bills that are presented here are not really thought out. A bill is presented and then we get an opinion back from the legal profession saying that it may not stand up to court challenges or that it is not well written and thought out. I think this bill falls into that category.

[*Translation*]

Instead of a sensationalized bill that does not get at the root of the problem, the minister should commit to widespread and meaningful consultations with community groups and experts so that the real issue of gender-based violence is addressed in an effective manner.

The government should also increase investments in organizations that provide services such as safe and affordable housing, counselling and help for families that are often traumatized by the fact that they must navigate complicated legal and immigration systems.

[*English*]

The thing is that what is happening with this bill, what I have learned in going through some background information, is that the information here often duplicates our existing laws. For example, the bill would change the Civil Marriage Act to make free and

enlightened consent legal requirements for marriage, but these requirements are already part of the civil code of Quebec and common law in other provinces. The bill would limit the defence of provocation, ostensibly to exclude honour killings, but courts have already ruled that the concept of honour and the culturally driven sense of what is an appropriate response do not count as provocation under the Criminal Code.

Canadian criminal law already provides recourse relevant in most cases involving forced marriage, prior to and after the marriage, as well as in cases of travelling with a minor with the intent to force her or him to marry.

I am just going to list what it includes because it is important for my colleagues here to understand that we have adequate measures in our current legislation for a lot of this information that we are discussing and we are voting on.

For example, it includes uttering threats, section 264.1 of the Criminal Code. It includes assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, forcible confinement, abduction of a young person, procuring feigned marriage, removal of a child from Canada, extortion, sexual offences against children and youth, failure to provide necessities of life and abandoning children, abduction of a young person and, moreover, spousal abuse, abuse of a child and abuse of a position of trust and so on.

We have to ask ourselves this. If in fact we have provisions in our current legislation to address these issues, why are we taking time to do another bill? I would like to submit that perhaps we are doing this because the Conservatives want to sensationalize certain aspects of our society and play to the base, to the fear factor that I talked about before.

Witnesses at the Senate committee hearings pointed out that immigrant women often have significantly less information about the Canadian immigration and legal systems than their sponsoring partners, which allows their sponsors to threaten and manipulate them. However, this bill would make no provision for providing women with basic information about immigration rules or with adequate integration services.

Families who have suffered from violence and harmful practices need adequate supports and programs, especially since the challenges faced by survivors of forced marriages are unique. However, this bill makes no reference to support services. That is an interesting point. We have seen, for example, the sensationalism about Bill C-51, this anti-terrorism bill, and all the provisions that are going into the bill. However, there is really very little about resources to people in the field, to our police and to others who keep our society safe or, in this case, resources that are provided for the safety of women.

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It is no secret that under the current government, women's centres have lost funding, that the organizations that support and work with women who are undergoing violence and spousal abuse do not have the resources that they had a decade ago. At the same time, we see a bill that supposedly would address the situation, but there is nothing on the ground to help those people when they approach a centre, if in fact the centre is still allowed to exist.

According to UNICEF, if Canada wants to ensure the protection of children from human trafficking, it must recognize that Canadian children who become victims of trafficking largely end up that way as a result of a series of failures in the protective system.

● (1320)

Many children live in low-income families without adequate access to community support services that could prevent the risk of exploitation. Many need educational support and mental health services, but do not receive them.

In 2008, Denmark's parliament unanimously passed a law making it a criminal offence to force anyone to marry. However, six years after the law was enacted, the police have not yet charged a single person and the courts have not convicted anyone under the act. Why? Susanne Fabricius of the national organisation of women's shelters in Denmark said that she did not think this had any impact on protecting women and, in fact, might have backfired and driven the problem underground. I rest my case with that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the long list of barbaric practices the member wished to focus the government's attention on, homelessness being one of them, the tragedy that is challenging and terrifying indigenous and aboriginal women in our country. There is the barbaric practice of tolerating poverty and thinking that tax cuts will present new housing or jobs to people when, in fact, our youth unemployment, in particular, is unbelievably cruel, yet we see no action.

Also, do we think if we make other practices illegal two or three times, they might be eliminated? In other words, if we make murder illegal three times, as polygamy has now been made illegal twice, and impose national and provincial standards that are already in place, therefore reinforcing the law by making a redundant law even more debated, are there any areas where redundancy is effective?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I agree with intent of the question. The fact is that we have existing laws and if we add a third or fourth law, it does not mean the problem will go away.

I would like to share with the member an experience I had last week. I was driving in my riding and saw a hitchhiker with a big knapsack on his back, rings in his nose and tattoos, and decided to give this guy a ride. I told him I was stopping to have some lunch and asked if he would like to have lunch. He said sure. I asked him where he was going and he said to Summerland, which I thought was interesting. He did not talk much, but as we were having lunch, he opened up. He said that he had been on the road for 10 years and was a homeless person. He said that there were hundreds of homeless people around the country who were angry at what was going on with the system, a system they could not access. He said that there were people in power who had no idea what is going on. To me, that illustrates in a small way what is happening in our country today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech.

In the case of homelessness or all of these horrific acts that women face and fear much worse, I would like to know whether he found any clauses in Bill S-7 that set out what resources would be allocated to the organizations that work on the front lines and are there when these people are looking for a helping hand or for assistance to get out of a difficult situation.

● (1325)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The answer is no. As I said in my speech, we have seen the same thing with a number of bills. The government wants to change the policy but does not allocate the necessary resources. It wants to send our soldiers to war, but there are no resources to give them the help they need when they return. It wants to help women, but it does not even want to create a commission of inquiry concerning aboriginal women we have spoken about in the House.

In my opinion, the best way to help these people is to look at what already exists and what resources are already out there. If there are not enough, we can add some. That would be a logical response to existing problems.

[*English*]

Mrs. Pat Perkins (Whitby—Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate in the debate on Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. It reflects the high priority our government places on supporting the ability of women and girls to live violence-free lives.

As a standing member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I am proud of the many actions the government has taken to address violence against women and girls. The bill is another important example of these efforts.

Allow me to provide a little context.

One of the most important actions we have taken is to increase the funding for the women's program at Status of Women Canada to record levels. We have invested over \$153 million in more than 750 projects since 2007. This includes over \$70 million for projects to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

In fact, through Status of Women Canada, close to \$3 million has been provided in support of projects to eliminate harmful cultural practices using community-based approaches. These projects are building partnerships with cultural community organizations, settlement, legal and law enforcement agencies and school boards. This has resulted in the development of comprehensive, collaborative strategies that address violence against women and girls committed in the name of so-called honour.

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For example, a project in Montreal, led by Shield of Athena Family Services, is providing training to liaison workers from cultural communities in order to identify at-risk situations and identify sources of assistance for the victims.

We also partnered with the Indo-Canadian Women's Association in Edmonton, Alberta in a project that mobilized the South Asian and Middle Eastern communities, service providers, faith organizations, teachers and students to help develop strategies to end this form of gender-based violence.

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act would represent another very important step we could take as a country to end gender-based violence. It would help ensure that no young girl or woman in Canada would become a victim or early or forced marriage, polygamy, violence committed in the name of so-called honour or any other form of barbaric cultural practice.

In the most recent Speech from the Throne, our government highlighted the fact that millions of women and girls worldwide continued to be brutalized by violence, including through the inhumane practices of early and forced marriage. That is why Canada is leading international efforts to address these cultural practices as violations of basic human rights.

In fact, the elimination of child early forced marriage remains a key priority for Canada. At the most recent meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York this March, it was raised again. We are committed to ensuring this cultural practice does not occur on Canadian soil.

The measures in the bill would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code to provide more protection and support for vulnerable individuals, primarily women and girls. They would do it in a number of different ways. They would render permanent and temporary residents inadmissible if they practised polygamy in Canada. They would strengthen Canadian marriage laws by establishing a new minimum age for marriage at 16 and by codifying the existing legal requirements for free and enlightened consent for marriage, and for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another.

• (1330)

They measures would also criminalize certain conduct related to knowing participation in underage and forced marriage ceremonies, including the act of removing a child from Canada for the purpose of such marriage ceremonies. They would help to protect potential victims of underage or forced marriages by creating a new and specific preventative court ordered peace bond where there were grounds to fear that someone would commit an offence in this area. Finally, they would ensure that the defence of provocation would not apply in so-called honour killings and many spousal homicides.

The bill would send a clear message to anyone coming to Canada and to those who would already a part of Canadian society that these practices would be incompatible with Canadian values. Like all other forms of violence against women and girls, they will not be tolerated here.

However, it is abundantly important to note that all Canadians need to be part of the solution. No single government, or person or

community organization acting alone can achieve these goals. We must rededicate ourselves as a society to changing attitudes and changing the conversation by underlining the fact that violence of any kind, including violence against women and girls, is never acceptable or normal behaviour. We need to continue to empower girls and women to speak out. We must keep working together to increase the responsiveness of our system to address the needs of victims and survivors. We must keep taking actions like the measures contained in this bill. As I said earlier, these practices simply will not be tolerated on Canadian soil.

The opposition refuses to take action. It wants more studies and more analysis. However, the time to take action is now. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration spent his summer going from coast to coast, talking to Canadians. It is the victims of these barbaric practices who are asking him to take action. It is the actual victims who are supporting the legislation.

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act represents another important step that we can take as a country to help women and girls live violence-free lives. That is why I am proud to say that I will support the bill, and I urge all hon. members of the House to do the same.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, free and enlightened consent is already a legal requirement in the Civil Code and in common law, in Quebec and in the other provinces. The courts have already established that the culturally defined concept of honour does not represent a valid defence under the Criminal Code. Furthermore, there is sufficient means of recourse in our laws for most cases of forced marriage.

Why would the government reproduce these measures in a new bill, when it could simply enforce the existing laws?

[*English*]

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Mr. Speaker, this is being brought forward simply because it needs to be addressed. We are being asked to address it by the communities that are most affected and by the people who are most adversely affected by these situations.

Honour killings, polygamy and taking underage children overseas to their parents' home country to have them married to someone and brought back here are all things that do exist and happen. If we have proper legislation and laws to address these things, it will allow us to have a society that can protect these young girls and women in a situation that the existing laws just do not provide.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to appreciate, in any way, the government's lack of attention in dealing with violence against women and girls. When we hear what provinces, municipalities, first nations leaders, and many different stakeholders are saying about the 1,200-plus murdered and missing first nations aboriginal women and girls, it seems the Government of Canada, this Conservative government, is the only body in Canada to believe that a public inquiry is not necessary.

Government Orders

Having said that, recognizing that polygamy, forced marriages, early marriages, and domestic violence are all actions that Canadians do not support, there are some mild steps within the legislation.

My question is specifically in regard to the Prime Minister's Office and his determination to label legislation. Why is it necessary to label culture as part of the act, when we know that all societies have different forms of gender violence? Why incorporate culture? If the government wants to amend and make it better legislation, at least it should change the title that the Prime Minister's Office is suggesting and delete the word "culture".

Would the member not agree that it is inappropriate to put the word "culture" in the title?

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Mr. Speaker, the word is actually "cultural", not "culture". It is "cultural practices", and the specific items within the bill do deal with specific cultural practices that are abhorrent to women and girls.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple. In a previous response, my colleague said that the government felt obliged to act in response to pressure from communities. However, our Criminal Code contains answers to all of their questions.

Is that not a clear indication that what communities need is support on the ground so that they can get the education, support and information they need to handle a situation already covered in the Criminal Code?

[*English*]

Mrs. Pat Perkins: Mr. Speaker, if hon. members want to get very specific, some things are not covered in existing law. This is very comprehensive. It is for the specific protection of women and girls.

There are barbaric practices, many of which are not even verbalized here today because they are so gross that we would not want to discuss them. We do not want to see things like that happen to young girls. If the opposition wants the bill to ignore those things, it is not happening.

We are in a situation where we are dealing with reality, and we certainly want to address it properly, as we have been asked to do.

• (1340)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy and very honoured to stand up today to speak in support of Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

For many of us, there are very special issues that are dear to our hearts, and when we are able to bring forward legislation that is important and is helping Canadians, it is especially gratifying.

Two years ago, I was able to stand up and speak in support of Bill S-2, a bill that was not widely talked about, that was completely opposed by the opposition parties and virtually ignored by mainstream media, but a bill that had an amazing and profound impact on aboriginal women. For the first time, it gave matrimonial property rights to aboriginal women.

Aboriginal women now have real matrimonial property rights. It is because of this government and that piece of legislation, and it is because we took a leadership role on a somewhat complicated and difficult issue.

We are doing the same thing today with Bill S-7. We are looking at an issue and a problem that primarily victimizes girls and women. We are looking at it in terms of what we, as a government, can do. As with so many issues that negatively affect our country, at the heart of it are people's feelings and attitudes toward women, marriage, and certain practices. Ideally those change first; the hearts and minds of people change first.

As legislators, we cannot change people's hearts and minds; only they can change their hearts and minds. What we can change is legislation. We can change laws, and we can give law enforcement the tools they need to help protect the most vulnerable.

In this case, we are certainly primarily talking about women and girls. I think all of us, and I have listened to some of the comments from the opposition, agree that the following practices are unacceptable, and we would describe them as barbaric. They are wrong and not acceptable in Canada. I think we all agree that forced marriages are wrong. We all agree that the early marrying of very young girls is also wrong and should be stopped. We agree that in Canada not only is polygamy wrong, it is illegal. Certainly we would all 100% agree that honour killings are absolutely wrong. There is no defence to any of these practices.

The next thing we need to agree on are the best ways that we can stop these practices, combat them, and the best ways we can support women who find themselves in these situations. Preferably, we need to agree on how we can stop these situations from happening. That is where Bill S-7 comes in.

We are introducing a number of changes to a number of pieces of legislation that are already in place. Together we believe that they form a good package, whereby we can protect women from some of these practices.

First, we are raising the age of consent for marriage to a minimum of 16 years. That is across the country. Different provinces do have different minimum ages. Some are extremely young; I think as young as 12 or 14 years. We want that to be uniform across the country so that there is a minimum age with consent of marriage. The bill will establish a national minimum age of 16 years for marriage to protect our most vulnerable in society, namely our children.

The Civil Marriage Act will also be amended to codify the legal requirements for free and enlightened consent to marriage and the requirement for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another. That will remain consistent.

The other step we are taking is on changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in regard to polygamy. In relation to polygamy, this bill proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to specify that a permanent resident or foreign national is inadmissible on the grounds of practising polygamy.

Government Orders

The bill would prohibit both temporary and permanent residents from practising polygamy in Canada and provide for the removal of non-citizens who practise polygamy in Canada, without the need for a Criminal Code conviction or a finding of misrepresentation.

Someone who lives outside of Canada and practises polygamy and wants to come to Canada and live here permanently or temporarily will not be allowed. Polygamy is illegal in Canada. We are sending the message loud and clear that polygamy is illegal. It is not allowed, and it is not tolerated in any way, shape, or form.

• (1345)

We are going to ensure that if they are practising polygamy, they will be removed from the country. That is step number two.

Step number three addresses the whole issue of people who participate knowingly in forced or early marriages. This would not only send a strong signal, but it has penalties attached.

The proposed amendment addresses a gap in the current legislation by creating offences that focus on the active participation in the forced or underage marriage ceremony itself. What does this mean? Essentially, the bill proposes two new offences for anyone who knowingly celebrates or aids in a marriage ceremony where one or both of the spouses are under the age of 16 years or are marrying against their will.

We can compare this to violence. If anyone knowingly participates, celebrates, or encourages violence toward another person, there are penalties for that. If someone knowingly encourages, participates, or is active in a forced or early marriage before the age of 16 years, that would now be an offence under the new legislation. It would include those who conduct the marriage ceremony, and those, such as family members, who have full knowledge of the circumstances but still actively participate. These two new offences would be punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment.

We also want to make sure that it is an offence if someone tries to remove a child from Canada for the purpose of a forced or underage marriage outside of our country. A child could not be taken from Canada to a different country for the purpose of forcing them into marriage. That would also be an offence. There have been disturbing cases of this, and Canadian protection officials currently lack the tools needed to intervene and prevent the child's removal from Canada. I believe these measures would help not only prevent but also deter the removal of children for these harmful practices, and punish the perpetrators.

I have heard that many victims of forced or underage marriage are very reluctant to come forward to contact authorities prior to the marriage because they do not want their parents or other relatives prosecuted. It is very understandable. That makes sense, and it is something we wanted to address. We want to make sure that young women are not feeling this pressure.

Currently, where there are reasonable grounds to fear that a person, including a family member, will cause personal injury to another person, they can be brought to court and ordered into a peace bond or a court order to keep the peace and be of good behaviour. Other conditions can be imposed, including that the person have no

contact with the person who fears for their safety. A person subject to a peace bond could be prosecuted if they breach the order.

Bill S-7 would give power to courts to help protect these girls without necessarily laying a criminal offence. It basically tells the perpetrator that there is a peace bond on them and that if they break this law then there will be a criminal charge. Therefore, it protects these young women, but also gives them a sense of peace, in that they know they are not going to be prosecuting their relatives. This would also mean that the perpetrator would have to surrender travel documents and refrain from making arrangements or agreements in relation to the marriage. They would also have to participate in a family violence counselling program.

The last part of the bill that I would like to speak to is in relation to the honour killing issue. We definitely know it is an issue. As legislators, we have to look at every way that violence can be inflicted on the most vulnerable, in this case primarily women. Honour killings are some of the most horrible cases. Women and girls are being killed because they dated someone or wore the wrong clothing, or got a tattoo or went to a bar. Girls have been killed in Canada in the name of honour.

Right now, provocation is still a defence. We want to remove that loophole as any possible defence. Therefore, we are going to change "provocation". Provocation is not when someone dates someone outside of their faith or culture. Provocation is not if someone goes to a bar or wears earrings or gets a tattoo. We are absolutely removing that; provocation would have to be something that is actually illegal and punishable by law.

I am very proud of this piece of legislation. I support it. I look forward to the opposition supporting the spirit and the letter of the legislation with their vote.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister what happens to women and children in polygamy cases or in this case, polygyny, when a man has several spouses and is deported for polygamy. Are these people also deported, or does Bill S-7 make it possible for them to stay in the country?

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, at all times, we want to ensure that victims, women, are not revictimized. There are a number of measures and supports in place from the government, both at the federal and provincial levels, to support these women if they are victims of forced marriages or polygamist situations.

I think we all know that we are one of the most generous, pluralistic, and kindest societies in the world. We absolutely would provide protection for these women who are victimized by things like polygamy, as my opposition just asked about.

Government Orders

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member say that there are provinces in this country that will marry 12-year-olds. I have been searching on Google, but I have not found a single province that does not require one to be 18 years of age. If one is under the age of 18, the minimum is 16, but one requires parental consent.

Could the member please explain what province 12-year-olds are getting married in?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to find that information. I have been told that there are some provinces where the legal age for marriage is extremely young. It is 12 or 14. If I am incorrect, I will absolutely correct that.

I would ask that member about the age of 18, because there are absolutely lower ages for marriage. I would be happy to talk about that.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister of State for Social Development for her important intervention in this debate.

Obviously, both men and women have a beautiful inherent dignity. It has always caused me consternation that people could be deprived of this dignity through certain cultural practices, and even more insultingly, under words like “honour” when applied to honour killing, for example.

I would like the minister of state to comment on how this bill and its measures would enhance and call forth the inherent dignity particularly of women and young women in this country.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, one of the great benefits of being a Canadian man or woman is our freedom and democracy and our freedom of choice as to how we live our lives, whom we marry, and when we get married. These are all important parts of lives.

It is difficult when we see in the news or hear stories of young women being brutally murdered simply because they did not follow someone else's wish or belief in terms of who they married, where they went, how they socialized, or how they dressed, which are very simple things all of us take for granted in Canada. However, we have seen women in Canada victimized by this.

The term “honour”, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, is a matter of the heart. I think we need to see hearts changed. Again, I think our local communities and organizations, all of us together, would like to see a change in the hearts of men and women and a true belief in respect and dignity.

In the meantime, we absolutely will carry forward laws and introduce legislation to protect young women from this kind of victimization.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the recent speeches and to the answers that were provided. I would like to start out by saying that we oppose polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage. We strongly believe that this bill is not an appropriate response to the serious problem of gender-based violence, which is not a cultural problem. Bill S-7 could actually exacerbate existing problems.

Experts who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights explained that criminalization alone will not resolve the problem. On the contrary, they said, it will exacerbate the problem. In fact, several sections of the Criminal Code already provide avenues of remedy to the offences targeted in this bill. Instead of politicizing the debate and the issue of gender-based violence, the government could enforce the legislation already in place. It must also commit to implementing a national action plan to fight violence against women and investing more in organizations that provide services to women who are victims of forced or underage marriages.

I was listening to the last speaker answer the following question: will women in a polygamous marriage be protected if the husband is deported? She said that yes, measures could be applied and protections were in place. I am sorry, but there is nothing in this bill about that. The bill does not contain any provisions to allow women who are conditional permanent residents to remain in Canada if their polygamist partner is deported. The hon. member said the opposite of the truth.

No woman should have to suffer gender-based violence, including forced and underage marriage. The bill could have serious consequences by inadvertently criminalizing victims of polygamy and by penalizing and deporting children and separating them from their family.

Instead of focusing on a sensationalist bill that does not address the root of the problem, the minister should commit to holding serious consultations on a wide scale with community groups and experts to effectively deal with the problem of gender-based violence. The government should also invest more in organizations that provide such services as safe and affordable housing and assistance to families that are often traumatized at having to deal with complicated legal and immigration systems.

However, the Conservatives' use of these themes for political ends is nothing new. As members will recall, in March 2012 the Conservatives introduced legislation to crack down on marriage fraud, requiring that the sponsored individual live with the sponsor for a period of two years under penalty of deportation or criminal charges. Speaking of barbaric practices, that is one.

● (1355)

In my riding, I have two constituents who are each married to a woman from Cuba. These Cuban women arrived in my riding last year. Unfortunately for them, the two men were abusive, so the women had to turn to local women's shelters to escape the abuse inflicted by these two violent men. However, by acting to defend themselves, the women faced the very real possibility of being deported from Canada.

What happened after that? We lost track of the two women. Of course, they do not want to return to Cuba. They appreciated life here, but in this case, they were not guilty of violence. It was the men who brought them to Canada who were guilty of violence. Thus, we are faced with a measure that is completely unfair and leaves victims of violence to carry the burden of the abuse they suffer. This should not be the case.

I will continue my speech after question period.

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

•(1400)

*[English]***TAXATION**

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is tax season, and I would like to take a moment to read just one of the many emails I have been receiving from middle-income constituents about our family tax cut plan. It reads:

I would like to write and express my appreciation and support to the income splitting reforms. I am a father of 3 young children and my wife is able to stay at home and raise our children, partially due to [your] government friendly family support such as income splitting.

You and the conservative party of Canada can be assured [like many others] that you have me and my wife's votes this coming election.

I have to like that part.

The opposition is committed to taking those important tax savings out of the pockets of my constituents. That is outrageous, but I am committed to not letting that happen. When it comes to protecting hard-working ordinary middle-income families, my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex get it. They know only the Conservative Party will stand up for them.

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ELECTRICITY METERS

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is growing evidence that wireless technology may be detrimental to our health and that the current Safety Code 6 is outdated. In this regard, I would like to thank my colleague from Oakville for introducing Bill C-648, which would require health warning labels on wireless devices. This is a logical first step.

I am also pleased to see that the health committee is taking the time to study this issue. Unfortunately, instead of applying the precautionary principle, various jurisdictions across North America have been ramming wireless smart meters down our throats. A number of people are sensitive to electromagnetic radiation or have other health concerns and have refused this technology.

BC Hydro charges a punitive opt-out fee of \$32.40 per month. Several Slovan Valley residents who rejected this technology have gone through the winter with their electricity disconnected. This is completely unacceptable. The very least that the B.C. government could do would be to adopt the more reasonable Quebec model of a \$15 opt-out fee and a monthly charge of \$5.

B.C. residents deserve better.

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HAMILTON-WENTWORTH CELEBRATION OF RURAL EXCELLENCE

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will not be too long before we see farm fields spring to life with preparations for the coming year's crop, which is why I want to hear back to a Saturday evening in mid-February when I had the pleasure of attending the annual Hamilton-Wentworth Celebration of Rural Excellence.

Considering that the celebration took place on February 14, the very same day that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture says was Food Freedom Day in Canada this year, these award-winning farming operations and individuals deserve our recognition and appreciation.

We enjoy a safe, abundant food supply in Canada. That is why I rise to congratulate and thank the DeBlicke family of Lynden, Ontario, for their forward-thinking farming operation, Josmar Acres. It was awarded the Hamilton-Wentworth's Farm Family of the Year award.

I also congratulate Cathy McMaster of Troy, Ontario, who was named the Rural Citizen of the Year. My friend Cathy is a tireless advocate for our rural citizens and causes.

Finally, as we look to the future, congratulations and thanks go to Drew Spoelstra, who was recognized as Rural Youth of Excellence by the Wentworth Junior Farmers that same evening.

Farmers feed families.

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RUN FOR ROCKY CHARITY EVENT

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sometimes we are inspired by the most unexpected people in the most unexpected places, and they leave us with an impact so intense that we are changed in the process.

Rob and Nancy Campagna of Windsor are two such people. Their son Rocky passed away in August of 2012 after attempting suicide. Rocky's life was short, but his work in the LGBT community was large. He helped create gay-straight alliances in the schools and ran yearly in Toronto's Pride parade. He was a volunteer, a fundraiser, and an activist.

His parents knew Rocky wanted his organs donated, but they were refused because he was gay. Even after his death, Rocky was an activist. In 2014 I, along with other MPs in the House, presented petitions to allow gay men to donate organs.

Rob and Nancy's love and grief made them activists too. They created Rocky's legacy and began the annual Run for Rocky, a five-kilometre charity run, raising over \$130,000 for gay-straight alliances and safe schools program in Windsor-Essex to educate parents of LGBT youth, teachers, and students.

This year's Run for Rocky is April 12 at Dieppe. Please go and donate—

Statements by Members

The Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Coquihalla.

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CARL TYMM

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I announce the passing of Carl Tymm in my riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla. Mr. Tymm was not a household name in my riding, although many would recognize him, and there is a reason for that. Carl Tymm spent many decades involved in community service, both as a dedicated Rotarian and as a Shriner.

All members of this House know the good work of Rotary International and the Shriners organization, but this work would not get done without the outstanding efforts of individuals who volunteer and put service above self. Carl Tymm was one of those individuals, and I suspect members in the house know of someone similar in their home ridings.

Out of respect for the memory of Carl Tymm, I would ask all members to share a round of applause in appreciation of those Canadians who volunteer and serve our Canadian service organizations.

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● (1405)

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, residents of St. John's East and all of Newfoundland and Labrador are concerned about the high cost and availability of child care. Our province has the second-highest child care cost in the country.

In local media over the past week, parents told their stories about the serious consequences for their young families or for them as single parents trying to cope, be part of the workforce, or continue in education. Some couples pay more than their mortgage and sometimes half of their income to obtain child care.

We have a serious problem when families with two working parents say that they just cannot afford to have the family size that they want, or even have children at all.

Fortunately, help is on the way. The NDP has a practical plan for a national child care system, working with the provinces to deliver one million child care spaces over eight years, costing a maximum of \$15 a day. According to the TD Bank, every dollar spent by government will return to the federal and provincial coffers, and more besides.

That is a plan that everyone should get behind. It is real progress for families.

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ROTARY CLUBS IN PRINCE GEORGE—PEACE RIVER

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the hard work of Fort St. John Rotary Club's president Gord Sandhu and new club president Michael Elphinstone, not to mention past presidents Trevor Bolin, Chuck McDowell, Gus McLeod, and Rae Evans. All are dedicated community leaders who are committed to improving the lives of families in need throughout our region.

As we all know, the men and women who participate in Rotary are passionate about their local communities and the world at large. Most significant is Rotary International's work to eradicate polio. To date, Rotary has contributed more than \$1.3 billion and countless volunteer hours to help fight polio. This is an amazing achievement and something that all Rotary members should be extremely proud of.

It is for this reason that I am pleased to stand today and recognize the efforts of all Rotary Clubs in my riding, including those in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Fort Nelson, and Mackenzie.

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WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that honours and stands with our veterans by implementing the new veterans charter and its comprehensive review as well as by enhancing benefits and services.

In further honour, our veterans affairs minister went to Washington, D.C., with Devil's Brigade members like our own Ralph Mayville, where they received the Congressional Gold Medal in addition to their earlier Canadian award.

Sadly, we have lost many from that greatest generation and are losing our living legacy with increasing frequency as each year passes. As a Delta Company member and friend of the Essex and Kent Scottish Regiment, I joined the regiment and others at the recent Hochwald dinner, where we honoured those who passed in the last year. They are Marshall Dejaegher, Art Deschamps, Gordon Fralick, Howard Large, Jim McArthur, Roy Rogers, Arthur Rossell, and Hank Thiessen.

They may now be gone, but they will never be forgotten.

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FRANK CHAUVIN

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to pay tribute to Frank Chauvin, a retired police officer and an extraordinary Canadian. Some of his many awards recognize his greatness, such as the Order of Canada, the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Windsor Police Services Gordon Preston Memorial Award, and the United States Department Certificate of Appreciation Award.

However, his true greatness was his unlimited capacity for love and charity, from his work with aboriginal Canadians through Madonna House to his lifelong commitment to the children of Haiti through the Foyer des Filles de Dieu orphanage and health clinic to shipping humanitarian aid around the globe. Last year alone, 369 containers were sent to 17 countries.

His faith was always his touchstone and moral compass. He literally saved thousands of lives in both body and spirit. Windsor has prided itself on its citizens' charitable giving. Frank was our most brilliant light in that regard.

Statements by Members

Our deepest condolences go to his wife Lorraine, his 10 children, 22 grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren. He will be missed.

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•(1410)

[Translation]

SEMAINE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the week of March 20 to 28 is the Semaine de la Francophonie.

This past year Canada played a significant and multi-faceted role in the Francophonie, as demonstrated by its leadership and important achievements in a number of files including maternal, newborn and child health, child marriage, underage marriage, forced marriage and the fight against Ebola.

Furthermore, for the first time in Canada's history, the Francophonie elected a Canadian, Michaëlle Jean, as the secretary-general of the Francophonie. Ms. Jean's appointment, announced at the 15th Sommet de la Francophonie held in Dakar, Senegal, garnered a great deal of attention and bears witness to the positive influence of Canada in the francophone world.

I invite all my colleagues to participate in the various activities that will take place across Canada during the Semaine de la Francophonie, which will celebrate our rich francophone heritage.

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[English]

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR PRODUCT VALIDATION

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Centre for Product Validation is a project worthy of our support. With only two such centres in the world, the proposal from Fanshawe College fills a niche with a made-in-Canada solution whereby potential products are tested and expert researchers suggest improvements. This business initiative will expand economic growth in London and create jobs. Economic impacts include the potential expansion of existing manufacturing in the region, attraction of new business, and job creation as a result of increased competitiveness.

In addition, the centre would provide access to the workforce for skilled graduates with experience in industry product testing.

The Canadian Centre for Product Validation would be a most welcome boost to a region devastated by factory closures and the loss of well-paying jobs.

The London business community is squarely behind the proposal, and I support Fanshawe College in this most worthy endeavour.

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NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River are concerned that the NDP leader has still not reimbursed Canadian taxpayers for the \$3 million the New Democrats used for parliamentary offices outside of Ottawa. This is a violation of the rules of the House of Commons. Now he is saying

that he does not see this money coming out of the pockets of the 68 NDP members who misspent these funds; instead, he expects the taxpayers to pay.

It is time for the NDP leader to do the right thing and repay taxpayers immediately. The New Democrats made inappropriate use of taxpayer funds to run party offices, and their March 31 deadline is fast approaching. When will the leader of the NDP take responsibility and pay back the taxpayers of Canada?

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ST. PATRICK'S HOME OF OTTAWA

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate St. Patrick's Home on the occasion of its 150th anniversary. From its very modest beginnings, St. Patrick's Home of Ottawa has played a foundational role in the city of Ottawa. It is recognized as a leader in high-quality residential care.

Starting in 1865, with just 10 children and four seniors cared for by the Grey Sisters of the Cross, St. Patrick's Home of Ottawa has always been rooted in the tradition of care and compassion. Now, 150 years later, it has opened a brand new 288-bed facility, which is an important addition when we consider that by 2017, close to one in five Canadians will be over the age of 60.

I thank the thousands of volunteers, donors, fundraisers, and staff who have touched the lives of countless residents and families.

It is said that the extent to which a community looks out for each other is the hallmark of a civilized society. In this regard, St. Patrick's Home exemplifies the very best of what Canadians can be.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, jihadi terrorists have declared war on us. This is a fact, and it is impossible to dispute.

Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, a spokesman for ISIL, praised terror attacks in Canada. ISIL has specifically targeted Canada, urging supporters to attack disbelieving Canadians in any manner and vowing that we should not feel secure even in our homes.

Despite this clear and obvious declaration of war against Canada, the New Democrats still do not get it. According to the *Canadian Press*, the member for St. John's East and NDP defence critic said that the fact that ISIL has declared war on Canada is "preposterous as a notion."

The only thing that is preposterous is the NDP's continued blindness to the threat that ISIL represents. ISIL represents a real threat to Canada. This is why we are not sitting on the sidelines, as the NDP and the Liberals would have us do. We are a proud member of the international coalition fighting ISIL, and that will not change.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, mere weeks since the Prime Minister attempted to score political points by linking mosques to terrorism, Conservative MPs are taking their cue from his divisive rhetoric and making outrageous and intolerant statements.

The member for New Brunswick Southwest said, “it makes no sense to pay ‘whities’ to stay home while we bring in brown people to work in these jobs.”

The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound said that Muslim women should “stay the hell where you came from.”

The member for Calgary—Nose Hill hid behind parliamentary immunity to question the head of one of Canada's leading Muslim Canadian organization about defamatory statements made by the Prime Minister's spokesman.

These members of the Conservative caucus are blunt in their divisive language. They are reinforcing the very same message we hear from the current Prime Minister—a message of division, anger, and intolerance. This is an approach that Canadians will reject by electing an NDP government, led by a prime minister of principle and dignity and acceptance this October.

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SERVICE MEDALS

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to celebrate a very important constituent in my riding of Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. Mr. Roy Morrison from Truro Heights enlisted in the Air Force at the age of 17.

In 1943, he was assigned to the Royal Canadian Air Force Bomber Command 90 Squadron and flew 35 bombing missions over Germany, as a combat tail gunner under fire. Throughout the war, Roy served his country with dignity and respect. After the war was over, he was only recently awarded the medallions and medals that he so rightly deserved for decades.

I congratulate Roy on finally receiving his medals. His service to this country and his protection of peace and democracy worldwide will never be forgotten.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have used every divisive fearmongering tactic available to try to convince Canadians their overreaching Bill C-51 is necessary, but Canadians know better. They know this just is not true. Canadians have even taken to the streets across Canada, saying loudly and clearly that Bill C-51 is an attack on our freedoms and it will not keep us any safer.

Why is the minister refusing to listen to the concerns of Canadians?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the anti-terrorism bill is targeting terrorists, not lawful protesters who are specifically excluded from the bill.

I invite the member to listen to the witness who will appear in the committee tonight. I understand the committee will hear the daughter of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent.

I hope the member will understand that Canadians need to be protected against the international jihadi terrorists.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the minister is asking people to listen, we would ask him to listen to the Canadian Bar Association, which has serious concerns about the bill. In fact, it has called it ill-considered. It goes on to say that this bill brings the entire charter into jeopardy, undermines the rule of law, and goes against the fundamental role of judges as the protectors of Canada's constitutional rights.

Why is the minister refusing to listen to expert testimony, ignoring our nation's lawyers and continuing to ram this dangerous bill through the House?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the hyperbole and the hyperventilating, we are doing no such thing. We are listening to experts. We are listening to many experts, including the Bar Association, but let us be clear on the role of judges here. There is no greater authority than to involve the judges, to preview some of the applications that are made with words.

By the way, members of the Bar Association here and around the country would know that judges do this every day in the exercise of their authority.

That is exactly what I would ask the hon. member and members of the Bar Association to revisit.

* * *

●(1420)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians will not accept a measure that makes something illegal that ought not to be.

Conservatives have been blatantly misleading Canadians about Canada's role in Iraq. Now they indicate they will be extending and expanding Canada's involvement in the Iraq war, and widening Canada's role with bombings in Syria.

Can the government confirm it will be tabling a motion in the House either today or tomorrow and will the motion expand Canada's combat efforts into Syria?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can confirm what the Prime Minister said last week, that the government intends to table a motion seeking the concurrence of this House in an extension, an expansion, of the Canadian security mission against the genocidal terrorist organization ISIL that has declared war on Canada and is at least partly responsible for inspiring terrorist attacks here on our own soil last year and is attempting to engage in ethnic cleansing against religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq and Syria.

Canadians believe that we should not sit on the sidelines. When it comes to defending our security and international security and opposing genocide, we have a role to play, and that is exactly what the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are doing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have a right to know whether the scope of our military mission in Iraq will be expanded beyond training and support for the Kurdish forces and when that will happen. Our soldiers are already on the front line and are under fire from Islamic State militants.

I repeat: can the government confirm it will be tabling a motion in the House today or tomorrow? Will this motion expand Canada's combat efforts into Syria?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that the government will soon table a motion to extend the security mission against the so-called Islamic State, because it poses a threat to international security and our security. This terrorist group has made threats against Canadians and is responsible for inspiring the terrorist attacks on Canadian soil last year.

Canadians do not sit on the sidelines when it comes to important missions to defend our security and international security. We have a duty to take action and we will continue to take action.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec has joined the growing chorus against Bill C-51, criticizing the federal government's unilateral approach and the impact Bill C-51 will have on Quebecers' fundamental rights. The federal government has a responsibility to consult the provinces on such fundamental issues.

Will the Conservatives agree to our request to hear from three Quebec ministers in committee, namely the ministers of justice, public security and Canadian intergovernmental affairs?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have already had the opportunity to meet with my Quebec counterpart, Minister Lise Thériault, and talk to her about the measures—the balanced bill—that we want to put in place to protect Canadians from the terrorist threat.

We are going to continue working not only with the provinces, but also with police forces. That is one reason why it is so important to share information. I assured her that the federal government would

share information with the provincial and municipal police forces to protect Canadians from the terrorist threat.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the past 15 months, job growth has dropped to the lowest it has been in nearly 40 years. Last year, the number of temporary jobs grew by 2.3%, while the number of permanent jobs grew by only 0.1%. Where are the permanent jobs and what is the government doing to improve its record when it comes to creating good jobs?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only plan the Liberal Party has for jobs is to increase taxes. The companies that hire and the workers who do the work know that the budget will not balance itself.

Our job creation plan has already created 1.2 million new jobs, 85% of which are full-time positions. We are cutting taxes for job creators and workers. It worked before. We have the best job creation record in the G7, and we are going to continue in that direction.

● (1425)

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's record is 15 months of standard job creation, the longest streak of job mediocrity in four decades. The late Jim Flaherty said in his budget plans that building infrastructure is the most cost-effective way to drive jobs and growth. He also said income splitting for the wealthy is too costly and unfair, and it does nothing for growth.

Will the Conservatives listen to Mr. Flaherty's words, cancel income splitting for the wealthy, and replace that \$1.5 billion that they have chopped from build Canada for municipalities?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we came to government, we have continually cut taxes for Canadians, whether it was cutting the GST not once but twice, whether it was introducing income splitting for pensioners or whether it was introducing tax cuts for businesses and job creators.

Now we are cutting taxes for families with kids. Every single family with children under the age of 18 will benefit, whether it is our income-splitting measures which will help two million families, as the PBO said, or it is our universal child care benefit.

They want to raise taxes and they want to spend money, they want to drive our economy into the ground. We are going to support Canadian families.

Oral Questions

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the million jobs the Conservatives brag about were three and four and five years ago. Last year's job numbers were down from the year before, and the year before was also down from the year before that.

Now retail is in trouble. Manufacturing just lost 20,000 more jobs. The energy sector is negative.

From the G20 globally to Premier Wall in Saskatchewan and Mayor Nenshi in Calgary, the prescription is more investment in infrastructure. Will the government put the money back into build Canada and drive more jobs and growth right now?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the worst thing we could do for jobs is to follow the Liberal plan to increase taxes, which is the only thing the Liberals have offered. That would make it more difficult for business owners and families, both of whom know that the Liberal leader is completely out to lunch when he says that the budget will balance itself.

We have balanced the budget here, and we are helping families and small businesses balance their budgets by lowering their tax burden. That is why we have 1.2 million net new jobs; 85% full-time, two-thirds in high-wage sectors. We are getting it done for jobs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will ask for a little order at the far end of the chamber. It is increasingly difficult to hear the minister.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Bar Association is not the only one worried about the impact that Bill C-51 will have on our rights and freedoms.

In a letter to the Conservative ministers, the Government of Quebec denounced the fact that Bill C-51 gives CSIS "such vast powers, including the possibility to take certain actions that violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms".

What does the Conservative government plan to do to address these entirely legitimate concerns?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows very well, our government intends to continue to hold consultations in this parliamentary process.

[English]

This is obviously a very important bill that has far-reaching implications. This is why we are waiting for the process to conclude with regard to the ongoing testimony from experts who are appearing before this very important parliamentary committee on the bill. We will await full input, including the input of the hon. member.

[Translation]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time the Conservatives have alienated the provinces by trying to impose flawed, unbalanced legislation. Just think of Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill that the Conservative government imposed on Quebec, despite the fact that the bill would lead to overcrowded prisons and cost the provinces tens of millions of dollars.

When will the Conservatives stop imposing bills on the provinces that they want no part of, without even consulting them first?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as I have already said, I had the opportunity to meet with Quebec's public security minister, Lise Thériault.

The Quebec government, like the Government of Canada, recognizes the importance of adopting effective measures to confront the terrorist threat. That is why we introduced Bill C-51, a bill that has targeted, effective measures to track terrorists.

I invite my colleague to follow the committee proceedings. The sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent is appearing before the committee this evening, and I invite the member to listen to her evidence.

• (1430)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. Bill C-51 is so problematic that even groups that normally support the Conservatives, like the National Firearms Association, are speaking out against it.

When the government has lost even some of its closest allies because it is threatening the rights and freedoms of Canadians, it is time for it to reconsider what it is fighting for.

What will it take for the minister to stop ramming this dangerous bill through Parliament, and to get him to stop and listen to Canadians?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member forgets that the jihadi terrorists have declared war on us.

He has forgotten that, on October 20, there was a terrorist attack, although those members will not call it that. They do not want to call a cat a cat. It was a terrorist attack that took place on October 20 in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, as well as in this very place.

That is why our first duty is to take a responsible and balanced approach to protect the rights and freedoms of Canadians against the international jihadi terrorist threats.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives came here to change Ottawa, but it seems like Ottawa has actually changed them.

There was a time when the Conservatives would have been the first to speak up against legislation that so profoundly threatens our rights and freedoms, but now they champion it.

Oral Questions

Canadians have been clear. Bill C-51 needs a full study and amendments, not a rubber stamp by Conservative MPs. Will the minister do the right thing, listen to the voices of thousands of Canadians and stop this bad bill?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that there is no security, and there is no liberty without security.

Why would the NDP oppose reasonable measures to protect Canadians from terrorists? What about cutting criminalization of terrorism, or just preventing high-risk travellers from getting on to an airplane to conduct terrorist attacks? This is not the Canadian way.

We have tabled a responsible bill, and we are eager to hear witnesses, like the sister of Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. Why does the NDP not listen too?

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services was found guilty for interfering politically in a project to help friends of the Conservative Party, but she has not really come clean with Canadians, and a lot of questions remain unanswered.

What did happen to that letter from the MP for Thornhill? Was it really lost, or did the Conservatives deep-six it? There are also allegations that the minister interfered in other projects. I will be bringing this issue to the ethics committee.

It is a simple question. Will the Conservatives work with us to get to the bottom of these serious allegations, or will they continue to cover up for the very ethically challenged minister?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister acted within good faith and within the discretionary authority that was available to her. The main goal was to improve accessibility for people with disabilities to a community centre.

With respect to the ethics committee, I suspect the ethics committee might also want to take a look at the inappropriate mailings of the NDP, which have cost taxpayers \$2.7 million. We might also want to look at the illegal \$350,000 that NDP members accepted in campaign contributions, or the fact that they were charged \$40,000 for illegal robocalls. I suspect the House of Commons, which is soon going to be garnishing their wages, will help us deal with that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have the right to know the truth. The report from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner could not answer all the questions about funding for the Markham community centre. The minister even received a letter from the Minister of the Environment asking her to fund the project. Oddly enough, that letter has disappeared.

When correspondence between two ministers disappears, that always raises suspicions. Can the minister help us find that letter and get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always believed that this project to improve access to the Markham centre for people with disabilities was valid and in the public interest.

I can assure the member that I co-operated fully for the three years that the investigation was under way.

* * *

● (1435)

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program is still a mess because of the Conservatives' mismanagement. The new Microsoft Canada training centre in Vancouver was supposed to provide 400 new jobs, but only 20 out of those 400 jobs will be offered to Canadians. The other positions will be filled by recruiting temporary foreign workers.

Can the minister explain why he is once again allowing the temporary foreign worker program to be used against the interests of the Canadian labour force?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our reforms seek to ensure that Canadian jobs go to Canadians and that the temporary foreign worker program is used as a last resort to fill needs that Canadians are not available to meet. That is why we limited the percentage of work for which a company can find temporary foreign workers. We also put financial penalties and even prison sentences in place for those who disobey these rules.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Really, Mr. Speaker. When the Conservatives promised to ensure that jobs in Canada would go to Canadians first, who would have thought they meant only 5% of the jobs? They are allowing Microsoft to hire foreign workers without any scrutiny, even though Microsoft promised that only 20 of its 400 jobs would go to Canadians.

These kinds of exemptions make a joke out of the government's reforms. When are the Conservatives going to get serious about overhauling the temporary foreign worker program?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that former NDP MLA Gregor Robertson was at the announcement welcoming the opening of this centre. It is a training centre. We should all be proud of the fact that Canada is now attracting investment and growth from some of the world's largest technology players. That is because our immigration system is working. That is because our training and education system is working.

Canada has a workforce in this sector, as in others, that is second to none in the world, and that is showing in Vancouver and elsewhere.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that absolutely shows that the centre is being used to launder people through it, and only 5% of the jobs are going to Canadians.

In December, the former minister for Employment and Social Development announced he was hiring 400 additional public servants to deal with the lengthy delays in EI processing. This was, we were told, a result of “the important work” done by his parliamentary secretary. However, Canadians who would like to see this report are out of luck as the government has not made it public.

When will the minister table that report so Canadians can—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Employment.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my excellent parliamentary secretary for his work on this and other important files.

Over the last 10 years, we have increased the efficiency by 42% in the EI program. Two-thirds of claims are now fully or partially automated. The result is that now the majority of EI claimants receive their pay within 28 days of making their claim, and that number is on the rise.

The reality is that our goal is to cut taxes to create more jobs so EI recipients have the opportunities that are before them to get out into the workforce.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today there is yet another report showing that Canada's job market has flatlined. The report shows that annualized job growth in Canada has stayed below 1% for 15 months in a row. Outside of a full recession, that is Canada's longest stretch of low growth in jobs in almost 40 years.

Canadians are looking for a response from the government. They need action. Why does the government continue to refuse to provide Canadians with a plan for jobs and growth, and a budget?

• (1440)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan; it is called the low-tax plan. That is precisely why the Liberals cannot recognize it, because they cannot recognize anything called low tax. Their only idea on jobs is to raise taxes on people who create them. That is the equivalent of thinking that a budget will simply balance itself.

We have lowered taxes and created \$1.2 million net new jobs, 85% of them full-time and two-thirds in high wage sectors. We will continue to lower taxes and continue to increase employment.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budgets do not write themselves either. It takes a government with a real plan for jobs and growth.

The report shows that in the past year most of the job growth has been in temporary work, not full-time jobs. The evidence is clear. The Bank of Canada, the PBO, the TD Bank and the CIBC all agree that Canada's job market is much weaker than our unemployment rate actually suggests. The Bank of Canada has taken action and has lowered interest rates.

When will the Conservatives stop dilly-dallying, stop dithering and actually provide Canada with a budget, with a plan for jobs and growth?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should tell his leader that budgets do not balance themselves. It takes hard work and discipline to do that.

On jobs, we have a three-T plan: trade, training and tax cuts. Guess what? It is working, and 1.2 million net new jobs have resulted from lower taxes, increased trade and more training for our young people so they can realize their full potential in our economy.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are trampling on the taxpayer bill of rights.

Article 6 states that, “You have the right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information.” A survey conducted by the Canada Revenue Agency showed that ever since all the service counters closed, a company has to call three times on average before getting a response. When companies did manage to reach someone, they were given incorrect information one out of four times.

Is that what the minister calls accurate, complete and timely information?

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these results are unacceptable. We agree that when Canadian individuals and businesses contact the Canada Revenue Agency, we expect them to be provided with correct information. We encourage people who believe they have received incorrect information from the CRA to make a formal complaint. We expect the CRA to continuously improve the quality and accuracy of the telephone services it is providing. We have implemented several measures to improve the quality of services offered by the Canada Revenue Agency.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, senior civil servants are warning the Conservatives not to strip environmental requirements from infrastructure budgets. Scrapping these criteria would be short sighted.

Oral Questions

Green infrastructure saves us billions in the long run by ensuring our communities can adapt to growing extreme weather events and climate change, but cabinet seems to be considering scrapping it.

Will the minister commit to retaining green infrastructure criteria in the upcoming federal budget?

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, that is already in the building Canada plan. A wide area of waste water, waste management, and disaster mitigation projects are eligible under the new building Canada fund and the gas tax fund. Green infrastructure is also a specific category under the new building Canada fund. It is up to the provinces and municipalities to prioritize the projects they want.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question.

The Prime Minister reneged on Canada's signature and withdrew from the Kyoto protocol. For 10 years this government has gutted our environmental laws. Senior officials are now sounding the alarm because infrastructure projects would no longer be subject to environmental criteria, which help cities adapt to the effects of climate change.

Will the minister be clear and unequivocally promise to keep these environmental criteria?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we were pleased to introduce the largest and most substantial infrastructure plan in Canada's history. It is unprecedented. The criteria can be found on the Infrastructure Canada site.

Of course, the Liberals did nothing when they were in power. They would like to try again, but we will be back. We will continue to invest in infrastructure.

We will continue to work very hard. The criteria are available on the Infrastructure Canada site.

* * *

•(1445)

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is another example of the Conservatives' environmental mismanagement. According to internal documents, \$24 million of taxpayers' money was wasted on ads to promote the Keystone pipeline. The Conservatives used \$24 million belonging to Canadians to help their friends in the oil industry—the richest companies in the country—and for what? Nothing. What a waste of public funds. The Conservatives will stop at nothing to please their friends in the oil industry.

Why not let the oil companies do their own advertising? Why is the government subsidizing them?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to promote Canada as a destination for business investment and responsible resource development. It is our job to show key international markets that Canada is a world-class, environmentally responsible energy partner. We will not apologize for promoting the lifeblood of the Canadian economy on the world stage.

[*English*]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, internal documents show the Conservatives blew \$24 million on U.S. ads to promote the Keystone XL pipeline, but subway ads and online pop-ups cannot mask their poor environmental record. In fact, a survey showed that no one even knew what the ads were all about.

That is \$24 million of our tax dollars to advertise for some of the richest companies in Canada. It seems the Conservative government will do anything to help its rich oil buddies. Why can the oil companies not do their own advertising? Why the subsidy?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is our job to raise awareness in key international markets and demonstrate that Canada is a world-class, environmentally responsible energy partner, particularly with the United States.

When NDP members go to Washington, they attack Canadian workers. They call the oil sands a disease. They oppose projects that have been approved by independent regulatory reviews. Canadians know that the NDP has no leg to stand on when it comes to defending Canada's natural resources. We will.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government continues to stand up for hard-working Canadians. We proposed in the Speech From the Throne that consumers should only have to pay for television channels they actually want to watch. Last week we fulfilled that commitment, and Canadians will finally be able to buy only the channels they actually want.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage please tell the House more about this good news for all Canadian families?

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that great question. Our government has said all along that Canadians should not have to pay for channels they do not want in order to get the ones they do. As we stated in our Speech From the Throne, we promised to provide consumers with more choice in channels, and we have, in fact, delivered. This will not only give more choice to consumers but will also help Canadian families make the best decisions on how to spend their hard-earned dollars.

This is a win-win, and we are very proud on this side of the House to have delivered this wonderful news.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

SPORTS

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were horrified to learn that young athletes were the victims of a national ski coach. To date, 11 victims have reported incidents that occurred over a period of eight years. That is extremely troubling.

Can the minister tell the House what measures have been taken within the national sports federations to protect our young people? Can he tell us whether his department is investigating Alpine Canada?

[English]

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, safety for those participating in Canada's sports system is a priority for the government. Also, the government is working with national sports organizations, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Paralympic Committee to make sure that athletes are safe when they participate in sports. However, this matter is before the courts, and that is why we cannot comment on that.

* * *

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during a visit to northern Ontario, the President of the Treasury Board said that the government would not invest in the Ring of Fire project. According to him, the economic conditions are not right.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce cannot believe it. The government's explanations do not make sense. The government should be encouraging development opportunities, not stifling them. The people of northern Ontario deserve respect and good jobs.

Will the minister support them?

• (1450)

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to developing the Ring of Fire.

Last week, with my provincial counterpart, I had the pleasure of announcing a study on a service corridor for the regional community, which will support mining and increase accessibility for first nations communities. We will continue to work closely with the Province of Ontario on infrastructure projects that support mining and increase accessibility for remote communities.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the President of the Treasury Board was in northern Ontario last week to lecture northern businesses about why he does not think the Conservatives should do anything to unlock the potential of the Ring of Fire. Northern Ontarians and first nations communities, already fed up with the delays, were not amused. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce called the minister's comments perplexing and underlined that Conservative delays are holding up thousands of jobs for northern Ontarians.

Does the Minister of Natural Resources agree with his colleague that northern Ontarians should take a hike?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the northern Ontario NDP members that northern Ontarians want to take a hike. Let us be clear about that.

We remain committed to supporting the province in its development of the Ring of Fire. Most recently, I was joined by my provincial counterpart at the world's largest mining conference in Toronto to announce a regional community corridor study in the Ring of Fire. This is a major step forward for first nations and for the region.

Sadly, the New Democrats vote against this and in fact any measures that support or reflect the values or priorities of northern Ontarians.

* * *

[Translation]

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Friday was the International Day of La Francophonie, but here in Canada, people were not in the mood to celebrate.

After all, in the past year, the government appointed a unilingual anglophone foreign affairs minister and made cuts to Radio-Canada's broadcasting of French-language content and regional news. These are just two small examples of their mismanagement. It is shameful.

When will the government finally do something to address the setbacks for the French language in this country instead of contributing to them?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we actually had a very good reason to celebrate the International Day of La Francophonie, which was on March 20. Canada, with the help of New Brunswick and Quebec, managed to get Michaëlle Jean elected to lead the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie.

Now it is time to build on the legacy left by Abdou Diouf when it comes to good governance, transparency and the rule of law. Ms. Jean presented an economic strategy that will further propel the Francophonie into the 21st century, and we should be proud of that. This will bring many future benefits.

Oral Questions

[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday I was in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound listening to residents about their hopes, concerns, and priorities. What I heard over and over again was shock and embarrassment about their Conservative MP telling Muslim women to stay the blank where they came from. At the Owen Sound Muslim centre, community leaders told us that they have never felt more afraid.

Will the Prime Minister denounce this blatantly racist statement?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has recognized that his comments were inappropriate and has apologized.

The fact is that immigration has built this great country, and under this government, Canada has enjoyed the highest sustained levels of immigration in Canadian history.

The government's position is clear. We believe covering one's face during a citizenship ceremony, at the very time one is being welcomed into the Canadian family, is contrary to the Canadian values of openness and equality. The majority of Canadians, including new Canadians, agree with our position.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a worrying pattern forming. Canadians were also outraged when the Conservative member for New Brunswick Southwest publicly railed against the government paying “whities” to stay home while companies bring in “brown people” as temporary foreign workers.

These ugly and racist comments were completely unacceptable, but the Prime Minister's refusal to publicly condemn them is an abdication of his responsibility to set an example for this country. Why will the Prime Minister not personally denounce these racist comments?

Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, those members have recognized that their comments were inappropriate and have apologized for their comments.

Canada is one of the most welcoming countries in the world, and as the Prime Minister has stated, Canada's diversity is one of our greatest strengths. Under our Conservative government, we have the highest levels of sustained immigration ever, and I am proud to be a part of the most diverse caucus in parliamentary history.

* * *

●(1455)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now know that problems related to pyrrhotite are not confined to the Mauricie region. Experts have confirmed cases in Mont-Laurier, in north Montreal and elsewhere in Quebec. It is no longer just a local problem, and the magnitude of the disaster could be even bigger.

The government says that it has tightened the standard on aggregates in concrete, but the standard has not yet been published. Families that have to repair their house foundations have to foot a

huge bill. Why are the Conservatives stubbornly refusing to provide financial help to pyrrhotite victims?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is well aware, the pyrrhotite problem falls under provincial jurisdiction. The Government of Quebec has a provincial program to provide financial help to property owners dealing with damage caused by pyrrhotite. I invite anyone concerned about this problem to contact the Société d'habitation du Québec.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the people of Quebec have been waiting for the new armoury for seven years, but they will have to keep waiting because last week, we found out that the work that has taken over Place George V will not be done in time for Canada's 150th anniversary in July 2017. The 150th anniversary celebrations will take place among scaffolding and orange construction cones. What a delight the celebrations will be.

This reeks of ad hockery, and Quebec deserves better. Why did the Conservative government wait so long to start work on the new armoury?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to rehabilitate the armoury, and we will keep that promise. It will take time, but we are doing our best to finish it as soon as possible.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, jihadi terrorists have declared war on us. They have specifically targeted Canada and have urged their supporters to attack disbelieving Canadians “in any manner”.

There is no greater responsibility for any government than the protection of its citizens, especially from those who would do us or our families harm. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update the House on the government's plan to further confront and degrade the terrorist group ISIL?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course ISIL has declared war on Canada. No reasonable person or political party would dispute this, which takes us to the position of the NDP. It has said that the fact that ISIL has declared war on Canada is “preposterous”. The only thing preposterous is the NDP continuing to deny the obvious truth that ISIL is a serious threat that requires a serious response. This is why we will not sit on the sidelines and why we will soon table a motion to extend and expand Canada's mission against these terrorists.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative cuts at Correctional Services Canada endanger the safety and security of the women and men who work inside the walls of our penitentiaries.

The recent announcement about closing the Shepody Healing Centre in Dorchester, New Brunswick, a fully accredited psychiatric hospital, continues this trend and puts Canadians at greater risk. The hospital gave the staff the tools they needed to manage some of Canada's most difficult and dangerous psychiatric cases.

Why is the minister being irresponsible and closing this important psychiatric facility, which is important to the safety of Canadians?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

On the contrary, we are maintaining psychiatric care at the Shepody Healing Centre. Not only are we maintaining it, but we are enhancing it. From now on, every inmate who needs psychiatric care will have it 24/7. It is part of our mental health strategy.

However, let us be clear: inmates with mental health problems should be in hospitals and not in penitentiaries.

That is why we must continue to work with the provinces.

* * *

• (1500)

[*English*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are poking the Newfoundland and Labrador bear over shrimp quotas, and failing to put coastal communities first.

Last year, inshore harvesters lost 26% of their quota compared to only 5% for the offshore fleet, and despite concerns about declining shrimp stock, we are hearing that there might not be quota cuts. The science does not add up. We do not even know what that science is.

Will the Conservative government commit now to the principle of adjacency, that those closest to the resource must benefit from the resource?

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Let me say that as someone with hearing loss, Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate a question from this member. However, there seems to be no correlation between the volume of the question and the quality of the question.

With respect to the question, when it comes to fish harvesting decisions, we always look for the right balance between maximizing economic opportunities for fishermen and ensuring sustainable fisheries.

Our management decisions are always based on science, and we share this science with both the inshore and offshore industry to ensure they have an opportunity to comment. We are waiting for that input.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight we will vote on the respect for communities act, which would give residents, law enforcement, and community leaders a say when safe drug injection sites want to open in their areas.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have voted against giving communities this say, while the Liberal leader wants to open more injection sites across the country.

We all know that drug injection houses allow the use of dangerous and addictive drugs. We also know that drugs promote family breakup. They tear families apart, promote criminal behaviour, and ruin lives.

Can the Minister of Health please update the House on the latest developments on this important legislation?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right in saying that these dangerous and addictive drugs do tear families apart. They promote criminal behaviour and they destroy communities.

The Liberal leader's pledge to blindly open drug injection houses in neighbourhoods is not only disturbing, it is risky for the health of Canadians.

As Minister of Health, I will make sure that communities have a say when injection sites want to open, and we will, of course, most importantly, continue to support treatment and recovery programs that work to get those who are addicted to drugs off drugs, and help them lead recovered and drug-free lives.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the member for Beauce said that he was fed up with the National Assembly's unanimous declarations. The member, who is a minister, showed a clear lack of respect for Quebec's parliament.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether his minister was speaking on behalf of the Conservative government? If he was, is the federal government's new policy to tell Quebec's government to take a hike? If he was not, will the Prime Minister reprimand his minister for his lack of judgment and apologize to the National Assembly?

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 the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, I am pleased to inform the House that we work with all the provinces and respect their jurisdictions.

Routine Proceedings

Reciprocity is important when it comes to jurisdictions, and we work well with our partners in the Quebec government to advance all the province's files. That is our objective.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, in February alone, 14,000 Albertans lost their jobs. Then last week, another 1000 job losses were announced in the energy sector.

Late last year, the Prime Minister emphatically stated that it would be crazy to impose carbon emission standards given the fragility in the energy sector, but then he surprisingly told Peter Mansbridge that he was musing about a carbon levy.

When will Canadians hear more details about the Prime Minister's proposed multi-billion dollar, job-killing carbon tax, levy, tech fund, or whatever else he decides to call it?

• (1505)

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has been very clear on carbon tax.

We will not introduce the NDP or Liberal carbon tax.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, since coming into office in 2006, the government has spent nearly \$750 million on government advertising.

Some of it admittedly is quite helpful, such as informing Canadians of new programs, assuming that those programs actually exist, or health and safety risks. Others are pure shilling for the government agenda and partisan objectives.

Does the government that brought us the Federal Accountability Act not believe in protecting taxpayers from using public dollars that advance partisan ends?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure his constituents appreciate his sarcasm, but the truth is that we have an obligation to ensure that citizens are aware of government programs that may affect them in their everyday lives.

We will continue to advertise these excellent government programs, which are in fact increasing job opportunities, increasing infrastructure, and doing the right things for Canadians. We are proud of that, and we will advertise the details to Canadian citizens.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, German Chancellor Angela Merkel urged the public to turn their backs on Pegida:

So I say to all those who go to such demonstrations: do not follow those who have called the rallies. Because all too often they have prejudice, coldness, even hatred in their hearts.

Next Saturday, Pegida Quebec, the first chapter of the movement in North America, is holding a rally in Montreal's Little Maghreb.

Will the Prime Minister echo Angela Merkel and unequivocally urge the people of Quebec not to take part in this rally?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we have important values and principles in Canada. Respecting rights and freedoms and gender equality are important principles. Although people are free to take part in demonstrations, we encourage them to abide by the rules of democracy.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Wade MacLauchlan, Premier of Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CERTIFICATES OF NOMINATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 111.1 (1), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a certificate of nomination with biographical notes for the proposed appointment of Joe Friday to the position of Public Sector Integrity Commissioner.

I request that the nomination be referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's responses to 23 petitions.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today, signed by a number of citizens of Canada. Petitioners want to see tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. They are also asking that we redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death to vehicular manslaughter.

RAIL SAFETY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have petitions signed by another one hundred members of my community in Parkdale—High Park on the issue of rail safety. Petitioners note the alarming number of tank cars rolling through our neighbourhoods, but also that the budget for rail safety has been cut by the government by more than 20%. They want safer, tougher standards for tank cars. They want to restore the budget to oversee safety management systems. They want the industry to explore ways to reduce the volatility of Bakken crude, including partial refinement at source. They also want both the railways and the shippers to carry sufficient insurance to cover the cost of an accident spill or derailment through densely populated neighbourhoods like ours.

• (1510)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition calling on the House of Commons to ensure that our nation's obligation to care for our veterans and their families is upheld. They ask that this be done by strengthening the new veterans charter to reflect this commitment, ensuring that veterans have access to veterans services by reopening nine closed regional veterans affairs offices, reviewing the fairness of lump sum payouts to veterans made under the new veterans charter, and ensuring that military personnel and veterans have timely and adequate access to mental health services on an as-needed basis.

ANAPHYLAXIS

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of dozens of Canadians who are calling on the Government of Canada to enact a policy to reduce the risk for anaphylactic passengers using Canadian airlines.

[*Translation*]

MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions today on behalf of my constituents.

The first petition calls on the government to take immediate action to increase investments in mental health services for members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP.

AGRICULTURE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the government to respect the rights of small family farmers to store, trade and use seeds.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to present a petition signed by some young activists from Development and Peace I met with a few weeks ago.

They are quite concerned about small farmers, especially in the south, being able to use their own seeds. These farmers are up against industrial companies that are patenting all kinds of things. They are calling on the federal government to take international action and to protect the rights of small farmers.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to present four petitions signed by my constituents in Beauce.

The petitioners are calling on the Canadian government to protect the rights of small farmers in the global south to preserve, use and freely exchange seeds, which would enable them to combat hunger and poverty in these countries.

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I join other members of the House in presenting a petition on cuts to our postal service that have been taking place all across Canada.

Petitioners are calling on the government to reverse its decision to eliminate home delivery for millions of urban customers and slashing rural hours, which would unfairly impact seniors and people with disabilities.

My constituents from Surrey North would also like to voice their concerns in regard to the postal cuts that have been happening across the country.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I table a petition signed by many constituents of Winnipeg North.

The petitioners call upon the government to adopt international aid policies that would support small family farmers, especially women, and recognize their vital role in the struggle against hunger and poverty. It deals in good part with the importance of the farmers in the global south to preserve, use, and freely exchange seeds.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to rise today to present two petitions.

Routine Proceedings

The first is a petition with respect to the inaction of our federal government to address climate change and the impacts of climate change on the day-to-day lives of Canadians. The federal government withdrew from Kyoto. It cancelled the home retrofit program, which helped cut emissions and the energy bills of families. It failed to deliver the public transit strategy to get cars off the road.

The petitioners feel that the NDP is the only party with a plan to protect the environment and grow the economy.

• (1515)

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is on behalf of constituents in my riding of Newton—North Delta and the surrounding areas.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to create a ministry for people with disabilities and mental health issues. They feel there are very limited after-hour and weekend programs offered to those with disabilities and mental health issues.

Like these petitioners, I want to see real leadership on mental health. We need to work with communities to fight stigma, bolster recovery, ensure better access to treatment, and reduce disparities in support and services across the country. The New Democrats recognize the importance of ensuring that Canadians who live with mental illness have access to the support they need.

PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from residents in my riding who are concerned about retirement security and the fact that fewer than 40% of all employees are covered by a workplace pension plan. They believe, as do we on this side of the House, that every Canadian deserves a safe, secure, fully portable and predictable pension.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Government of Canada to work with the provincial and territorial governments to increase pension benefits under the Canada and Quebec pension plans, and implement a fully funded plan to phase in increases without delay.

VISAS

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition on behalf of members in my community calling upon the Government of Canada to secure a 10-year visa deal with China.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by dozens of citizens from B. C. and Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the federal government to support investments in modern agriculture, including plant biotechnology, as a way to combat food shortages around the world. They note that with rapid population growth, the world would require double the current amount of food production in just 50 years. They also note that safe modern plant breeding techniques would provide groundbreaking research jobs for Canadian scientists and that Canada could continue to be a world leader in science innovation.

I urge the federal government to carefully consider this petition.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of the riding of Trinity—Spadina and other ridings in the downtown core of Toronto. The petition deals with the tripartite agreement that regulates jet and airplane use on the Toronto waterfront.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to refrain from reopening and amending the tripartite agreement governing the Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport and the Toronto Port Authority to allow jet aircraft. This is an issue that runs counter to the \$1.5 billion investment to make the Toronto waterfront more beautiful.

These petitioners ask the federal government not to allow jets that would destroy that investment, unbalance the extraordinary beauty of Toronto's waterfront and industrialize it unnecessarily.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1015, 1016 and 1019.

[Text]

Question No. 1015—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the Department of National Defence: (a) when did the department implement parking fees for employees at CFB Halifax; (b) why did the department implement parking fees for employees at CFB Halifax; (c) are employees at any other military base in Canada charged parking fees; (d) if the answer in (c) is affirmative, what are those bases and their fee structures; (e) if the answer in (c) is negative, what are the reasons for which parking fees are not being charged elsewhere; (f) what other options were considered before parking fees for employees at CFB Halifax were implemented and why were these options rejected; (g) what geographic area was used to determine fair market value for parking spaces at CFB Halifax; and (h) what were the total costs associated with installing payment infrastructure at CFB Halifax?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the date was October 1, 2014.

With regard to (b), the department implemented parking fees in order to be compliant with Defence administrative order directives, DAODs, 1004-0 and 1004-1, and Treasury Board custodial parking policy.

With regard to (c), parking fees are not uncommon across Government of Canada properties and assets, including properties of Public Works and Government Services Canada, Canadian Heritage, Public Safety Canada and Environment Canada, all in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines. CFB Halifax is the first base to fully implement these directives.

With regard to (d), the question is non-applicable.

With regard to (e), most bases in Canada are located in remote locations where fair market value, FMV, for parking has been or will undoubtedly be assessed at \$0.00. For DND establishments located in commercially developed centres, it should be expected that appropriate charges for parking will be established in the near future.

With regard to (f), as the current parking fee structures comply with the DAODs and Treasury Board policy, no other options were considered.

With regard to (g), the fees for parking spaces at CFB Halifax were determined through a fair market value study conducted by an independent contractor hired through Public Works and Government Services Canada.

With regard to (h), the total incremental costs associated with installing payment infrastructure at CFB Halifax amount to approximately \$460,000.

Question No. 1016—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the Department of National Defence (DND): (a) when did DND become aware of complaints from Private Wallace Fowler, Service No. R29083886, regarding racism and discrimination experienced at CFB Borden, CFB Esquimalt and CFB Trenton; (b) what action did DND take to address these complaints; (c) what assistance or support was offered to Mr. Fowler and his family to deal with the emotional, financial and professional impact of their experiences; and (d) under what category was Mr. Fowler released from the Canadian Armed Forces, and how was that category determined?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the Privacy Act, DND is not authorized to disclose the personal information of Mr. Fowler unless we obtain his consent or there is legal authority to release such information.

Question No. 1019—**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims :**

With regard to temporary foreign workers: (a) how many workers will reach the end of their four year eligibility period in 2015, broken down by (i) total, (ii) month when their eligibility will end; (b) how many workers will reach the end of their four year eligibility period on April 1; and (c) how many workers are expected to receive an exemption from the four-year rule because of the deal concluded with the Alberta government allowing workers to stay if they have an immigration application being processed?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, insofar as Citizenship and Immigration Canada, CIC, is concerned, with regard to (a) and (b), CIC is currently unable to provide the precise number of temporary foreign workers, TFWs, who would reach the end of their four-year eligibility in 2015. Without exit controls in place, it is impossible to determine how many foreign workers remain in Canada at any given time. Also, for the reason noted in (c), and because TFWs currently in Canada may choose to avail themselves of some of the pathways to permanent residency for which they may be eligible, any estimate would be purely speculative and potentially inaccurate.

With regard to (c), it is not possible to provide concrete data, as the number of individuals who could qualify for the exemption from the four-year rule will depend on who the province intends to nominate, and who is found eligible. CIC has worked closely with the Alberta government in the design of this initiative to emphasize the temporary nature of the entry of temporary foreign workers into Canada, while providing flexibility to individuals the Province of

Routine Proceedings

Alberta intends to nominate for permanent residence, and will continue to do so during implementation. It is important to note that the temporary foreign worker program is intended to address temporary labour and skills shortages and to ensure Canadians are given the first chance at available jobs. The Government of Canada is committed to long-term prosperity and economic growth.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 950 to 952, 954 to 957, 959, 960, 965 to 970, 975 to 977, 983 to 986, 991, 992, 994, 995, 997, 1000, 1003, 1004, 1006 to 1012, 1017, 1018 and 1020 to 1030 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Text*]

Question No. 950—**Mr. Ted Hsu:**

With regard to the 11 billion dollars in new investments in science, technology and innovation (STI) since 2006 identified in Seizing Canada's Moment: Moving Forward in Science, Technology and Innovation 2014 and in the Economic Action Plan 2014, broken down by fiscal year from 2006 to 2014 inclusive and by federal department or agency: what was (a) the set of STI initiatives, projects, programs to which funds were allocated; (b) the amount of funds allocated to each of these initiatives, projects, programs; and (c) the amount and year of disbursement for each of these initiatives, projects, programs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 951—**Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:**

With regard to government funding allocated in the ridings of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, Louis-Hébert, Louis-Saint-Laurent, Québec and Beauport—Limoilou, broken down by department, agency, Crown corporation, any other government entity or program in fiscal years 2004–2005 to 2014–2015 inclusively: (a) what is the total amount of this funding; (b) how many full-time and part time jobs were created as a direct result of this funding; (c) what are the total budget cuts both in dollars and as a percentage of the total budget; (d) and how many positions were cut between May 2011 and today; and (e) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired between May 2011 and today?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***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)

Question No. 954—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With respect to data, information, or privacy breaches with respect to government departments, institutions and agencies for 2014: (a) how many breaches have occurred in total, broken down by (i) department, institution, or agency, (ii) the number of individuals affected by the breach; (b) of those breaches identified in (a), how many have been reported to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, broken down by (i) department, institution or agency, (ii) the number of individuals affected by the breach; and (c) how many breaches are known to have led to criminal activity such as fraud or identity theft, broken down by department, institution or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 955—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With respect to staffing at the Department of Veterans Affairs for the period from 2006-2014: (a) how many caseworkers were employed by the department, broken down by (i) specific work locations, (ii) program activities, (iii) sub-program activities, (iv) sub-sub-program activities, (v) year; and (b) what is the departmental target for caseloads for each caseworker, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 956—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With respect to research conducted or funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs: (a) how much has been spent each year on such research; and (b) what is the (i) name, (ii) description, (iii) purpose of each research project, including duration, broken down by year for the period from 2006-2014?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 957—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With respect to staffing at the Department of Veterans Affairs: for each Veterans Affairs member whose job was eliminated during the period from 2006 to 2014, broken down by year, what are the (i) specific work locations, (ii) program activities, (iii) sub-program activities, (iv) sub-sub-program activities, (v) job descriptions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 959—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to labour mobility entry portals under international trade and investment agreements signed by Canada, and currently in force: what is the number of individual entrants, (a) broken down by each trade or investment agreement; and (b) under each agreement identified in (a), for the last (i) 5 years, (ii) 10 years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 960—Mr. Don Davies:

With regard to government funding for each fiscal year from 2008 to 2014: what is the total amount allocated within the constituency of Vancouver Kingsway, specifying each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 965—Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the regions of Quebec since March 27, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contacts' reference numbers; (c) dates of contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 966—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to government communications since December 5, 2014: (a) for each press release containing the phrase "Harper government" issued by any government department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, what is the (i) headline or subject line, (ii) date, (iii) file or code-number, (iv) subject matter; (b) for each such press release, was it distributed (i) on the web site of the issuing department, agency, office, Crown corporation, or other government body, (ii) on Marketwire, (iii) on Canada Newswire, (iv) on any other commercial wire or distribution service, specifying which service; and (c) for each press release distributed by a commercial wire or distribution service mentioned in (b)(ii) through (b)(iv), what was the cost of using the service?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 967—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to ongoing litigation between the federal government and other Canadian governments (provincial or municipal): for each such case, (a) who are the parties, including interveners, if applicable; (b) what is the summary of the issue or issues in dispute; (c) what are the court docket numbers associated with the case; and (d) what have been the expenditures to date on each case?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 968—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to the backdrops used by the government for announcements since June 4, 2014: for each backdrop purchased, what was (a) the date when (i) the tender was issued for the backdrop, (ii) the contract was signed, (iii) the backdrop was delivered; (b) the cost of the backdrop; (c) the announcement for which the backdrop was used; (d) the department that paid for the backdrop; and (e) the date or dates on which the backdrop was used?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 969—Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:

With regard to government spending on Google adWords: (a) how much has each department spent since May 5, 2010; (b) what keywords were chosen; (c) what daily limits were set; (d) what was the cost of each keyword; (e) how many clicks were made per keyword; and (f) what are the titles, dates, and file numbers of any assessment carried out regarding the use of Google adWords since January 1, 2006?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 970—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Health Canada since March 28, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 975—Mr. Frank Valeriote:

With regard to materials prepared for past or current Parliamentary Secretaries or their staff from December 5, 2014, to present: for every briefing document or docket prepared, what is the (i) date, (ii) title or subject matter, (iii) department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 976—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to materials prepared for past or current Ministers or their staff from December 9, 2014, to present: for every briefing document or docket prepared, what is the (i) date, (ii) title or subject matter, (iii) department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 977—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Veterans Affairs Canada since June 4, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 983—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to government advertising: (a) how much has each department, agency, or Crown corporation spent to (i) purchase advertising on Facebook since June 4, 2014, (ii) purchase advertising on Xbox, Xbox 360, or Xbox One since June 5, 2014, (iii) purchase advertising on YouTube since January 1, 2011, (iv) promote tweets on Twitter since March 25, 2014; (b) for each individual advertising purchase, what was the (i) nature, (ii) purpose, (iii) target audience or demographic, (iv) cost; (c) what was the Media Authorization Number for each advertising purchase; and (d) what are the file numbers of all documents, reports, or memoranda concerning each advertising purchase or of any post-campaign assessment or evaluation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 984—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to government advertising: for each advertisement located in either the Air Canada Centre (Toronto) or the Bell Centre (Montreal) during the 2015 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Junior Hockey Championship, what is the (a) identification number, name or ADV number; (b) number of advertisements during a game, specifying the total number of times and the total length of time (periods of play), broken down by date and match for each advertisement; (c) total cost to place each advertisement, broken down by date and match; (d) criteria used to select each of the advertisement placements; (e) the arena for each advertisement, broken down by date and match; (f) total amount spent per arena, broken down by date and match; (g) the date that each individual run of the advertisement was confirmed, booked, or place with the host; and (h) the cost to produce each sign or placard use for the advertisement?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 985—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to government advertising: for each television advertisement that was aired during the 2015 International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) World Junior Hockey Championship, what is the (a) identification number, name or ADV number; (b) number of times each advertisement has aired during such a broadcast, specifying the total number of times and the total length of time (seconds or minutes), broken down by date and match for each advertisement; (c) total cost to air each advertisement, broken down by date and match; (d) criteria used to select each of the advertisement placements; (e) media outlet used to air each advertisement, broken down by date and match; (f) total amount spent per outlet, broken down by date and match; and (g) the date that each individual run of the advertisement was confirmed, booked, or placed with the network?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 986—**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to government participation in or support of trade shows, conventions, or exhibitions, what are the details of the participation in or financial support of trade shows, conventions, exhibitions, or other like events by departments, agencies, offices, or crown corporations, since January 1, 2010, giving (a) the nature of the participation or support, distinguishing (i) direct grants or contributions, (ii) advertising or promotional consideration, (iii) sponsorship, or (iv) the purchase or rental of an exhibition space or booth; (b) the dollar amount or value of the participation or support referred to in (a); and (c) the name, date, and location of the trade show, convention, exhibition, or other like event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 991—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces since June 4, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 992—**Ms. Joyce Murray:**

With regard to National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces: what are the details of all buildings or structures at Canadian Forces Bases, Canadian Forces Stations, or any other Canadian Forces establishment, that have been demolished since January 1, 2006, broken down by (i) the Base, Station, or other establishment on which it was located, (ii) the civic address or other location information, (iii) the name, description, and identifying number, if any, of the building or structure, (iv) the year in which the demolition was carried out, (v) the reason for which the demolition was carried out?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 994—**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:**

With regard to the government's commitment, on July 3, 2013, to resettle 1300 Syrian refugees: (a) how many Syrians have been granted refugee status in Canada since July 3, 2013; (b) how many Syrian refugees have been admitted to Canada from overseas since that date, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by month; (c) how many of the Syrian refugees admitted to Canada from overseas since that date have been government-sponsored, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by month; (d) how many of the Syrian refugees admitted to Canada from overseas since that date have been privately-sponsored, (i) in total, (ii) broken down by month; (e) of the government-sponsored Syrian refugees admitted to Canada from overseas since that date, how many were admitted from (i) Syria, (ii) Iraq, (iii) Jordan, (iv) Lebanon, (v) Turkey, (vi) elsewhere; (f) of the privately-sponsored Syrian refugees admitted to Canada from overseas since that date, how many were admitted from (i) Syria, (ii) Iraq, (iii) Jordan, (iv) Lebanon, (v) Turkey, (vi) elsewhere; (g) of the privately-sponsored Syrian refugees admitted to Canada from overseas since that date, how many were sponsored by (i) sponsorship agreement holders, (ii) groups of five, (iii) community sponsors; (h) how many applications to sponsor Syrian refugees privately have been received by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (i) in total, (ii) from sponsorship agreement holders, (iii) from groups of five, (iv) from community sponsors; (i) how many applications were received on behalf of Syrians seeking refugee status in Canada, (i) from January 1, 2011, until July 3, 2013, (ii) since July 3, 2013; (j) of the Syrians granted refugee status in Canada since July 3, 2013, how many applied from within Canada; (k) of the applications received on behalf of Syrians seeking refugee status in Canada (i) from January 1, 2011, until July 3, 2013, (ii) since July 3, 2013, how many remain in process; (l) what is the average processing time for applications received from January 1, 2011, until July 3, 2013, on behalf of Syrians seeking refugee status in Canada, (i) overall, (ii) for privately-sponsored refugee applicants, (iii) for government sponsored refugee applicants; (m) what is the average processing time for all applications received from January 1, 2011, until July 3, 2013, on behalf of individuals seeking refugee status in Canada, (i) overall, (ii) for privately-sponsored refugee applicants, (iii) for government sponsored refugee applicants; (n) what is the average processing time for applications received since July 3, 2013, on behalf of Syrians seeking refugee status in Canada, (i) overall, (ii) for privately-sponsored refugee applicants, (iii) for government sponsored refugee applicants; and (o) what is the average processing time for all applications received since July 3, 2013, on behalf of individuals seeking refugee status in Canada, (i) overall, (ii) for privately-sponsored refugee applicants, (iii) for government sponsored refugee applicants?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 995—Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:**

With regard to Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Express Entry program: (a) with whom did the government consult in regard to the creation and design of the program, and on what dates; (b) with whom did the government consult in regard to development of the point system, and on what dates; (c) what studies did the government conduct before the decision was made to introduce Express Entry; (d) what studies did the government conduct in designing the program; (e) has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted on the design of the program; (f) what is the target date for matching prospective immigrants with potential employers; (g) what precautions will be taken to ensure that employers have tried to hire eligible Canadians before they are allowed to search for prospective immigrants; (h) how will the system identify potential candidates for employers; (i) how often will draws for names be conducted; (j) who will decide how many names will be drawn in each draw; (k) who will decide how names that are drawn will be divided among the three immigration streams included in Express Entry; (l) when will the first evaluation be conducted of Express Entry; and (m) what is the program's projected budget for the next three years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 997—Ms. Lise St-Denis:

With regard to government advertising: what are the details of all advertising since January 1, 2010, for which the advertisement was, in part or in whole, in a language or in languages other than English or French, broken down by (i) the date on which the advertisement was placed, (ii) the name and location of the outlet in which the advertisement was placed, (iii) the medium of that outlet, distinguishing radio, television, internet, daily newspaper, weekly newspaper, other print publication, and other medium, (iv) the language or languages in which the advertisement was published, broadcast, or otherwise placed, (v) the nature or purpose of the advertisement, (vi) the name of the advertisement or advertising campaign, (vii) the identification number, Media Authorization Number, or ADV number, (viii) the publication dates or duration of the advertisement or advertising campaign, as the case may be?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1000—Ms. Lise St-Denis:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Canadian Heritage since March 27, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1003—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to materials prepared for Deputy Heads or their staff from December 9, 2014, to the present: for every briefing document or docket prepared, what is (i) the date, (ii) the title or the subject matter of the document, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1004—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to materials prepared for past or current Assistant Deputy Ministers or their staff from December 9, 2014, to the present: for every briefing document or docket prepared, what is (i) the date, (ii) the title or the subject matter, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1006—Mr. Marc Garneau:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada since April 1, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1007—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada since March 27, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1008—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to natural resources: what are the names, titles, and file numbers of any reports, memoranda, briefing notes, dockets, or studies, which have been written, produced, or submitted to any department, agency, or crown corporation since January 1, 2011, pertaining to the economic risks or potential economic risks related to or deriving from (i) changes in ownership of natural resource projects or developments in Canada, (ii) foreign ownership of natural resource projects or developments in Canada, (iii) state-owned corporation investment in or ownership of natural resource development in Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1009—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With respect to government advertising: (a) for each television advertisement that was aired during the annual championship game of the National Football League, otherwise known as Super Bowl XLIX, which occurred on Sunday, February 1, 2015, and was televised in Canada on the CTV television network, what is the (i) identification number, name, or ADV number, (ii) number of times each advertisement was aired during the broadcast, including the pre-game programming, beginning at 12:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, specifying the total number of times and the total length of time for each individual advertisement, (iii) total cost to air each advertisement, (iv) criteria used to select each of the advertisement placements; (b) did any government advertising run on any other Canadian television outlet during the same time-period that the Super Bowl aired on CTV Network; (c) if the answer in (b) is affirmative, what was the total cost to air each advertisement, broken down by the outlet on which it aired, and what criteria were used to select each of the advertisement placements; and (d) if the answer in (b) is negative, were advertisements specifically withheld during the Super Bowl game?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1010—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Small Craft Harbours program, what is the amount and percentage of all lapsed spending, broken down by year from 2006 to 2013?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1011—Mr. Fin Donnelly:

With respect to government funding allocated within the constituency of New Westminster—Coquitlam from fiscal year 2011-2012 to the present: what is the total amount allocated, broken down by (i) department, (ii) agency, (iii) initiative?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1012—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to Military Police Complaints Commission's Fynes Public Interest Hearing: (a) what is the total cost to date for the hearings, broken down by type of expenditures; (b) what are the detailed cost estimates for any future expenditures, broken down by type of expenditures; and (c) what is the anticipated date of conclusion for this process?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 1017—Mr. Joe Preston:**

With regard to government funding in the riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, for each fiscal year since 2005-2006 inclusively: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1018—Mr. Joe Preston:

With regard to government funding in the riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, for each fiscal year since 2005-2006 inclusive: (a) what are the details of all grants, contributions, and loans to any organization, body, or group, broken down by (i) name of the recipient, (ii) municipality of the recipient, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received, (v) department or agency providing the funding, (vi) program under which the grant, contribution, or loan was made, (vii) nature or purpose; and (b) for each grant, contribution and loan identified in (a), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1020—Mr. Murray Rankin:

With regard to Health Canada and the regulation of pharmaceutical manufacturing companies for the last ten years: (a) how many companies inspected in Canada have received a “proposal to suspend” letter, broken down by year; (b) how many companies inspected in Canada have received an “immediate suspension,” broken down by year; (c) how many companies inspected in Canada that were not sent a “proposal to suspend” letter or subject to a suspension has Health Canada worked with following an inspection to bring about compliance, broken down by year; (d) how many companies inspected in Canada have been subject to a re-inspection within six months, broken down by year; (e) how many companies inspected internationally have received a “proposal to suspend” letter, broken down by year; (f) how many companies inspected internationally have received an “immediate suspension,” broken down by year; (g) how many companies inspected internationally that were not sent a proposal to suspend letter or subject to a suspension has Health Canada worked with following an inspection to bring about compliance, broken down by year; (h) how many pharmaceutical manufacturing companies inspected internationally have been subject to a re-inspection within six months, broken down by year; (i) how many Import Alerts has Health Canada issued with regard to non-compliant health products, broken down by year; (j) which companies have been subject to an Import Alert; (k) how many voluntary quarantine requests has Health Canada issued, broken down by year; (l) which companies have been subject to a voluntary quarantine request; (m) how many “Notice of Intent to Suspend” letters have been issued to clinical trials, broken down by year; (n) how many “immediate suspensions” has Health Canada issued to clinical trials, broken down by year; (o) how many complaints have been received regarding off-label prescriptions of drugs, broken down by year; and (p) how many cases has Health Canada referred to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada for off-label prescriptions of drugs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1021—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to funding under the Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement Fund at Natural Resources Canada, from June 2012 to present: (a) for each contribution, what is the (i) dollar amount, (ii) name of the recipient organization, (iii) city, town, municipality, district or other location in which the organization is located, (iv) purpose for which the grant was awarded, (v) type of organization (such as, but not limited to government, research institution, consultant, corporation), (vi) identity of any co-sponsors of the project or event funded; (b) what is the total amount contributed by calendar year to each organization; and (c) what is the total amount contributed, broken down by each province, state or country?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1022—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to funding under the Recreational Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program, from June 2013 to present: (a) for each contribution, what is the (i) dollar amount, (ii) name of the recipient organization, (iii) city, town, municipality, district or other location in which the organization is located; (b) what is the total amount contributed by calendar year to each organization; (c) what is the number of applications made in each province, broken down by calendar year; (d) what is the number of awards made in each province, broken down by calendar year; and (e) what is the total dollar value of awards in each province, broken down by calendar year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1023—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by the Canadian Coast Guard since March 28, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1024—Hon. Mark Eyking:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada since March 31, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1025—Hon. Stéphane Dion:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Parks Canada since May 30, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1026—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Environment Canada since April 1, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1027—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to the Access to Information Act and the Open Government Initiative: what are the details of each instance since January 1, 2006, where it has come to the attention of a government institution which is now, or formerly was, listed in Schedule I of the Access to Information Act, that a data set which was released in response to an Access to Information Request, or proactively disclosed or published pursuant to any Act, regulation, policy, or initiative of government, has been improperly altered, falsified, forged, or tampered with, broken down by the (i) name of the government institution, (ii) title or description of the data set in question, (iii) authority under which the data set was disclosed, (iv) date on which it was disclosed, (v) file number of the Access to Information request, if the data set was disclosed pursuant to a request under that Act, (vi) nature of the improper alteration, falsification, forgery, or tampering, (vii) actions taken by the government institution in light of the improper alteration, falsification, forgery, or tampering?

(Return tabled)

*Speaker's Ruling***Question No. 1028—Ms. Irene Mathysen:**

With regard to the Wolseley Barracks: (a) which buildings are slated for demolition; (b) when was the decision made to demolish these buildings; (c) what is the reason for the demolition of these buildings; (d) what is the projected cost of this demolition; (e) how much money was spent between 2008 and 2015 on repairs to the buildings slated for demolition; (f) what activities currently take place in each of the buildings slated for demolition; and (g) where will those activities be relocated after the demolition is complete?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1029—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to the census: what are the dates, titles, and file or reference numbers of all reports, dossiers, studies, dockets, files or other materials, prepared by, for, or on behalf of any department, agency, crown corporation, office, or any other government organization, since April 1, 2009, concerning (i) the 2011 Census of Population or the 2011 Household Survey in general, (ii) the design or methodology of the 2011 Census of Population or the 2011 Household Survey, (iii) the application or use of the 2011 Census of Population or the 2011 Household Survey, (iv) the nature or quality of the data returned by the 2011 Census of Population or the 2011 Household Survey, (v) the 2016 Census of Population or the 2016 Household Survey in general, (vi) the design or methodology of the 2016 Census of Population or the 2016 Household Survey?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1030—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to the case before the courts between Frank et al. v. the Attorney General of Canada: (a) what has been the total cost to the government to pursue this matter in the courts, broken down by (i) cost incurred by in-house counsel, (ii) cost incurred by external legal counsel, (iii) cost of consulting fees; (b) who has been consulted by the government throughout the proceedings, broken down by (i) name, (ii) date; (c) how much more has the government budgeted to spend on this file; and (d) what are the details of all records or related records regarding the aforementioned case, broken down by (i) relevant file or tracking numbers, (ii) correspondence or file type, (iii) subject, (iv) date, (v) purpose, (vi) origin, (vii) intended destination, (viii) other officials copied or involved?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**ARCTIC SEA ICE**

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Halifax, and I will hear her now.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the urgent situation in the Arctic.

Just last week, the National Snow and Ice Data Centre reported that the Arctic Ocean's winter ice reached its annual maximum extent. Not only has this occurred earlier than normal, but it has hit an all-time low since satellite recording began in 1979.

I am asking today for an emergency debate on this issue as we no longer have time to waste. The reasons are plentiful and warrant immediate action from parliamentarians.

[Translation]

The strong trend of rising temperatures in the Arctic is wreaking havoc on our ecosystems. This will have a profound impact on the lives and livelihoods of northern peoples.

The warming of the Arctic and the melting sea ice will have an effect on the weather of all Arctic regions in Canada and around the world.

[English]

We will see more extreme weather, including flooding, heat waves and drought. It is important to note that less Arctic ice means that the uncovered Arctic waters will warm exponentially faster from the sun's rays, melting more ice and raising water levels to disastrous results.

[Translation]

People in the north are very concerned about the increase in Arctic temperatures. Mammals have had to change their eating habits and their migratory movements. This has a huge impact on the northern communities that rely on hunting for survival.

• (1520)

[English]

Northern communities also depend on frozen ground for land transport of food and the necessities of life for much of the year. If we ignore the warming trend now, the impacts will be far-reaching and irreversible.

An emergency plan is needed for all aspects of northern life, but Canada does not have one. We are facing an environmental crisis that goes beyond a warning of the impact on our northern communities. The situation is dire and has consequences for our entire planet. We cannot ignore the facts anymore.

This is not the first time I have requested an emergency debate on this issue, and since I first raised it in 2012, things have deteriorated even further. The NDP has tried to bring this issue forward at committee for urgent study, but to no avail. We are facing an emergency situation. We are witnessing unprecedented threats to the lives and livelihoods of our northern peoples, to our coastal communities, to our economy, our security and our way of life. This matter cannot be ignored any further and deserves to be signalled out as an emergency.

We need to have a thoughtful discussion in the House and devise a plan for the future. We must include Canadians in the conversation, as this will not only impact us but future generations. There is no time to waste. Our country needs a plan.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this matter. It is obvious that it is of great concern to the member. I do not know that it meets the test in the Standing Orders for an emergency debate.

Speaker's Ruling

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDERSTANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the House Leader of the Official Opposition regarding events which took place in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on February 26, 2015.

[English]

I would like to thank the House leader of the Official Opposition for raising this matter, as well as the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the member for Winnipeg North for their comments.

The House leader for the Official Opposition described the sequence of events at issue in the following manner. The member for Northumberland—Quinte West having moved the previous question during debate on a subamendment to the motion regarding the schedule of meetings for the study of Bill C-51, anti-terrorism act, 2015, the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security ruled it out of order. His ruling was then appealed and overturned by a vote of the committee, effectively allowing a procedurally inadmissible motion to pass and ending debate on the matter. He considered this manner of proceeding to be unacceptable, one in which parliamentary rules, practices and precedents were ignored.

The government House leader, for his part, summarized the events somewhat differently. He claimed that it was in response to a filibuster that the member for Northumberland—Quinte West asked the chair to put the question to a vote, citing persistence, repetition and irrelevance on the part of certain members of the committee. Furthermore, he noted that the members were within their right to overturn the chair's ruling pursuant to the rules of the House. He argued that the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security must remain the committee's exclusive concern unless and until it reported this matter to the House, given that committees were masters of their own proceedings and that Speakers had resisted adjudicating committee matters in the absence of a report from the committee.

[Translation]

It is not unusual for issues related to committee proceedings to be raised in the House when, for whatever reason, members feel that they have no other recourse. Needless to say, versions of events often differ significantly.

[English]

In the present circumstance, the Chair is concerned by the suggestion that the proceedings that took place in committee on February 26 threatened to undermine the work of the committee and that the committee was unable to find its way to a mutually acceptable solution, even with both sides stating that they wished to proceed with committee consideration of Bill C-51.

Committees enjoy considerable flexibility and fluidity in their proceedings. It is one of the great advantages that they have in the organization of their work. In fact, it is one of the hallmarks of the

committee system, since it not only facilitates and fosters greater co-operation among committee members, but it also enables committee members to find their own solutions to the issues they face. Yet this latitude was certainly never intended as a means to thwart existing rules and practices wilfully.

On June 3, 2003, the then Deputy Speaker stated, at page 6775 of the *Debates*:

I have said that committees are granted much liberty by the House but, along with the right to conduct their proceedings in a way that facilitates their deliberations, committees have a concomitant responsibility to see that the necessary rules and procedures are followed and the rights of members and the Canadian public are respected.

Just as importantly, it has always been understood that bringing deliberations in committee to a procedural standstill is also not desirable.

● (1525)

[Translation]

The work of committees is an essential part of the legislative process; its integrity depends on members remembering that the rules governing its proceedings matter. The rules adopted by the House exist for the benefit and protection of all members as they carry out their parliamentary functions, both in the House and in committee.

[English]

It is perhaps useful in the circumstances to remind the House of the underlying principle, as stated on page 250 of O'Brien and Bosc, that:

—parliamentary procedure is intended to ensure that there is a balance between the government's need to get its business through the House, and the opposition's responsibility to debate that business without completely immobilizing the proceedings of the House.

[Translation]

Faced with such a situation arising in committee, how is the Speaker to adjudicate? As has been noted, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states at page 1046 that:

The Speaker is reluctant to intervene in a committee's internal affairs unless the committee has previously reported on the matter to the House.

[English]

This is so because of the freedom that committees have to determine their own approaches to carrying out their work. For this reason, committees are commonly referred to as being “masters of their proceedings”. This is why it is said that matters originating in committee which require the attention of the House must be brought forward by way of a report from the committee itself. This is not merely a technicality. Rather, it is an indication of the breadth and importance of the powers delegated to committees by the House.

[Translation]

The approach taken by the Chair in cases brought to its attention has long been founded on respect for the authority of committees to manage their own affairs, even in times of difficulty. This requires the Chair to refrain from intervening until invited to do so formally by way of a report from the committee itself on a given matter. Speakers have consistently and successively upheld this separation of authorities.

Government Orders

[English]

On June 10, 2010, Speaker Milliken stated, at page 3678 of *Debates*:

Indeed, on numerous occasions, Speakers have restated the cardinal rule that committees are masters of their own proceedings and any alleged irregularities occurring in committees can be taken up in the House only following a report from the committee itself. There have been very few exceptions to this rule.

On March 13, 2012, as Speaker, I had cause to state, at page 6199 of *Debates*:

In the absence of a report from that committee, I do not know what the Speaker can do about what is alleged to have happened. However, if such a report does end up coming to the House then the Speaker will consider it then.

Again, on June 5, 2012, at page 8860 of *Debates*, I stated:

When events transpire at committee, it is up to the committee to deal with anything that may have breached protocol or the rules at the committee...if there is a report presented to the House, it will be something that the Speaker can then weigh in on.

This is not to suggest that the chair is left without any discretion to intervene in committee matters but, rather, it acknowledges that such intervention is exceedingly rare and justifiable only in highly exceptional procedural as opposed to political circumstances. For example, in a ruling delivered on June 20, 1994, *Debates* pages 5582 to 5584, Speaker Parent intervened in a committee matter involving two bills that had been reported to the House when the fundamental right of the House to establish the membership of a committee was not respected by a committee that had exceeded its powers.

On July 24, 1969, Speaker Lamoureux stated, at page 4183 of *Debates*:

What hon. members would like the Chair to do...is to substitute his judgment for the judgment of certain hon. members. Can I do this in accordance with the traditions of Canada...where the Speaker is not the master of the house...? The Speaker is a servant of the house. Hon. members may want me to be the master of the house today but tomorrow, when, perhaps in other circumstances I might claim this privilege, they might have a different opinion.... It would make me a hero, I suppose, if I were to adopt the attitude that I could judge political situations such as this and substitute my judgment for that of certain hon. members.... But I do not believe that this is the role of a Speaker under our system....

[Translation]

In keeping with the overwhelming body of practice in adjudicating disputes of this kind, the Chair cannot find sufficient grounds in this case to supplant the committee's authority by reaching into committee proceedings on this matter before the committee has seen fit to report it to the House.

● (1530)

[English]

Thus, until such time as the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security decides to report this matter to the House, the management of its proceedings remains within its exclusive purview.

Before concluding, I would however be remiss if I did not point out that the Standing Orders, as they exist today, provide avenues to deal with difficulties in reaching agreements between the parties in circumstances such as those brought before the House in this case.

[Translation]

I thank all honourable members for their attention in this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BARBARIC CULTURAL PRACTICES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Resuming debate.

The member for Rivière-du-Nord has five minutes remaining.

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are back to debating Bill S-7. After 10 years of Conservative rule, we are headed in a direction in which we do not want to go. This bill is yet another example of the government's habit of playing politics at someone's expense—this time at the expense of women who are victims of violence.

In 2012, when we opposed the conditional permanent residence measure, we claimed that it gave too much power to sponsors with respect to the responsibility and rights of their female spouses and that it forced them to remain together for two years. The real effects of that have become clear. In my riding, for example, two women experienced psychological violence and they were forced to flee their homes, under the threat of being deported by their sponsors. Their sponsors would threaten them, saying that if the women left they would arrange to have them deported. That is too much power in the hands of the sponsor.

The government is still taking—or at least focusing on—a repressive approach, instead of adopting a supportive approach. Earlier, the Minister of State for Social Development said that women in a polygamous marriage, for example, would be protected if the polygamist in question was found guilty, since this practice would be criminalized. She said the opposite of the truth. It is very clear that this bill does not contain any provisions enabling conditional permanent residents to remain in Canada if their polygamist partner is deported.

There is an old naval rule that states “women and children first”. The government is going against that rule and actually putting people who are already vulnerable or being abused in a difficult situation.

Another example of this pertains to forced marriages. The bill criminalizes everyone involved in a forced marriage. Yes, it is an offence and a practice that is unacceptable. Criminalizing everyone involved was already introduced in Denmark. What has been the result? Since the law passed in 2008, not a single charge has been laid. Why? Because it would mean asking the young girl being forced to marry to report her family members, who then would become criminals—her uncles, aunts, parents, brothers, sisters and cousins. Imagine the burden this places on the shoulders of these children. It is unbelievable.

Government Orders

At the same time, the bill contains no support measures for either the victims of polygamy or for the young girls being forced to marry—and yet everyone who took part in the Senate committee debate called for such measures, to make sure that the approach adopted is not based on criminalization but rather on support and prevention. We must work proactively, ahead of the situation. We need to make sure that people integrate into our communities with a better understanding of our way of life, our ways of doing things. Young women also need to know their rights.

I would like to come back to the two women who were threatened in my riding. They have rights; they have the right to be free of violence and constraints at the hands of their sponsors. No one explained those rights to them. They believed that if the sponsor mistreated them psychologically, he could have them deported to their home country with no recourse. We need answers and solutions to those issues. Unfortunately, the bill does nothing to address them.

• (1535)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives within Bill S-7 one could argue have some value, such as those that deal with polygamy, forced marriages, early marriage, particularly the setting of a national minimum age of 16, and issues related to domestic violence. Does the member see any value in any aspect of the legislation that the New Democratic Party could support?

Having said that, from a Liberal Party perspective, we have an issue with the title of the bill, in which the Conservatives make reference to culture. The short title is zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. We believe that at the very least, “cultural” needs to be deleted from the short title of the bill.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment on both aspects.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions.

Indeed, the NDP supports the provisions of the bill on prohibiting marriage for those under 16. I too was struck by the title of this bill, considering that my research shows that a third of the world's population, in all countries combined, lives in polygamy. I get the impression that barbaric is not the right word to describe these countries.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I asked Conservative members and a minister a number of questions and their answers were often vague.

For example, I asked them why they wanted to include in this new legislation measures on things that are already covered by other laws and what this bill does for the spouses and children of people deported for polygamy. Their answers remain vague.

Does my colleague think that this is because the bill was put together hastily, that it is botched and that its only purpose is to please the Conservative base?

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague took the words out of my mouth.

Indeed, this is a botched bill that will likely cause more problems than it solves. Earlier, the Minister of State for Social Development answered my colleague's question about what would become of the wives and children of a person deported from Canada for polygamy, claiming that they would be protected and have recourse. However, the bill includes no such provision. I believe the minister said that just for show.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the remarks made by my colleague from Rivière-du-Nord.

Is it simply an impression, or is there a modus vivendi creeping into the government's bills? In Bill C-51, for example, the government would have Canadians believe that existing police forces and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service are not equipped to fight terrorism.

In Bill S-7, it seems to be saying that potential victims, and we hope that there will never be victims, also have no recourse. The Criminal Code already contains very clear recourse for almost all these situations.

What is going on? Is this a partisan political vision or a real bill to help people who are going to need it?

• (1540)

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle: Mr. Speaker, if the government really wanted to help immigrant women with these issues, it would welcome them and provide them with solutions and support.

Unfortunately, this bill offers nothing in the way of prevention. My colleague is quite right: there are dozens of provisions in the Criminal Code—which I will not name—that already address the problems and provide for the prosecution of those who perpetrate such abuse.

In the Criminal Code we find section 264 concerning assaults, section 265 on sexual assaults, and sections 271 and 273 on kidnapping. I could name 50 Criminal Code sections that would apply to forced marriage or forcing young people to leave the country and be married elsewhere.

[English]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, regarding Canada's commitment to preventing and responding to early and forced marriage, polygamy or other types of barbaric cultural practices both at home and abroad.

Our government does not shy away from tough conversations about the importance of women's full and equal participation in all aspects of social, economic and political life. The promotion and protection of women's human rights are central to Canada's domestic, foreign and international policy. I am proud to say that our government had made ending child, early and forced marriage a domestic and international policy priority.

Government Orders

For example, in October 2013, our government announced \$5 million in new money to address the causes and consequences of early and forced marriage around the world. These funds were used for programs in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia and Zimbabwe. More recently, in July 2014, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada is contributing \$20 million over two years to UNICEF, toward ending child, early and forced marriage. The UNICEF project aims to accelerate the movement to end child marriage in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Yemen and Zambia by supporting efforts in these countries to strengthen both programming and political support to end the practice.

Our government's commitment is not limited to funding. For instance, Canada has spearheaded the initiative to establish the international day of the girl and is co-leading with Zambia a United Nations General Assembly resolution on child, early and forced marriage. Additionally, Canada leads the annual resolution on violence against women at the Human Rights Council as we are a strong supporter of the six UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security.

All of this goes to say that our government continues to work domestically and internationally on promoting and protecting the rights of all women and children. Equality of men and women under the law is a fundamental Canadian value that shapes Canadian policy and actions in the international and domestic arenas. Free and healthy societies require the full participation of women. Sadly, in many countries around the world, millions of women and girls continue to be prevented from full participation by violence and intimidation, including through the inhumane practices of early and forced marriage.

The strength of our country is centred on the fact that Canadians of very different origins live and work together, side by side. One of the key elements to this success, prosperity and social harmony of our country is that we are united Canadian citizens, not by our common origins, but rather by a pledge of mutual responsibility and shared commitment to values and traditions rooted in our society.

At the same time, harmful cultural practices that go against Canadian values and are in violation of Canada's international human rights commitments will never be tolerated in Canada. Our government is well aware of cases of Canadian children being taken abroad for an early or forced marriage and has concerns that girls who are from countries where the practice of female genital mutilation is common may be at risk.

Canada is committed to protecting and defending those who are vulnerable to these practices, both domestically and internationally. Our government has demonstrated its leadership in this area by introducing this bill and by continuing to work with our international partners and community members to find ways to end such harmful practices, which are tragically occurring each and every day around the world.

I would like to speak now about how Bill S-7 would protect women and girls here in Canada. The provisions in Bill S-7 would strengthen Canadian marriage laws by establishing a new national minimum age for marriage at 16 years, as well as codifying the existing legal requirements for a free and enlightened consent for marriage. Setting the minimum age to marry across Canada at 16 is

consistent with current practices in like-minded countries, such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

Provincial and territorial legislation would still impose requirements for marriages between the ages of 16 to 18 or 19, depending on the age of majority. Requirements such as parental consent or a court order provide added safeguards to permit mature minors between the ages of 16 and 18 to marry in exceptional circumstances. However, given that many forced marriages are perpetrated by parents, parental consent to the marriage of a minor may be insufficient to protect against forced marriage where it is the parents who are forcing the marriage upon an unwilling child. As a result, the Minister of Justice has engaged his provincial and territorial counterparts in a discussion to enhance provincial and territorial legislative measures that would protect young children against forced marriage by imposing judicial consent in any marriages involving a minor.

● (1545)

Bill S-7 also proposes to amend the Criminal Code to create the offences of knowingly celebrating, aiding or actively participating in a marriage ceremony involving a person under the age of 16 or a forced marriage. These new offences specifically address the social harm caused by the public endorsement of an unwanted or harmful legal bond within which sexual violence is expected to occur. These offences will apply to individuals who engage in conduct specifically intended to facilitate the marriage ceremony such as acting as a legal witness knowing that one of the parties is under the age of 16 or marrying against their will.

These proposed new offences would be punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment. The proposed amendments would also criminalize taking steps to remove a child from Canada for the purpose of an underage or forced marriage. This is done by adding the new offences in relation to underage and forced marriage to the existing offence of removing a child from Canada to commit female genital mutilation or sexual offences. This offence is punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment and Bill S-7 maintains this penalty.

Countries such as Australia and Norway have similar criminal measures, which Canada has looked to in the development of this bill. Other proposed amendments would create a new peace bond that would give courts the power to impose conditions on an individual where there are reasonable grounds to fear that a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16 would otherwise occur, or if they will take a child out of Canada with the intent that they be subjected to an early or forced marriage ceremony abroad. Such a peace bond would be used to prevent an underage or forced marriage by requiring an individual to surrender travel documents. These measures that would prevent someone from being taken abroad for the purposes of early or forced marriage are similar to forced marriage civil protection orders in the United Kingdom.

Government Orders

Additionally, the bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code to address concerns that the defence of provocation has been raised in several so-called honour killing cases here in Canada. Unfortunately, we have seen these cases too often on our soil and one victim is one victim too many.

The defence of provocation currently allows a person found to have committed murder, which carries a mandatory sentence of life, to seek a conviction of manslaughter instead with no minimum sentence unless a firearm is used by arguing that the victim's conduct provoked the person to lose self-control and kill. Currently, any conduct by the victim, including insults and other forms of offensive behaviour that are lawful, can potentially qualify as provocation if it is found to be sufficient to cause an ordinary person to lose self-control, the accused was not expecting it and the killing was sudden.

The proposed amendment would limit the defence of provocation so that lawful conduct by the victim that might be perceived by the accused as an insult or offend that person or their sense of family honour or reputation cannot excuse murder. Only conduct by the victim that amounts to a relatively serious criminal offence, that is an offence under the Criminal Code punishable by at least five years in prison, could be argued to be provocation for the purposes of the defence. The provocation defence has been abolished or restricted in almost every common law jurisdiction like Canada, most Australian states, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Finally, the bill proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to increase the Government of Canada's ability to prevent polygamy from occurring in Canada. The bill would make amendments to the IRPA so that a polygamist permanent resident or foreign national who is or will be physically present in Canada with any of their spouses would be considered to be practising polygamy in Canada.

I have discussed some of the very important aspects of the bill to highlight that Canada is taking concrete action in ensuring that early and forced marriage and similar barbaric cultural practices never occur in Canada as was promised in the October 2013 throne speech. The bill also sends a strong message that Canada condemns such practices, not only domestically, but internationally. I hope that the government will get the support of all hon. members in protecting victims, specifically women and girls.

● (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Conservatives have a knack for fixing problems that do not exist. My colleague talked about the defence of provocation, among other things.

It is laudable to prohibit honour killings, but all of the courts that have addressed this concept of defence have found that a culturally oriented concept of honour does not constitute a defence of provocation under the Criminal Code.

Apart from the marketing and propaganda angles in advance of the upcoming federal election, what is the point of introducing an amendment just for this given that the courts have already ruled that it is not a defence of provocation?

[*English*]

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, this is such an important issue. It is one that we are taking a stand on as a government. Part of taking a stand is making sure that our laws are in line with the values that we hold dear here in Canada and to protect those most vulnerable. In this case, we are dealing specifically with women and girls.

With respect to the provocation, we are increasing the threshold, because it should no longer be a subjective matter. It should not be one that can even be argued as a defence in a court of law when such a case is brought before it, and that is the point of this legislation.

Our government would ensure that wearing a short skirt or dating someone who one's family does not agree with is not, even in the mind of the perpetrator, considered justifiable because provocation is not specifically limited, as we intend to do with this bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, the Liberal Party is comfortable supporting certain values within the legislation before us. We recognize that there are particular issues that would deal with polygamy, forced marriage and the whole of idea of early marriage, with 16 being a national minimum that the government would set. It also deals with other issues in a small but important fashion, such as domestic violence.

The issue that we have taken up with the government, and for which I understand we will move an amendment on, is in regards to the short title. It is the short title that many people feel somewhat offended by, zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. We would take nothing away from the legislation by deleting the word "cultural", yet it is quite offensive for many people who share the same values that we all have inside this chamber towards the attitudes that the member has talked about.

Would the member not agree that dropping the word "cultural" from the short title would do nothing to minimize the effectiveness of the legislation that the government is putting forward and, in fact, would then make it that much better in terms of legislation?

● (1555)

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, as far as the title is concerned, it is very important that we take a stand here as Canadians, to stand up for Canadian values. I think it also very important that we make very clear what it is that we are standing up against. Hence, we will not tolerate cultural traditions in Canada that deprive individuals of their human rights. The reason for that term in the title is because there are countries where some of these practices are not illegal or where they are illegal, those laws are not enforced.

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Therefore, we want to make it very clear where Canada stands on these issues for the protection of women and girls who are very vulnerable with respect to these issues. We want to make it clear to new Canadians coming here that in Canada this is not what we expect or accept, and that is why those words are in the title.

Our government believes that subjugating a woman is wrong, period.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to this bill. I was on the citizenship and immigration committee when it completed the report detailing how to better protect women in our immigration system. Frankly, I hate saying the short title of Bill S-7, which was created after that study, but I will. It is called the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. It would not do anything to actually protect women from violence, as it claims to do.

It was interesting to hear in the minister's speech that she thought it would potentially protect women when it really would not. Most of the practices that the bill hopes to curb, including polygamy and honour killings, are already illegal in this country, so Bill S-7 would not do anything new, other than focusing on criminalizing other behaviour.

When the citizenship and immigration committee was hearing testimony for its report, experts agreed that women who are experiencing violence need supports, like housing, counselling, and assistance in navigating the complex family, criminal, immigration, and legal systems. The experts also agreed that women coming into this country should be provided with information about our systems before they even come here, or at the borders when they arrive, in languages they can understand, to ensure that women are protected, educated, and made aware of the support systems available in Canada.

We were sad to hear testimony about how conditional permanent residence status had contributed to people being trapped in abusive relationships. Why? It is because the immigration status of the woman is tied to her partner. If she were to report violence in her relationship or to leave that relationship, she would fail her conditional permanent residence status and be deported from this country. That means she could be sent back to a country or situation that is not ideal or safe, or where she could be persecuted or stigmatized for leaving a conjugal relationship or marriage. There are many countries around the world where women are stigmatized, including Canada, for seeking a divorce or leaving an abusive relationship.

In its report about Bill S-7, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario asserted the following:

This Bill appears to extend a trend in this government's track record to strip permanent residence and deport more and more racialized people from Canada, regardless of how long they have been here.

SALCO'S report continued to assert this:

In the preparation of this legislative and procedural change, they have failed to consult experts in this field about what creates further barriers to accessing safety for women experiencing violence.

The fact is that the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration compiled expert testimony on protecting women in our immigration system, and the report did not include all of the good

recommendations that came from experts. The committee spent days and weeks studying this topic, and the recommendations in the report are still not addressed in this bill that the government has brought forward through the other chamber.

Let us talk about what Bill S-7 would actually do. It would make being in a polygamous relationship grounds for finding a permanent resident inadmissible in this country. Polygamy has been illegal in Canada since 1892, so what would it really accomplish? Nothing new. Immigration law and policy already contain provisions addressing polygamous unions, so nothing new is being introduced here.

I know the government has asserted that there are hundreds of polygamists already living in Canada today. If that is a fact, then why is the government not enforcing the existing laws? If it wants to get rid of polygamy in this country, why is it not ensuring that the laws that have existed since 1892 are actually enforced?

Moving on to the topic of honour killings, murder is murder is murder, and it is illegal in this country. This bill would preclude a defendant in a murder trial from arguing that an insult to family honour provoked his or her actions.

• (1600)

Canada's courts are sufficiently equipped to sentence somebody for murder, and that is what we have seen happen in this country when somebody has tried to claim an honour killing. We have seen our courts uphold our laws, sentence the perpetrators of these murders, treat them as murderers, and sentence them to jail time. Therefore, I do not understand why the government is pretending that it is creating a new law here when once again nothing is really changing.

Citing data from the South Asian Legal Clinic's study on forced marriage, the bill also criminalizes forced marriages. However, Bill S-7 ignores SALCO's recommendation, which is to protect families and provide adequate support to vulnerable women. Its experts specifically warned against criminalization, as this would be more destructive than helpful.

I am 100% against anybody being forced into a marriage. However, we have to ensure that we are protecting the women who are already in forced situations. We need to ensure they are given the support to leave in a safe way, and ensure that they are safe and secure in the community they are living in.

I want to read a couple of quotes from the Schlifer Clinic in a report that it issued. It states:

If passed, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, introduced on November 5, 2014, will serve as another example of institutional barriers to marginalized communities reporting violence and having access to support. It will serve as another example of how our government is failing to listen to survivors and targeting racialized communities for exclusion and deportation from Canada.

It continues to state the following:

The Schlifer Clinic has grave concerns about the Act, which would result in the exclusion, deportation and criminalization of families (or of women themselves), which only serves to further harm women experiencing violence.

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Therefore, we see from experts on the ground that this bill is not helping women and it is not protecting or supporting them; rather, it would end up doing the opposite.

I said earlier that the first time I read the short title I did not want to say it and that I did not like it. That is because it is xenophobic and reinforces prejudice against certain cultural groups by targeting racial minorities for practices that are found in Canadian society at large today.

I keep coming back to the experts because they are the ones who are doing the research on the ground. Here is a quote from Avvy Yao-Yao Go, who is the clinic director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. She states:

From the very naming of this bill to the various legislative amendments it seeks to amend, Bill S-7 invokes racist stereotypes and fuels xenophobia towards certain racialized communities.

Deepa Mattoo, the staff lawyer and acting executive director of the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, stated:

Giving it a shock factor name will not eliminate the issue. Instead it will force perpetrators to take this underground, ensuring the victims and potential victims are isolated from any resources. This causes a greater risk to their safety, not to mention their emotional and mental well-being.

That is another example of another expert telling us how the short title of this bill is xenophobic and that the bill as a whole would be more harmful for women in our country.

While I agree that no woman, regardless of her race, citizenship, status, or religion, should be subject to gender-based violence, including the practices of forced marriage or underage marriage, I do not support making women more vulnerable.

I would like to end my remarks by saying that this bill has not had adequate consultation.

As members will notice, I have many more sheets to go in my prepared remarks. However, I will go back to the experts. There is a media release that was sent out by 13 expert organization groups, and I do not have time to name them all. I want to read a small blurb from its introduction.

• (1605)

It states:

The announcements in the tabled Bill perpetuate myths about practices of polygamy and forced marriages while misguiding Canadians to believe that violence against women is a “cultural” issue and happens in only certain communities. The government has blatantly targeted marginalized and racialized communities through the racist framework used in the intent, wording and announcement of this Bill. This inflammatory language and the perpetuation of racist myths is itself an obstacle to understanding the harmful effects of these proposed legislative amendments. As organizations dedicated to advancing the rights of all women, we are painfully aware of the challenges faced by all women in Canada from all walks of life and backgrounds to find a safe and secure home. In that regard, immigrant and racialized women face additional challenges because of their race and/or their precarious immigration status. Contrary to what the government has stated, the proposed legislative changes will not result in greater protection for women victims of domestic violence, but will have the opposite effect.

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last time this bill was debated, the members of the official opposition kept saying that the bill would marginalize victims. The truth is that actual victims of these barbaric practices support the bill.

How does the opposition stick to the rhetoric when actual victims are coming up in support of this bill?

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, growing up in Canada, I was a victim of domestic violence. I am a survivor of domestic violence, and this barbaric practice happened in Canada by Canadians, not by any foreigner. Therefore, on this barbaric practice, there are many people who are survivors of violence perpetuated against women, everywhere, and not just domestic violence, but violence towards women all across this country. It is a root problem.

It is a systemic problem for women, who continue to face racism, sexism, and all types of discrimination and violence, and that needs to stop. It is the systemic barriers that the current government continues to support that are the problem, and those are the problems that need to go away.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every society has some form of gender violence. It is very real and tangible.

However, when we take a look at Bill S-7, I listened to the member's comments regarding the number of stakeholders who have taken offence to it.

The Liberal Party has been fairly clear regarding the use of the word “culture”. One would think that the Prime Minister's Office has a special group of individuals who sit around a table creating these names, and they throw in these adjectives. Here we have “zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices”. There is no doubt that it is exceptionally offensive to many people that the word “cultural” would be incorporated into the legislation in terms of the short title.

It seems to me in listening to the member that this is more offensive than anything else. However, it seems that there might be some value in certain parts of the legislation.

My question to the member is, if the government were to amend the word “cultural” out of the legislation, would she see any value whatsoever in supporting it?

• (1610)

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, I would support the entire short title being deleted completely. I think that is the best way to fix the title.

Even within the Conservative team, this is what Senator Andreychuk said in a media article about the title:

“...if you wanted barbaric cultural practices, which probably wasn't going to be my choice, but if you wanted that, I wished you had added something like violence in there...”

I laud Senator Andreychuk for realizing that the root problem here is violence against women and it is prevalent in all societies.

I have worked with Senator Andreychuk on many issues with respect to sexual and reproductive health rights, and I thank her for the work she is doing. The rest of the Conservative team should listen. It is fine if they do not want to listen to experts, but let them at least listen to members in their own caucus and team.

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[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to my hon. colleague talk about this important issue, I was wondering if she agrees with me that what we really need are human and financial resources.

One thing is for sure: we need to make sure that we can do things properly when it comes to this issue. I know that her riding must be like mine. We can have an impact on society by investing in resources for organizations, police forces and various front-line actors. That is how we can enable them to tackle the problems we do not really know how to address. The first step is talking to the community and making investments where they are needed. I would like to hear her thoughts on that.

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Québec is exactly right. Instead of a sensationalized bill that does not actually get to the root of the problem, the minister should commit to widespread and meaningful consultations with community groups and experts so that the real issue of gender-based violence is addressed in a meaningful and effective manner.

The government should actually increase its investment in organizations that provide services such as safe and affordable housing, counselling, and support in navigating our very complex systems and services. Immigrating to a new country can be very traumatizing for a young woman if this is the first time she has ever left her home country. Ensuring that she has every support she needs in a manner she can comprehend and digest is very important.

I really wish, from the bottom of my heart, that the government would actually take some interest in investing in resources and the agencies that are providing these much-needed services, mostly with volunteers and with very weak budgets.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. I would like to take this opportunity to address the comments that have been made in this and other places suggesting that the reform to the defence of provocation is unnecessary in light of three cases of so-called honour killing in which it was unsuccessfully raised.

The defence of provocation, sometimes known as the heat of passion defence, applies only to the charge of murder and comes into play only if murder is actually proven. It does not give rise to complete acquittal but rather produces a verdict of manslaughter instead of murder.

The defence offers significant benefits to an accused. A conviction for second degree murder carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison and strict parole ineligibility rules, whereas a manslaughter conviction carries no mandatory minimum sentence, except if a firearm is used, and allows a murderer to avoid the stigma associated with the label.

The defence will be successful where the murder was committed in response to a wrongful act or insult from the victim that would be sufficient to deprive an ordinary person of the power of self-control and where the accused acted suddenly, before there was time for his

passion to cool. The killing must be a spontaneous reaction to an unexpected provocation.

Most honour killings are believed to be premeditated. If the crown can prove premeditation, resulting in a conviction for first degree murder, the defence of provocation will not succeed. However, some killings that may be characterized as honour killings can be spontaneous reactions to something unexpectedly said or done by the victim.

In cases where the crown prosecutor proves that the killing was intentional but not premeditated, the provocation defence is available.

The defence of provocation has been raised in at least three cases that could be characterized as honour killings. These are *R. v. Nahar* in 2004, *R. v. Humaid* in 2006, and *R. v. Sadiqi* in 2013. All of these reported cases were appealed to the appropriate courts of appeal. In the case of Nahar, it was to the British Columbia Court of Appeal. The other two were to the Ontario Court of Appeal.

It is true that in each of these cases, the defence of provocation failed. However, this cannot be taken to have the consequence some have suggested, namely that the defence is now barred in an honour-killing context and that therefore there is no reason to amend the law.

As a general matter, even assuming that a court of appeal determines conclusively that the provocation defence is unavailable in these circumstances, the relevant legal issues have arisen in only two provinces: British Columbia and Ontario. Rulings from one provincial court of appeal are not binding in any other province. Without a ruling on the relevant legal issues from the Supreme Court of Canada, it is simply incorrect to say that the legal questions have been definitely resolved in Canada.

When we come to the substance of what was actually decided by these courts of appeal, a careful reading of these cases shows that the courts did not, as a matter of law, rule out the possibility of the defence operating in situations of honour killings. The defence continues to be available to be raised in cases where family honour has played a role in the killing. For instance, it would be available to an accused who, upon finding his teenage daughter in her bedroom with a boy from school, becomes enraged at this breach of the family's honour code. If he intentionally kills her in the heat of the moment in response to her verbal insults against his cultural traditions and beliefs, he could benefit from the potentially successful defence of provocation.

In the two cases, it was the defence that submitted evidence on the cultural background of the accused to demonstrate how a wrongful act or insult from the victim would give the provocation significance and would have gravity for an ordinary person from the same culture as the accused.

For instance, in Nahar, the accused claimed that he killed his wife in the heat of passion following disrespectful comments from her about men and behaviour such as smoking, drinking, and socializing with men. He introduced evidence that the victim's behaviour was completely at odds with acceptable behaviour for wives in his culture.

The British Columbia Court of Appeal actually found this cultural context to be relevant to understanding how an ordinary person of the same background as the accused would be provoked by the behaviour of the victim.

•(1615)

This may come as a surprise to those who have tried to suggest that all three cases definitively ruled out provocation in an honour-killing context.

This provocation claim failed for different reasons. First, the trial judge had grounds to find that the alleged provocation by the victim was not unexpected to the accused but rather had been going on for several months. In this regard, the killing was on the sudden, following an unexpected provocation. Second, the nature of the provocation by the victim was not found to be such as to cause an ordinary person to lose self-control, even assuming that the ordinary person was from the accused's cultural community.

In the Humaid case, the accused alleged that he was provoked by comments his wife made that he interpreted to be an admission of sexual infidelity. The accused led expert opinion evidence that in the accused's cultural tradition, infidelity by a female member of a family was considered a very serious violation of the family's honour and was worthy of harsh punishment by the male members of the family.

The court of appeal expressed the strong view that the application of cultural values that are contrary to gender equality to the defence of provocation was inappropriate. However, this was not the reason the defence failed. One reason the defence failed was that the accused did not introduce any evidence that he personally shared the views his community was said to have. It also failed because the crown had proven premeditation, which is inconsistent with the provocation defence. The views of the court on the question of cultural values were not matters that were necessary to decide the appeal, so they are not binding on lower courts.

Finally, in the Sadiqi case, the accused raised the defence of provocation in the killing of his sister and her fiancé by alleging that his sister had refused to seek their father's approval for the proposed wedding and that she and her fiancé insulted him in the moments before the murders.

The crown tendered expert evidence of honour killings within the traditional culture of the community of origin of the accused. The jury found the accused guilty of first degree murder. The appeal was about whether the crown's use of expert evidence was appropriate. The court of appeal held that it was. That is the only legal proposition this case stands for.

Despite some helpful discussions on gender equality in these cases, none of the rulings established as a matter of law that the defence is excluded in honour-killing cases. It remains available to be argued by any person accused of murder. The provocation claims

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failed in these three cases because of the facts and evidence presented and not because of any principle of law.

Taken together, these cases reflect outcomes all Canadians would hope for, but it is purely wishful thinking to say that these cases legally closed the door on the provocation defence in the honour-killing context.

Moreover, there is a long history of the provocation defence being raised and sometimes accepted to excuse spousal murders in Canada in circumstances that closely resemble the Nahar and Humaid cases. The principle difference is that the feelings of dishonour and shame are experienced at the family or community level in the case of honour killings and at the personal or private level in the case of spousal killings. What is the same is that men kill women when they feel that they have lost control over them.

It is high time we amended this defence so that it can no longer mitigate killing in response to a lawful insult. No person has a right to control another, and where people fail to get what they want, they should not have the murder of another person mitigated through a 500-year-old defence that originated in a culture that treated women as the property of their husbands.

This reform is about reaffirming the value of gender equality in Canada and about making it clear that homicidal violence against all women in reaction to lawful conduct will no longer provide an excuse for murder.

Bill S-7 proposes to address this long-standing problem in our criminal law by limiting the defence so that it can only be raised where provoking conduct by the victim amounts to an offence punishable by five years or more in prison.

People should not be able to use the defence that they violently harmed others because they were provoked.

•(1620)

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act sends a clear message to those coming to Canada that forced marriage, honour based violence or any other form of harmful cultural practices are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the other week I had the opportunity to put a number of concerns with Bill S-7 on the record. In general, we believe some of the positive things it hopes to achieve are somewhat small in nature in terms of steps forward.

However, I have raised a great deal of concern about the title of the bill. In reflecting on the short title of the bill, could the member explain to the House if the short title could be used in a court of law? If it cannot be used, why does the government feel so passionately that it has to be "as is", without amendment?

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Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act sends a clear message to those coming to Canada that forced marriage, honour based violence and any other form of harmful cultural practices are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our Canadian society.

The Government of Canada will continue to ensure it will protect Canadians from the harmful barbaric cultural practices and it will continue to protect Canadians vulnerable to these abuses.

That is why we have the strong context in the title of the bill. It is to show Canadians that this type of behaviour is unacceptable.

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a very sensitive and complex topic. Obviously, nobody here is in favour of barbaric practices that do not respect freedom. No one is condoning crimes or murders. My wife and I have two daughters, and we would obviously not want them to be forced into marriage.

However, I would like to ask this question: why do the Conservatives systematically use this sort of controversial issue to play politics, divide people and instill fear? The laws that we have are sufficient to prevent people from being forced to marry or from coming up with excuses for murdering someone or throwing acid in someone's face.

I think the Conservatives are just trying to mislead Canadians. This is nothing but demagoguery. This bill is extremely populist and completely unnecessary.

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the one thing I want to be very clear about is that a murder is a murder.

In Canada any type of legal defence that promotes this type of cultural barrier is unacceptable. It is of the utmost importance that we have to protect the rights of those individuals who come to Canada or reside in Canada.

I come from an RCMP background and I have seen what individuals are capable of doing. Having to go to a crime scene and investigate a murder where cultural practices are being used as a defence is unacceptable. That is why our government is looking at making these changes. As a Conservative government, we are here to defend the rights of Canadians.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, could the hon. member address the issue of marriages between young Canadians in their teens and the laws that do not currently exist but which this bill will now address?

I have received a number of letters and inquiries from my constituents who are surprised to hear that the laws across Canada, by province, are not consistent on this matter. Could he tell us a bit about what other countries have done to remedy this situation, and what the bill would do on that issue?

Mr. Rob Clarke: Mr. Speaker, countries such as Austria, Australia, Finland, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom have 16 as the minimum age, below which no one

can marry without parental consent. This is consistent with the proposal in this bill.

Several like-minded countries have set 18 as the age for marriage without additional consent from parents in court, but have no minimum age of marriage. For example, in Belgium, France, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and most of the United States laws are similar to the current law in Canada.

Setting a national minimum age of 16 years for marriage is consistent with the federal legislation that applies only with regard to the province of Quebec, in section 6 of the Federal Law—Civil Law Harmonization Act, No. 1. It is also consistent with what happens now in Canada, where there are few marriages contracted between individuals under 16. However, some limited exceptions are made for mature minors of 16 and 17 years of age under certain circumstances, for example, where one is pregnant.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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 Ahuntsic, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Québec, Housing; the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Seniors.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to strongly oppose Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, also known as the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

The NDP and I want to emphasize that we are opposed to polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage. These three practices are unacceptable. They target women specifically and go against the freedoms we enjoy here in Canada. That being said, we know that the solution proposed by the Conservatives is not suitable and will not achieve the desired results.

I would like to begin by saying that this bill is incomplete. The requirements that the Conservatives are presenting as new are already present in our existing legislation. What good does it do to duplicate legislation? It is a waste of our time and Canadians'. To be more specific, the requirement of free and enlightened consent is already present in the Quebec Civil Code and in the common law of the other provinces.

Moreover, Canada's Criminal Code contains avenues of remedy tailored to each situation to fight these kinds of marriages. These avenues of remedy can be employed before or after the marriage, which gives victims the opportunity to seek justice. The victims have to know about the avenues, however, and that is where we should be focusing our energy.

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I would like to talk more about the many shortcomings of this bill. These deplorable gaps will endanger victims of forced and underage marriage. The bill contains no solutions whatsoever to help immigrant women learn about their rights. These women have virtually no way to defend themselves. Our goal should be to give them the tools they need to navigate our legal system.

The Conservatives are either refusing or do not know how to implement a policy to make the law accessible to everyone, particularly the most vulnerable. One could be forgiven for believing that the government wants to keep them in the dark. How can they protect themselves if they do not know our laws? It is impossible, and that is why the NDP intends to make this information more available and minimize this kind of inequality around awareness of rights that is unfortunately present in Canada.

Another important point that the Conservatives have once again left out is the creation of programs and services to support the victims of forced marriage and polygamy. The bill does not address this aspect at all, despite how important it is. Another shortcoming has to do with the lack of education and mental health support, which will be crucial to protecting children who are victims of human trafficking. These situations unfortunately affect all too many children in this country. How do the Conservatives plan to help children living in high-risk situations if they have no programs in place specifically for such victims?

It is clear that the Conservatives did not do very much research in these areas for this bill. The NDP encourages the government to consult the parties involved and meet with front-line stakeholders and experts in order to really be able to address the problem of forced and underage marriages. This lack of consultation is an alarming reality in the case of many Conservative bills, and we find that very troubling.

I believe that the bill is not only incomplete, but it is also alarming. It is harmful for two main reasons. First, it helps further stigmatize immigrant populations in Canada. We see that in the title: the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. This bill is based on racist prejudices and fuels xenophobia by associating immigration, illegality and barbarism. The NDP fights every day against this simplistic type of view that contributes to excluding immigrant populations. A policy based on fearing the other and rejecting differences is not a policy the NDP wants.

What is more, this bill that claims to protect victims from situations of forced or underage marriage and polygamy in fact risks putting victims in greater jeopardy. By making the law even tougher, the government is discouraging immigrant women from reporting their situation out of fear of then being deported from the country. This bill includes no provision allowing conditional permanent residents to stay in Canada if their polygamist partner is deported. This bill is paradoxical because it isolates the victims and puts them further at risk.

• (1635)

Worse yet, by preventing the reunification of the family in a polygamous situation, the bill contributes to separating children from their mother. Children are once again the primary victims of senseless legal decisions. Minors would be at risk of being criminalized for participating in a forced or underage marriage. A

solution based on criminalization is not sound. It discourages victims from reporting this type of situation because of the threat of a criminal record weighing on them or members of their family.

[*English*]

The NDP is prepared to offer solutions to this issue in a culturally appropriate manner. One main focus would be to alter immigration policy in a direction that enables women to be independent.

The NDP is in favour of immigration implementing support services and amending processing times to allow wives and children of men who are to be deported to reside in Canada. This would reduce limitations on their ability to escape unhealthy relationships at the expense of their residency.

This can also serve as a better solution than the conditional permanent residency introduced by the Conservatives in October 2012, which further increases the vulnerability, abuse, and isolation of women and the degree of manipulation they are subjected to in the general state of the issue and by the CPR.

The NDP supports the notion of preventing and responsibly addressing this issue, by implementing programs and listening to experts in the field, as opposed to criminalizing and further marginalizing citizens. The way to address this issue can be seen through our national action plan, which addresses violence against women by examining the root of the issue of violence against women and offering support as opposed to further limitations.

[*Translation*]

We must put in place a policy that goes to the root of the problem, rather than applying a superficial and sensationalist policy, as proposed by the Conservative government. That is why the NDP is proposing to provide prevention and victim support services. The NDP and I want to support and fund such initiatives as the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, or SALCO, which plans to promote more prevention. This organization offers information sessions for police officers and those in charge of social services. This is a concrete and useful response.

We need a strategy that is appropriate for each situation and not an evasive and useless response like the government's. Instead of tackling the problem of forced or underage marriage or polygamy by passing a law that focuses on criminalizing the victims, the NDP has come up with concrete and insightful solutions. It is proposing to adopt a national plan to combat violence against women that responds to the specific vulnerability of each community. Furthermore, the NDP believes that it is vital to put in place culturally appropriate training for government officials so that they are able to prevent forced marriages. Government officials must be better prepared to fight ignorance in order to protect the victims in these situations.

This bill is yet another example of the Conservatives' habit of introducing legislation that is both ill-suited to the problem and dangerous to Canadians. They are not capable of helping the most vulnerable members of society and they are playing with fire by constantly linking immigration, illegality and insecurity. The serious problem of gender-based violence must be resolved as quickly as possible, but it must be done effectively. Only the NDP truly understands the true implications.

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In conclusion, I want to share the story of a case in my riding. In 2012 I helped a woman, Ms. Hernandez, who was the victim of domestic violence. She had started her immigration process and was therefore not yet a Canadian resident. She had been threatened with deportation because she had reported domestic abuse against her and her child. It took me several weeks, it took a number of protests, in particular one on International Women's Day last year, and it took the the help of the media and of groups like Solidarity Across Borders to ensure that Ms. Hernandez was able to remain in Canada.

Women in these types of situations are very vulnerable. It is dangerous for them. Women and children cannot live their lives in limbo. These people should not have to wonder whether they can remain in Canada or whether they will be deported.

● (1640)

That is why I am opposed to this bill. I think all Canadians agree with us and I hope that every member of Parliament will oppose this bill.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in short, I would have to agree to disagree on a couple of the points that the member has brought forward. I have been focusing a lot of attention on the name and title of the bill and suggesting that the short name of the bill should be amended to better reflect what Canadians would find more acceptable.

There are areas in which the legislation attempts to improve upon the system, albeit in a very small fashion. Is the member aware of some of the stakeholder groups that have been brought to her attention that are in opposition to the legislation, outside of the short title? If so, could the member give us specifics as to what part of the legislation offends them?

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I wish I could have talked about that, but as many of my colleagues mentioned, we are unfortunately under time allocation once again, which means we have less time to speak.

I would like to quote Hannana Siddiqui, head of policy and research for Southall Black Sisters, who talked about criminalization:

The problem for us was that we worked directly with survivors and victims. A lot of them are girls and young women who say to us, "I do want protection from the police, but I don't want to prosecute my parents or my family. I don't want to see them go to jail." They clearly said that if they went to the police and they were going to prosecute, then they would withdraw their charges; they would not cooperate or would not even go to the police in the first place.

Criminalization is therefore a problem. The government is always trying to make laws tougher instead of trying to do prevention. As they say, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That means it is our responsibility to help prevent these crimes against women, to inform them about their rights and to help them navigate our legal system.

I work with women's groups in my riding in west Montreal, and that is exactly the problem I see there. We have to help them with existing laws. Criminalization does not solve existing problems.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The Conservatives are caught up in wishful thinking. Unfortunately, Bill S-7 is another example of a heavy-handed bill that attempts to solve a problem in a way that has not been validated by the experiences of other countries.

The Danes tried this. They passed legislation in 2008, if I am not mistaken, banning forced marriage, but not a single arrest has been made. A Danish national organization for refugee women even said that the legislation passed in Denmark made the problem even worse by forcing women into secrecy.

I wonder if my colleague could comment on that.

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am not familiar with that Danish organization, but as I mentioned earlier in my speech, criminalizing this aspect will increase feelings of isolation among these women. They will feel as though they have fewer avenues of recourse, because they will be afraid of the consequences of criminalization.

Naila Butt, executive director of the Social Services Network, had this to say:

Criminalization of forced marriage, without the much needed institutional support for victims, would only further alienate and harm those facing forced marriage and gender-based violence, with the added insult of being stigmatized that they come from barbaric cultures.

As I mentioned, this is a racist bill that will isolate women, not help them. The bill does not give them any tools to get out of those situations. Everyone here agrees that these are terrible situations that should not exist, and this bill does nothing to improve things.

● (1645)

[English]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to speak on Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

In the Speech from the Throne in October 2013, our government promised it would ensure that no young girl or woman in Canada would become a victim of any cruel practice that violates basic human rights. Such practices are not acceptable on Canadian soil. Bill S-7 would send this clear message to all Canadians and those coming to Canada.

Bill S-7 would deliver on that promise. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act would demonstrate that Canada's openness and generosity does not extend to early and forced marriage, polygamy, and other types of barbaric cultural practices. Canada will not tolerate violence against women or girls, including spousal abuse and violence in the name of so-called honour. Those found guilty of these crimes will be severely punished under Canada's criminal law.

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This bill would establish a national minimum age of 16 for marriage in the Civil Marriage Act. Currently, a minimum age of 16 for marriage exists only in federal legislation pertaining to Quebec. It has never been legislated for the rest of Canada. As a result, the common law applies, which is usually interpreted as a minimum age of 14 for boys and 12 for girls. This bill would set 16 as the minimum age for marriages across Canada, consistent with current practices in countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Civil Marriage Act would also be amended to codify the legal requirements for free and enlightened consent to marriage. Currently the legal requirements for free and enlightened consent for marriage and for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another are legislated in Quebec. Consent is the most critical aspect of a lawful marriage. This amendment would make it clear that no Canadian should ever be forced to marry against their will.

Amendments to the Criminal Code are proposed to provide protection against early or forced marriage, prevent victims from being removed from Canada, and effectively punish perpetrators for violating Canadian laws. The proposed amendments in Bill S-7 are very important because they create offences that specifically address the social harm caused by the public sanctioning of these harmful practices.

More so, the bill proposes two new offences that would extend criminal liability to anyone who knowingly celebrates, aids, or participates in a marriage ceremony in which one or both of the spouses is either under the age of 16 or is marrying against his or her will. This would cover both those who conduct the marriage ceremony and those, such as family members, who have full knowledge that a marriage is forced or involves a child under 16 and actively aids the marriage ceremony taking place. This would include, for example, transporting an unwilling bride to the ceremony or acting as a legal witness.

It is important to note that a person could not be prosecuted for merely being at the scene of a crime and witnessing it; a person would need to have engaged in some conduct specifically directed toward helping an early or forced marriage to occur.

The bill also proposes to make it an offence to remove a child from Canada for the purpose of a forced or underage marriage outside the country. This government is aware of the very disturbing stories of Canadian children being taken abroad for a forced or early marriage. They are told that they are going overseas to a relative's wedding, only to discover upon arrival that the wedding ceremony is, in fact, their own.

• (1650)

Child protection officials who believe that the child will be removed from Canada for a forced or underage marriage lack the requisite legal tools to intervene and to prevent the child's removal from Canada. This bill would change that by adding new offences related to an underage or forced marriage ceremony to the list of offences in the provision that makes it a crime to remove a child from Canada.

The Criminal Code amendments provide a foundation for the very important prevention measures in Bill S-7 to protect vulnerable

Canadians and residents from early and forced marriages. The bill proposes to introduce specific forced or underage marriage peace bonds.

Peace bonds, which are preventive court orders, currently exist in the Criminal Code and are available in circumstances when a person fears, on reasonable grounds, that another person will cause them personal injury or will commit certain types of offences. Amendments would provide courts with the power to impose conditions on an individual when there are reasonable grounds to fear that a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16 will otherwise occur. For example, an order under the new peace bond provisions would prevent a victim from being taken out of Canada and would require the surrender of a passport.

We have heard that many victims of forced marriages are reluctant to contact the authorities prior to the marriage because they do not want their parents or other relatives prosecuted. These peace bonds are an important option available to victims of forced marriages who might be reluctant to contact the authorities prior to marriage because they do not want their parents or other relatives prosecuted. These peace bonds would also reinforce the clear message that forced and underage marriages will not be tolerated in Canada.

Another important measure in Bill S-7 proposes to amend the Criminal Code to limit the defence of provocation so that it would not be available in so-called honour-based killings or many spousal homicide cases. The defence of provocation can currently be raised by a person who is found to have committed murder on the basis that a wrongful act or insult by the victim was sufficient to deprive an ordinary person of the power of self-control, causing them to act suddenly, before there was time for their passions to cool. If successful, even though the person is found to have committed a murder, they are instead convicted of manslaughter.

This bill proposes to restrict the application of the defence of provocation so that it would no longer be available to those who intentionally kill another person in response to conduct that was legal. It would only be available when the victim's conduct amounted to a relatively serious criminal offence.

It is an important amendment because, as a society, we need to send a clear signal that murder should not be excused because the killer was insulted or embarrassed or suffered some other emotional upset. The strongest penalties should be imposed for murder committed because a person was unable to control the actions and decisions of another person.

Finally, Bill S-7 addresses polygamy and reinforces the message that it is a practice that is an affront to Canadian values. Amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act would specify that a permanent resident or a foreign national is inadmissible on the grounds of practising polygamy in Canada. It would allow for the removal of non-citizens who practice polygamy in Canada without the need for a Criminal Code conviction.

I am very proud that the government is sending a strong message to Canadian society and to the world that Canada will not tolerate barbaric cultural practices. I hope that all members of the House will join me in supporting Bill S-7.

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•(1655)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would ask the member the same question that I asked the previous member regarding the legislation.

As the member is no doubt aware, we have been talking a lot about the short title. From the member's perspective, can the short title actually be used in a court of law as an argument for or against any of the measures that are taking place? If the answer to that is no, why would the government not be open to receiving an amendment that would make the legislation less offensive to many of the different stakeholders and Canadians who are quite concerned, particularly about the use of the word "cultural" in the short title?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that we are spending so much time and focus on the title and not on the substance of the bill.

The bill is at second reading. It will go to committee, where there will be an opportunity for further discussion and debate. I would suggest that we should actually focus on what the bill is about.

It is about practices that I think, wherever members sit in this House, we have to consider barbaric. They are. What does "honour killing" mean? Are people going to kill their daughters because they did something that is considered unacceptable on cultural or religious grounds? Practices that include violence against women and girls or domestic violence are barbaric practices that are not allowed in this country.

This country accepts people from all corners of the world. Those people should know, and are informed, that some of the practices or actions that are legal in the country they come from are not legal here

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Our time on the five minutes is starting to wane. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all NDP members will obviously oppose this bill. It is problematic because instead of trying to find a solution to the problem of forced marriage and the resulting abuse, the bill is merely punitive or tends to take a punitive approach. The Criminal Code already contains all the legislative tools we need to sentence someone who, for example, abuses his spouse or confines her.

I would like my colleague to explain what more this bill will actually contribute, given that the courts and police services are already very well equipped to address the problem. We heard from Canadian organizations and international stakeholders that instead of solving this problem, the bill will even drive many women underground, forcing them to remain in the shadows and suffer their plight in silence.

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I do not really understand the logic here. How is this bill going to drive women underground?

The bill contains preventive measures to help women to deal with barbaric, terrible practices. Is it ideal? Probably not. Nothing is

perfect in life. Therefore, it probably could be perfected or made better, but its aim is to help people who come to this country.

I go and meet with organizations in my riding that provide settlement services that help women who come from different countries to understand that in this country they have rights and are protected, and that restrictions that they may have faced in the country they came from do not exist here.

This is something that is happening on the ground. It is financed by CIC. It is financed by Status of Women. It is going on. Is it easy? No, it is not, but this has to continue. We have to inform those people who come here to start a new life in this country. They have to be informed of our regulations and of their power—

•(1700)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak on Bill S-7. This bill contains measures to better protect women and girls in our country.

With this bill, our government is fulfilling a commitment made in the Speech from the Throne in October 2013. That commitment is to ensure that early and forced marriage and other harmful cultural practices, such as polygamist marriages and so-called honour-based violence, do not take place on Canadian soil. We see these activities as absolutely incompatible with Canadian values.

Today I would like to speak to the bill's proposed amendment to the provocation defence. I would like to address a number of misconceptions that have been expressed during debate on this bill.

A person who is found to have committed murder can raise the defence of provocation. They can raise, as a defence, that they killed the victim in the "heat of passion" brought on by "a wrongful act or insult" from the victim. The provocation, they can claim, would be sufficient to cause an ordinary person to lose self-control.

Much has been made of the fact that the defence has failed where it has been raised in the context of honour killings. While this may be the case to date, there is nothing preventing a court from accepting it in the future, and we would like to make sure that does not happen.

The defence has already been raised in at least three honour-killing prosecutions in Canada. The alleged provoking conduct in these cases was real or perceived marital infidelity and other conduct by the victim that the offender perceived as disrespectful or defiant toward them or their families. The particular three claims I mentioned failed owing to the inadequacy of supporting evidence in these cases.

The proposed amendment in Bill S-7 would modernize the defence. Under the bill, the defence of provocation would only be available to an accused found guilty of murder where the conduct of the victim that provoked the accused to kill amounted to a criminal offence with a maximum sentence of at least five years. In other words, it would be a serious offence. The reform would limit the defence so that it would no longer excuse murder where the provoking conduct of the victim was lawful.

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In the Senate debates on this bill, some suggested that the defence of provocation is a long-standing and sound principle of criminal law that is operating in conformity with Canadian values and should not be changed. It was also suggested that the proposed reform would limit the defence to match.

Therefore, the question for us as legislators is whether modern Canadian values do in fact support showing compassion and leniency to those who kill in response to something they find insulting or offensive. I do not believe they do.

It is a different matter if the provoking behaviour is objectively serious and unacceptable, such as criminal conduct. The defence would still be permitted when the provocation was a physical assault or threat or some other serious form of criminality.

I think it is very important to understand the history of the provocation defence. We should also look at countries that share our common law tradition and at their experiences with this defence.

Historically, the defence of provocation emerged in the common law around the 16th century. Initially it was limited to certain categories of conduct, all related to men defending their honour, such as a spontaneous fight or an arranged duel. This also included what a man might do on finding another man committing adultery with his wife.

In the early common law, let us remember that a man's wife was his legal property. The initial provocation defence reflected this social and legal reality of the day, namely that adultery was “the highest invasion of property”, as per the *Mawgridge* case in 1707.

● (1705)

Therefore, a man who killed in response to adultery was considered less blameworthy. It may surprise some members to learn that in the history of our own common-law tradition the provocation defence was the original honour defence.

However, at some point in its history, the honour-related basis for provocation was replaced with the idea that the law should make some allowance for “human frailty”, where a person is provoked beyond the ability to exercise self-control. The specific categories of provoking conduct were eliminated and the provocation defence was made available more generally and broadly. The defence would succeed where a person killed after having lost self-control as a result of any kind of wrongful act or insult by the victim, so long as an ordinary person could also have been provoked to lose his or her self-control in the same circumstances even though not necessarily to the point of killing. This is the form of the provocation defence that was incorporated into Canadian law in the 1800s, and it remains unchanged today.

However, the use of this defence in the cases of so-called honour killings flies in the face of freedom of expression, a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. In order to protect freedom of expression, there is no room to make allowances for intentional killings on the basis of insult or offence. Allowing the provocation defence to be invoked in response to mere insults or offensive conduct is inconsistent with core Canadian values of freedom of expression, liberty and gender equality.

Both internationally and domestically, the provocation defence has been the subject of similar criticisms from a range of quarters in recent years. The Supreme Court of Canada has referred to these criticisms in some of its rulings, stating that only Parliament can address these concerns.

Many point out that the historic origins of the defence still operate to excuse male proprietary or possessory claims over women. This is clearly at odds with our modern values of gender equality and personal autonomy and freedom.

In the past decade, the legislatures of most jurisdictions with a common-law history similar to ours have acted to address some of these concerns. New Zealand and several Australian states have entirely abolished the defence. Most other Australian states have restricted the defence in some measure, as has the United Kingdom. Just last year, the Australian state of New South Wales reformed its provocation defence, including by limiting its scope to provoking conduct that would be a relatively serious criminal offence. This is the same approach proposed in Bill S-7.

Another question that was asked in the Senate was whether the proposed amendment would have the unintended consequence of taking a viable defence away from battered women who kill their abusers, but this is another misperception. In Canada, the provocation defence is rarely raised in these circumstances, but could still be raised if the woman was treated with criminal activity such as assaults or threats.

There are two primary objectives in this bill: the first to prevent the defence from being raised in the future before it is ever accepted by a court or a jury; and the second to modernize the defence more generally, so that it can no longer be used to excuse spousal homicides based on lawful conduct.

The time has come for Canada to bring our law of provocation out of the 17th century and align it with our modern values. Our women and girls deserve nothing less. I hope that all members will support this proposal and all of Bill S-7.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech.

She ended her speech by talking about limiting the provocation defence in order to prohibit crimes of honour. This notorious provocation defence is problematic.

I would like my colleague to explain why this bill would simply limit this defence and not abolish it outright in all such cases that could arise.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, we have chosen not to do that. We believe, in the case of the provocation defence, that where an individual, a Canadian, is threatened, has been criminally assaulted and takes measures to protect himself or herself, this is a reasonable course of action in those cases.

The member will remember that the government passed an act to give lawful protection to people who are threatened, for example, by a home invasion where they may be beaten or tied up and somehow find a way to overpower their attackers, perhaps causing the death of the attacker. Any reasonable society feels that kind of provocation, when it is met with force, sometimes has to be found lawful.

However, in the case of simply an insult or something that another person finds offensive, that is not a legitimate use of the defence, and that is why we are moving to change that.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to say that I do not believe there is any such thing as an honour killing. I think all killings are criminal, and we need to look at them through that lens.

When I had the opportunity to speak to the bill when it was last before the House, I was able to tell the House a little bit about my visit to England last summer where I participated in the Girl Summit that was hosted by Prime Minister David Cameron. There were women from all around the world. There were men from all around the world who were there to discuss the very issues that we are discussing today.

Great Britain has realized that it has its own challenge with early and forced marriage, and it is particularly dealing with that issue.

While I was there I listened to Malala's father, who spoke very eloquently about the issues relating to girls. I wrote down his quote, and I wonder if my colleague might have some thoughts that she could share with the House. He said, "We should work on tomorrow's fathers. Why should I be a different father to my daughter than I am to my son?"

Does my colleague have any thoughts on how we can work with a new generation of young men particularly here in Canada and impress on them the value of girls?

• (1715)

Hon. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the tremendous work she is doing, a lot of it under the radar, to really support measures that foster and that affirm the equality of all, regardless of gender. This is such an important message.

Sadly, in many places of the world, there is still the idea that women and girls have no value, that they are simply chattels to be used and abused as males in the society feel appropriate.

As Canadians we are so fortunate to live in a society where that kind of discrimination is completely rejected. That is why we brought forward the bill, so that as circumstances come to our attention, as society grapples with some of these things such as honour killings and forced marriages, we have the tools to stop it in its tracks and protect Canadian society as a place where women are

treated with dignity, respect and the equality that we believe in so passionately.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to bring some clarity to such a sensitive debate, while the government and the majority are actively causing confusion.

I want to begin by reaffirming my unwavering opposition to polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage. As it happens, I have met with women who are victims of these practices. I do not have harsh enough words to condemn such violence and how it undermines women's dignity. These are practices I have fought against my entire life.

As a member of Parliament, I would be pleased to support any bill that would provide more protection for the victims or help prevent these crimes. However, Bill S-7 just confirms the government's ongoing trend. In March 2012, the Conservatives introduced new legislative measures regarding spousal relationships whereby the sponsored person must live with their sponsor for a period of two years. These measures include a penalty of deportation or a criminal charge if this condition is not met by the sponsored person. I want to remind hon. members that this provision was harshly criticized, and rightly so. Sponsored women who are victims of spousal abuse have no choice but to suffer the violence under threat of deportation. We see how compassionate the Conservatives can be. In April 2014, the hon. member for Mississauga South moved Motion No. 505 to supposedly deal with forced marriages through proxy marriages. I strongly opposed that motion at the time. I am opposing Bill S-7 for the same reasons.

With these various measures, the government is causing confusion and perpetuating xenophobic stereotypes. The increasing number of laws that associate cultural practices with violence against women shows that the government is willing to exploit this tendency in a thinly veiled attempt to win votes. The bill title alone, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, shamefully equates violence against women with certain cultural communities. This is a disgraceful way of doing things. It is ethnocentric and promotes the mistaken idea that violence against women occurs only within cultural minorities. The government is targeting racial minorities by perpetuating offensive stereotypes rather than introducing constructive measures to prevent violence against women.

This bill, like the other legislative measures I mentioned, is not only shameful, it will be ineffective. It will not solve the problems it claims to address since the Criminal Code, specifically sections 273.3 and 292, already provides recourse for the offences created in this bill. What is worse, as in the previous examples, this bill politicizes the issue of sexual violence, and the criminal offences it proposes will only exacerbate the problem. The fight against violence against women begins on the ground. In order to win that fight, we must work with all of the partners available, including those in cultural communities, in order to develop and implement a preventive approach. The bill title alone is a major obstacle to establishing such partnerships with people that this government considers "barbaric".

Government Orders

Beyond the matter of the title, some aspects of this bill jeopardize the safety of women and undermine efforts to combat violence against them. Bill S-7 would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to supposedly help combat polygamy. The fact that, under the bill, the mere suspicion of polygamy can result in inadmissibility to Canada or removal orders will have serious repercussions for women.

The testimony of Avvy Yao-Yao Go, the clinic director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic, during the Senate committee's study was particularly enlightening:

The bill seeks to deport people who are engaged in polygamy, and that would include the very women that the government claims it's trying to protect.

With respect to forced marriages, the measure providing for a prison sentence for anyone involved could prevent potential witnesses from speaking out.

• (1720)

I strongly believe that the criminalization provisions will be counterproductive. The government should opt to take the constructive method proposed by my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard in Motion No. 503 on forced marriage. This motion called on the government to increase funding to organizations working with potential or actual victims.

The organizations working on the ground, which do unbelievable work, have too few material resources. This causes some serious problems, especially when it comes to getting victims to speak out against the practices that victimize them. The government cannot simply punish people. It needs to give organizations in this field the means to protect victims and prevent these crimes.

We would also like to see a consultation process involving women, communities, organizations and experts to form a true picture of the issue and identify the best ways to address it.

I am astounded that the government is refusing to work with the people involved on the ground and to take the necessary measures to accurately quantify this phenomenon.

Other countries have already studied this issue and implemented measures, and we think we should follow their example. The United Kingdom has adopted a method that allows victims to choose between a civil process and a criminal process in the event of prosecution. Giving victims that power can give them the confidence they need to get help and report an individual without necessarily sending family members to jail. What happened in Denmark is also interesting, but for exactly the opposite reason. In 2008, Denmark introduced criminal offences similar to those set out in Bill S-7. In the seven years since, not one criminal has been brought to justice. This shows that Bill S-7's criminalization approach hurts victims by preventing them from reporting crimes.

Our primary objective should be to fight violence against women and help victims, not hurt them, which is what Bill S-7 could end up doing. We need to put an immediate stop to this stigmatizing rhetoric and adopt the proactive approach outlined in my colleague's Motion No. 503.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a number of thoughts come to mind in regard to the government's approach to this legislation.

One of the issues is that member after member from the Conservative Party will talk about how appalled they are at violence against women, domestic abuse and so forth. However, I could talk at great length about other areas where we could be investing much more of our time here in the House. For example, members of opposition parties have been calling for a public inquiry into murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls for a long time now. They are now joined by mayors, premiers, and many different stakeholders from coast to coast to coast on the issue.

When we look at the bill, the government has obviously made it a very high priority, yet it seems to take very small steps in two or three areas.

The part that seems to be most controversial is the name itself. I wonder if the member could provide her thoughts on this question. If the government were to accept an amendment to change the name of the legislation, would the NDP be more open to supporting the legislation?

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I thank my colleague for his question and for reminding everyone that the NDP has been calling on this government to launch an inquiry into the missing and murdered aboriginal women. Indeed, we need to bring in legislation or even a motion to really help women who are victims of violence of any kind. We are not here to criminalize them or further victimize them. Clearly, Bill S-7 has no place here. I urge all members of the House to oppose it.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they say that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The government claims to be a good administrator. However, if we look at just the administrative side of this bill, it seems to me that prevention measures would be better than punitive measures.

What are my colleague's thoughts on that, from a purely administrative point of view?

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very good question.

Of course, from a purely administrative point of view, we are well aware of all the positive effects of prevention. Likewise, when we create prevention programs, we must inform and educate the people concerned.

In a society that claims to be evolved and civilized, it is high time we began with prevention, which should be at the heart of all our policy decisions.

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with regard to my colleague's speech, I would like to reiterate the importance of avoiding extreme positions.

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In any political position, it is important to reflect Canada and be nuanced and balanced. We must not be on either end of the spectrum.

Just by introducing this bill, the government is trying to influence people or scare them, not through the content of the bill, but by exploiting certain prejudices. I invite all the members of the House to be careful and avoid extremes.

• (1730)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks.

In closing, I would like to quote Claude Lévi-Strauss:

The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism.

Believing in barbarism is to divide humanity into the “civilized” and the “savages”.

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. The bill strengthens Canada's commitment to preventing and responding to early and forced marriage, and other barbaric cultural practices both at home and abroad.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, I am pleased to see that our government is taking action in protecting young women and girls. Last year, the committee undertook a study, “Strengthening the Protection of Women In Our Immigration System”, and I am pleased to see that some of the recommendations and comments from witnesses were taken into account when creating the bill.

I am proud to say that Canada has made ending child, early, and forced marriages a priority. In October 2013, Canada announced \$5 million in new money to address the causes and consequences of early and forced marriages around the world. These funds were used for programs in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. More recently, in July 2014, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada is contributing \$20 million over two years to UNICEF toward ending child, early, and forced marriage. The UNICEF project aims to accelerate the movement to end child marriage in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Yemen, and Zambia by supporting efforts in these countries to strengthen both programming and political support to end the practice.

Canada also played an important role in bringing world attention and action to this issue of child, early, and forced marriage, through actions such as spearheading the initiative to establish the International Day of the Girl Child, and co-leading with Zambia a United Nations General Assembly resolution on child, early, and forced marriage.

These barbaric practices predominantly affect women and girls and impair their rights and ability to fully participate in society. Equality of men and women under the law is a fundamental Canadian value that shapes Canadian policy and actions both in the international and domestic areas. Free and healthy societies require the full participation of women. Sadly, in many countries around the world, millions of women and girls continue to be prevented from

full participation because of violence, including through inhumane practices of early and forced marriage.

It is both the reality and the strength of our country that Canadians of very different origins live and work side by side together. New Canadians work hard to learn our languages, our values, and our traditions, and in turn are welcome as equal members of the Canadian family. The languages, cultures, and traditions of new Canadians add to the diversity of Canada, which enriches our lives. At the same time, harmful cultural practices that go against Canadian values and are in violation of Canada's international human rights commitments will not be tolerated in Canada.

Our government is aware of the cases of Canadian children being taken abroad for early forced marriage. Canada is committed to protecting and defending those who are vulnerable to these practices, both domestically and internationally.

This summer, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration participated in several consultations on these issues across the country. Participants told the minister that early and forced marriages are still a harsh reality in Canada.

Our Conservative government has demonstrated its leadership in this area by introducing the bill and also continuing to work with our international partners and community members to find ways to end such harmful practices, which tragically are happening each and every day around the world.

Bill S-7 will strengthen Canadian marriage laws by establishing a new national minimum age for marriage of 16 years. Currently, only in Quebec is the minimum age of marriage set at 16 years. This is because specific federal laws apply only in Quebec. In other parts of Canada, the common law applies. The bill will now set 16 years as the minimum age for marriage across Canada. Some may query why the bill has not raised the minimum age to marry to the age of 18.

• (1735)

The approach in the bill seeks to balance the protections for children against flexibility to reflect the choices of mature minors between the ages of 16 and 18 who make a commitment to one another, such as those who have a child together. It also aligns with the approaches taken in other like-minded countries.

Bill S-7 also contains measures that would amend the Criminal Code to criminalize certain conduct related to underage and forced marriage ceremonies by knowingly officiating or knowingly and actively participating at an underage or forced marriage. For example, these offences may apply to individuals who engage in conduct specifically intended to facilitate the marriage ceremony, such as acting as a legal witness, knowing that one of the parties is under the age of 16 or marrying against their will. These proposed new offences will be punishable by a maximum of five years imprisonment.

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Proposed amendments will also criminalize removing a minor from Canada for a forced or underage marriage. This is done by adding the new offences in relation to underage and forced marriage in the existing offence of removing a child from Canada to commit female genital mutilation or sexual offences. This offence is punishable by a maximum of five years imprisonment. Bill S-7 maintains this penalty. Countries such as Australia and Norway have similar criminal measures which Canada has looked to in the development of this bill.

Other proposed amendments in this bill are prevention measures that will provide courts with the authority to issue peace bonds and conditions on an individual when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a forced marriage or an underage marriage will otherwise occur. As part of the conditions that would be available, a court could order a defendant to avoid making any plans or arrangements for a marriage, whether inside or outside Canada, to surrender travel documents or to participate in a family violence counselling program.

The creation of specific forced or underage marriage peace bonds to prevent someone from being taken abroad for the purposes of early or forced marriage is similar to forced marriage civil protection orders in the United Kingdom. In addition, Bill S-7 would amend the Criminal Code to ensure that the defence of provocation would not apply in so-called honour killings and many spousal homicides. Currently, any conduct by the victim, including insults and other forms of offensive behaviour that are lawful, can potentially qualify as provocation if it is found to be sufficient to cause an ordinary person to lose self-control, the accused was not expecting it and the killing was sudden.

The proposed amendment will limit the defence of provocation so that lawful conduct by the victim that might be perceived by the accused as an insult, or offend that person or their sense of family honour or reputation, cannot excuse murder. Only conduct by the victim that amounts to a relatively serious criminal offence, such as an offence under the Criminal Code punishable by at least five years in prison, could be argued to be provocation for the purposes of the defence.

The provocation defence has either been abolished or restricted in almost every common law jurisdiction like Canada, such as most Australian states, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

Finally, to better prevent polygamy from occurring on Canadian soil, Bill S-7 would create a new ground of inadmissibility in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for practising polygamy. A criminal conviction or finding of misrepresentation is currently required before polygamists can be found inadmissible.

The bill would make amendments to the IRPA so polygamist permanent residents or foreign nationals who are or will be physically present in Canada with any of their spouses would be considered to be practising polygamy in Canada. The permanent resident or foreign national could be found inadmissible on that basis alone, without requiring evidence that the person misrepresented their situation or has a criminal conviction.

I have discussed some of the very important aspects of this bill, which sends a strong message that Canada condemns barbaric cultural practices not only domestically but internationally as well.

• (1740)

Canada has and will continue to be seen as an independent leader on these important international rights. While the opposition refuses to even call these practices “barbaric”, it is clear that our government is taking action to prevent these barbaric practices from occurring on Canadian soil.

I hope all hon. members of the House will support this important legislation that will protect victims, predominately women and girls, from such intolerable and inhumane practices.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech and we must admit that his main point is rather absurd.

The short title of this bill, which seeks to eliminate barbaric cultural practices, is obviously offensive. It is tinged with racism. Furthermore, we might ask why the Conservatives are trying to use this type of title and this type of bill. It is probably for election purposes. While we are at it, we could debate other barbaric practices. Perhaps we could discuss torture or the use of information obtained by torture.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of torture, for example. Is that a barbaric practice?

[*English*]

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the NDP does not get it. This is very simple. For the purposes of this initiative, the term “barbaric cultural practices” encompasses forms of gender-based family violence, early, forced and polygamous marriage, female genital mutilation and honour based violence. There is nothing racist about that. It is very simple, and I do not understand why the NDP is against the measures that we would put in place to stem these practices.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I can provide some clarity for the member. There is the content of the legislation itself, which deals with polygamy, forced marriage and early marriage by setting a minimum age. It also deals in part with some domestic violence issues.

We then have the short title, which has offended a great number of people for a wide variety of reasons. It is not understood why the Prime Minister's Office has determined that we have to incorporate the word “cultural” into the short title. Ultimately, it would not have any bearing on the legislation when the courts of Canada deal with it. They do not look at the short title of a bill and say that they have to use it as part of their interpretation in a disposition.

The government seems to want to make a political statement. The connotation of that political statement in the eyes of many, especially stakeholders and others, including myself, is that there is a racial component to it.

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Why incorporate the word “cultural”? I am not interested in what the Prime Minister's Office has to say. I have heard a lot of the rebuttal coming from the Prime Minister's Office. I am interested in the member's personal opinion on that issue.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Speaker, in the title, “cultural” does not refer to any one individual culture. In fact, many of the issues that we are concerned about are clearly present in a number of different cultures. A number of people who have been accused of these horrible and barbaric practices tell the courts how they treat women or how they treat their daughters as part of their culture. It is important to point out exactly what this is.

Furthermore, this question comes from a member whose party leader does not want to call these practices “barbaric”. We say exactly what they are. They are barbaric cultural practices and they have no place in Canada.

● (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill S-7, which has a rather odd title. We are debating the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act.

I listened to several colleagues on the opposite side of the House, and also on this side, talk about the title. We are talking about the title because the government clearly intends to start this debate in a rather extreme way. The government is generalizing. That has been the trend recently with the government and the Prime Minister. We also heard several Conservative members attack a culture or a cultural community that has already been targeted by a great deal of generalization. The Conservatives clearly intend to breed a culture of fear, whether through the debate in the House on what will happen with Canada's intervention in Iraq or through its practice of pigeonholing certain communities.

As a member of a cultural community myself, I believe that the government is intentionally seeking to divide people with its approach. The government wants to tackle this issue. We see that. Obviously, the Conservatives came up with a certain directive so that they could go back to their ridings, go on the radio and tell women to go back where they came from if they do not like how things are done in Canada. Unfortunately, that is what the chair of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities did. I am a member of that committee.

To come back to the debate we are having today on Bill S-7, let us be clear: the NDP is against forced marriage, underage marriage and polygamy. These issues are clear. Despite the rhetoric that we are hearing from the other side of the House, I think everyone here and all Canadians agree on these issues.

However, the government's level of debate is somewhat shameful. I am talking about form. With regard to the substance of the debate, when we listen to the Conservatives speak, we hear a bit about the main objective. However, the problem is the same as it is with many bills. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for a short time and I saw Conservative bills that created criminal offences. When it comes to criminalization, the Conservatives' motto is law and order. As a result, they are making everything a crime. They are going to put people in prison. They are going to build megaprisons and that is how they are going to solve

society's problems. Unfortunately, that is a very dogmatic approach that is so typical of the Conservatives. It really is their way of doing things. However, the problem with that is that they do not think about the people who will be affected.

In this particular case, when we talk about forced marriage, for example, we are talking about women and children, who are the most likely victims. They will technically be victims of the Conservatives' bill. That is why I will explain why I oppose this bill. The government comes in with a sledgehammer and says that we will throw people in prison without looking at the facts or listening to stakeholders. The government makes a broad generalization and then says that this is the solution. The government has no data on forced marriages, and we have no statistics to know what is going on in Canada. What is really happening?

As sensible legislators, we must look at what other countries are doing. I want to cite one of the examples given today, which I will continue to reference. If we look at what happens in Denmark, for example, we can see that a bill somewhat similar to the government's bill was passed in 2008, if I am not mistaken. Since then, not a single charge has been laid and there has been no meaningful impact.

Once again, the government has come to us with a bill that claims to change everything and fix everything, but in reality it does not address a real problem. Let me clarify. I am not saying that the situation is not a problem. I agree that forced marriages are a problem and that we are against them. However, the government's reaction is excessive. I am not defending the practice. I am simply thinking about the victims.

● (1750)

They want to deport or imprison people who practice polygamy, but that would victimize the women and children. The fact is that most of the people who practice polygamy are men, but the women, who do not always know it, end up suffering the consequences of this crime. Basically, I am worried about these children and these women.

Some of the measures in this bill are already in the Criminal Code. For example, we know that polygamy is not allowed in Canada, and that makes sense. The same applies to forced marriages.

The NDP is opposed to the government's approach because we have a different philosophy: prevention. It is not right to make such practices a crime without considering the consequences for families, women and children. We think prevention should come first. That is why I am so proud of Motion No. 563, which was moved by my colleague, our immigration critic. This motion outlines all of the measures we need to take. Here it is:

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That, in the opinion of the House, forced marriages are a crime that constitutes violence against women and consequently, the government should: (a) strongly condemn the practice; (b) increase funding to organizations working with potential or actual victims; (c) consult with women, communities, organizations, and experts to form a true picture of the issue and to identify the best ways to address it; (d) allow women with conditional permanent resident status to remain in Canada if their partners are deported due to polygamy or forced marriage; (e) invest in information programs tailored to immigrant women; (f) develop culturally appropriate training programs for service providers dealing with immigrant women such as the police and social workers, as well as officers of the Canada Border Service Agency and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration; (g) restore funding to Status of Women Canada; and (h) implement the NDP's national plan for a strategy to address violence against women.

I am proud of this motion moved by my colleague, our immigration critic, because it clearly explains our vision and our proposal. At the risk of repeating myself, the Conservatives favour criminalization while ignoring the consequences and without any prevention measures. When we talk about criminalization, it is all about a deed already done. It is about introducing punitive measures and putting people in prison.

We in the NDP believe in investing in prevention and education. It is not through bills with titles that include terms like “barbaric cultural practices”—and so many other Conservative bills—that we will promote dialogue and education. On the contrary, this shows a certain closed-mindedness.

I am not saying that the practices targeted by this bill are acceptable. On the contrary, they are completely unacceptable. However, as an elected member, it saddens me to hear the Prime Minister, some members and even ministers say things that make an entire cultural community in our society feel like it is under attack. This is not coming from me. Unfortunately, the Conservative government clearly had every intention of attacking certain cultural communities for purely partisan political purposes. It is troubling.

For that reason, and all the other reasons I mentioned earlier, I will be opposing this bill at second reading. The government should listen to what the opposition has to say, consult the experts and, above all, do its homework so that it really understands the consequences of its actions for the people it is trying to protect.

• (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the comments of my colleague. The member opposite does not quite understand that we are not targeting one culture or one cultural community, but those who use their culture as an excuse when practising these barbaric acts. People come to Canada to participate in a shared value, and these barbaric practices are certainly not our shared value.

Let me quote a human rights lawyer, Taima Al-Jayoush, who had this to say about the bill:

When we describe a crime as “barbaric” we are simply calling it what it is. No one should identify with it except the ones who have committed such a crime. It is not directed at any certain community.

Why will the opposition not stand up for these victims and take action? Since this is an important piece of legislation, it should not be playing a political game at this time. It should stand up for people's lives.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned—and I hope he listened to what I had to say—our concern is with the victim. We want to make sure that the victims are protected, and that is one of the problems New Democrats have with this bill.

This measure is not about prevention. The government is actually cutting funds for Status of Women.

[*Translation*]

On the one hand, as I explained, the bill simply criminalizes people, without really tackling the problem itself. The Conservative government has cut social programs, which has had a direct impact. I have met with community organizations that have told me that their funding has been cut.

[*English*]

These are organizations to help immigrants get involved and get integrated, and that is what the government is cutting. It is cutting funds to these organizations, and New Democrats see the problems that arise from that. Our concern is actually about the victims, the women and kids, who are affected by that. The government's actions are actually making it worse for them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's comments about the NDP motion that he referred to regarding deportations, and the example that a spouse who has been subjected to abuse would be able to stay in Canada.

My question is about temporary visas or refugee claimants when deportations are involved. Is it the NDP's position, then, that in those two instances, if domestic violence is claimed, those people would also be allowed to stay in Canada?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I have a quote from the clinic director of the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic. It is pretty clear, so I will read it. It states:

Attacking the issue of domestic violence through the lens of immigration and criminal law is wrong-headed. The bill seeks to deport people who are engaged in polygamy, and that would include the very women that the government claims it's trying to protect. The denial of permanent and/or temporary resident status to people involved in polygamous relationships will not have the desired effect of protecting women; it will simply bar women in such relationships from coming to Canada.

• (1800)

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to speak in this House in support of Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. If the measures in this bill are implemented, they will amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act, and the Criminal Code to add further protection for vulnerable individuals, in particular women and girls.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, gender-based violence is a sad reality for women and girls across this country. Whether they are Canadian-born or newcomers to Canada, in too many cases the violence comes in the form of abusive cultural practices that have no place in this country. I am speaking about practices such as polygamy, underage marriage, forced marriage, and so-called honour killings. These abusive practices have damaging and wide-ranging consequences for the victims, and they also harm victims' children, homes, and communities. Indeed, they severely affect all those involved, from influencing whether individuals can successfully immigrate to Canada to breaking down opportunities for integration and economic success.

Our Conservative government made a strong commitment in the recent Speech from the Throne to prevent and counter violence against women and girls within the borders of this country. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act is a concrete example of this commitment. Its proposed measures are worthy of the support of all parliamentarians, because they would clearly help ensure that barbaric cultural practices do not occur on Canadian soil. Bill S-7 would send a clear message to newcomers to Canada, as well as to those who are already part of Canadian society, that such practices are unacceptable here.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration participated in many round tables and consultations across Canada. Participants told the minister that early and forced marriage, so-called honour killings, and polygamy still occur in Canada. These practices that occur across all cultures and ethnicities will not be tolerated in Canada, and our immigration system will not be used as a vehicle to perpetuate these acts. This bill reinforces the message that these practices are completely incompatible with Canadian values and will not be tolerated.

As I said, one of these practices is polygamy, which although illegal in Canada, is an accepted practice in a number of other countries around the world. In a 2011 ruling that upheld the constitutionality of Canada's polygamy law, Chief Justice Bauman, of the B.C. Supreme Court, found that there were physical, psychological, and social harms associated with the practice of polygamous marriages. He found that women in polygamous relationships “face higher rates of domestic violence and abuse, including sexual abuse”, that “[c]hildren in polygamous families face higher infant mortality” and “tend to suffer more emotional, behavioural and physical problems, as well as lower educational achievement”, that polygamous families face “higher levels of conflict, emotional stress and tension”, and that “[p]olygamy institutionalizes gender inequality”.

For these reasons and more, we must enact measures that increase our ability to prevent polygamy from occurring on Canadian soil. Bill S-7 would do so by enhancing existing immigration tools to render both temporary and permanent residents inadmissible for practising polygamy in Canada.

Of course, polygamy is not the only cultural practice that contradicts Canadian values and that causes harm to its victims. That is why Bill S-7 contains measures to help counter early and forced marriages. These measures include setting a national minimum age of 16 years of age for marriage. Currently there is no national

minimum age for marriage in Canada. Federal law, which applies only in Quebec, sets the minimum age at 16.

● (1805)

In other parts of Canada common law applies. There is some uncertainty about the common law minimum age, but it is generally considered to be 12 for girls and 14 for boys. Although in practice very few marriages in Canada involve people under the age of 16, setting a national minimum age of 16 or older for marriage would make it clear that underage marriage is unacceptable in Canada and will not be tolerated here.

Other proposed amendments to the Civil Marriage Act in Bill S-7 include codifying the requirement that those getting married must give their free and enlightened consent to marry each other and the requirement for the dissolution of any previous marriage. In addition, Bill S-7 contains measures that would amend the Criminal Code to help prevent forced or underage marriage and would create a new peace bond that could be used to prevent an underage or forced marriage, for example, by requiring the surrender of a passport, as well as preventing a child from being taken out of Canada.

Also notable are the measures in the bill that address so-called honour killings, which are usually premeditated and committed with some degree of approval from family or community members. However, in some cases they may also be alleged to be spontaneous killings in response to behaviour by the victim that is perceived to be disrespectful, insulting or harmful to a family's reputation. In Canadian law, an individual facing murder charges can raise the defence of provocation. If this defence is successful, it can result in a reduced sentence.

The defence of provocation has been raised, so far unsuccessfully, in several so-called honour killing cases in Canada. Accused murderers have claimed that real or perceived marital infidelity, disrespect, defiance or insulting behaviour on the part of the victims toward their spouse, sibling or parent provoked the killing.

This provision may or may not have yet been successful, but what happens if it is successful one day? We must not take the chance. No one should be able to use the defence that they violently harmed another because they were provoked. It is simply contrary to Canadian values for lawful behaviour by a person, no matter how it may be perceived as insulting, to excuse their murder.

That is why measures in Bill S-7 would amend the Criminal Code so that such legal conduct by a victim could never be considered as provocation.

In conclusion, I am sure all my hon. colleagues would agree that we must stand up for all victims of violence and abuse and take necessary action to prevent these practices from happening on Canadian soil. That is exactly what we would be doing by ensuring the bill's passage into law, and that is exactly why I hope everyone in the House will join me in supporting the passage of Bill S-7. I hope all hon. members of the House look past politics and vote in favour of the bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech.

Government Orders

The Conservatives' speeches unfortunately sound a bit like the speeches charlatans made in days gone by, when they tried to sell healthy people remedies that would solve all their problems and whatever was ailing them and even give them more energy.

In reality, this bill seeks to replace a host of Criminal Code provisions that in fact prevent assault-related abuses. Obviously, I am not talking about murder. We can talk about threats and coercion, but the troubling thing is that this comes back again to the famous defence of provocation, and it is applied strictly to one category of murder with a racist connotation or, in any case, to only a small part of the population.

I would like my colleague to tell me why this is being applied to that category, where this defence has never managed to prevent a conviction, when this exists for other categories of murder, which are just as unacceptable.

• (1810)

[*English*]

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act demonstrates that openness and generosity does not extend to early and forced marriages, polygamy, or other types of barbaric cultural practices.

Canadians, as I said in my speech, will not tolerate any type of violence against women and girls, including spousal abuse, violence in the name of so-called honour, or other violence. Those found guilty of these crimes must be severely punished under Canada's criminal laws.

The purpose of this proposed legislation is to stand up for the victims of violence and abuse and to send a very clear and strong message to those in Canada, and those wishing to come to Canada, that such practices will not be tolerated on Canadians soil.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, other Conservative speakers have said that this is meeting their goals and objectives from the 2013 throne speech. I would suggest that they have set the bar relatively low.

Violence and abuse of women and girls is a very serious issue, but does this legislation make a difference? There are some aspects, to which I have made reference all afternoon, that would make some difference. It is a step forward. However, it is nowhere near what the Conservatives are trumpeting from the rooftops in terms of what it actually does.

There is a great number of Canadians who are offended by the decision from the Prime Minister's Office to incorporate the cultural aspect in the short title.

My last question is to the member because we are under time allocation. Given the importance of the issue, why does she believe that the government incorporated such a provocative short title, which would not be utilized in a court of law. It is more of a political statement coming from the Prime Minister's Office. Why does she feel that "cultural" has to be incorporated in the short title when it offends so many Canadians?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that our government announced its commitment to take these steps in the 2013 Speech from the Throne. This was followed up in the 2015

series of round table consultations, led by our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, on violence against women in the context of immigration.

We think Bill S-7 is also consistent with the aims of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration on the issue of protecting women in our immigration system. These actions contained in the bill build on existing initiatives that are aimed at ensuring that immigrant women and girls in vulnerable situations have access to support and services that meet their unique needs.

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act sends a clear message to those coming to Canada that forced marriages and honour-based violence, or any other forms of barbaric cultural practices, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The bill therefore deserves the full support of all the members on both sides of the House.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, March 12, 2015, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

• (1815)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you will find consent to see the clock at 6:30.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from March 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at third reading stage of Bill C-2.

Call in the members.

● (1840)

[English]

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

(Division No. 353)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Hayes
Hiebert	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenny (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	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Perkins	Poilievre
Preston	Raith
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trottier	Truppe

Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
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 — 143	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Allen (Welland)
Andrews	Angus
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélanger	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brisson	Brousseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	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	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jones
Julian	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Raynault
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriot	Vaughan— 108

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Adjournment Proceedings

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Raif Badawi is a Saudi Arabian—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Maria Mourani: I am sorry. There is too much noise.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Could members please take their conversations outside the chamber as soon as possible?

[*Translation*]

Let us try again. The hon. member for Ahuntsic.

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, Raif Badawi is a Saudi Arabian. In 2008, he and Souad al-Shammari, a Saudi Arabian women's rights activist, created the site Free Saudi Liberals in support of religious freedom. It was a blog where people could discuss this issue online.

In 2008, he was arrested, questioned and then released. Nevertheless, he was charged with creating a website that insults Islam and forced to leave the country. He returned to Saudi Arabia in 2009 and, although the charges against him had supposedly been dropped, he was banned from leaving the country and had his bank account frozen.

In 2011, he was again arrested on charges that his website undermined religious values. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for religious insult and blasphemy. The first 50 lashes were administered but the rest of his punishment has been repeatedly postponed, as we have heard in the media.

I, along with other parliamentarians from other places, met with Mr. Badawi's wife, and she told us how urgent the situation is. We know that her husband's physical and emotional health has greatly deteriorated. We must therefore take action.

Many countries have reacted to this inhumane situation. For example, Sweden's foreign affairs minister said that the practice of flogging is straight out of the Middle Ages, and the Swedish government has not renewed its military co-operation agreement with Saudi Arabia, which expires in May.

Mr. Badawi's wife, Ms. Haidar, has been living in Quebec with their children since October 31, 2013, and the Premier of Quebec, Mr. Couillard, told representatives of Saudi authorities in Canada that we want to bring Mr. Badawi here.

Furthermore, Quebec's international affairs minister, my colleague the member for Acadie, Christine St-Pierre, called Mr. Badawi's treatment inhumane and called on the Conservative government to

take action in light of the family's situation, even though Mr. Badawi is not a Canadian citizen.

The federal government has granted Mrs. Badawi and her children the status of political refugees in Canada.

People in Sherbrooke mobilized and held vigils to support Mr. Badawi. A vigil was also held in Quebec City. Elected officials in Montreal unanimously called on the Canadian government to take action.

However, the Prime Minister is the first to talk about barbaric practices when it suits him, and we even voted today on a bill that he decided to call the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. He likes to talk about barbarism.

Will he follow the Quebec premier's lead and ask that Mr. Badawi be sent here? Will he personally get involved in this case?

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite is well aware, the minister and our government have taken a very strong stand on this issue. We consider the punishment of Mr. Badawi to be in violation of human dignity and of his personal rights.

We will continue to call for clemency in his case, and we will continue to promote human rights around the world as part of our government's policies.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, the government does not seem to have much to say about this.

Here are the facts. Mr. Badawi did not do anything wrong. All he did was create a blog in support of freedom of religion in Saudi Arabia. His family has political asylum here, so he has some significant ties to Quebec and Canada.

When will the Prime Minister call for his release? I do not understand why he does not talk about Mr. Badawi during his discussions with the Saudi princes, the representatives and the heads of state there.

I would ask my colleague to ensure that his leader, his Prime Minister, do this, so that it does not take 10 years for Mr. Badawi to get to Canada.

● (1850)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was clear the first time. The member should be aware that the minister and our government have taken a strong stand on this issue. We consider the punishment of Mr. Badawi to be in violation of his human dignity and his personal rights. We continue to call internationally for clemency in his case, and we will continue to promote human rights around the world as part of our government's policy.

Adjournment Proceedings

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today. A few weeks ago I asked a very clear question to the government about the important homelessness partnering strategy, the HPS, a federal program to fight homelessness. Homelessness is a problem in every city, including Quebec City. The problem may not be as bad in Quebec City as it is in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, but homelessness is still an issue.

Why do we not see many homeless people on the streets of Quebec City? It is probably because there are organizations to help them, organizations that are proactive and try to ensure that people do not become homeless. If a person does become homeless, these organizations can help that person and follow up with them to ensure that the person is on the right track.

Prevention makes all the difference. Prevention is very important in Quebec City. Indeed, there about 36 listed organizations that are taking concrete action against homelessness in this city. Of these 36 organizations, 26 are funded by the federal government's homelessness partnering strategy, or HPS. All these 26 organizations are to use 55% of their federal funding on prevention and all services not related to housing. We know that the Conservatives want to promote the housing first program, which aims to ensure that every homeless person has a roof over their head.

However, fighting homelessness does not just involve providing housing for a homeless person. If the homeless have health, mental or psychological problems, they are entitled to a certain amount of follow-up. It also means ensuring that the resources are available. That is what is important. The Conservative government announced that it was going to eliminate the entire budget for prevention. It does not respect the holistic approach preferred by the Quebec City stakeholders that have been working together on this issue. That is our criticism of the Conservative government. Without these funds, the organizations cannot provide everything I talked about earlier.

If the government does not understand the reality in Quebec City and the holistic approach that makes all the difference, sooner or later we will once again see homeless people roaming the streets because they have not been helped by the system.

I have plenty of examples. I am in frequent contact with these organizations, and I salute them because they do exceptional work. One of these is the Maison de Lauberivière, a major shelter in Quebec City. Its trust is in jeopardy. That trust keeps a roof over people's heads and prevents them from becoming homeless again. The Maison de Lauberivière provides many different services, such as those helping people sober up. All of these services have been affected. Another organization is the Salvation Army, and I have close ties to these people who work hard to follow up. Another is the YWCA. Services provided by these four organizations will be cut unless this approach is taken.

When it comes to homelessness, I think the federal government should play a much bigger role. It should prevent rather than cure because that costs much less. This is the economical choice. I urge the government to sit down with people from Quebec City and understand how they are working together on this issue.

● (1855)

[English]

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Québec has some questions about our homelessness partnering strategy, questions that show she does not fully understand the policy that we are implementing. She has asked why we are not going with approaches that work. That is precisely what we are doing.

We have made housing first the cornerstone of our homelessness partnering strategy because it does work. Housing first is a proven, evidence-based approach. Housing first aims to stabilize the lives of homeless people for the long term, first by moving them into permanent housing and then by providing them additional support for the underlying problems like addiction and mental illness.

Last year, the Mental Health Commission of Canada released the results of the largest study of its kind, the At Home/Chez Soi project. The study found strong evidence that the housing first approach was effective in reducing chronic homelessness, while alleviating the pressure on other shelter, health and judicial services. Our former approach to homelessness was not reducing the size of the homelessness population. It was time for us to try something new, so we did.

The hon. member also asks why we are imposing this one-size-fits-all solution, but this is hardly the case. The homelessness partnering strategy, or HPS, allows communities to assess their own needs and develop projects to meet those needs. The federal government entrusts a community body, often a municipal government, with the responsibility of selecting and managing HPS projects within its own area. All requests for funding must go through that body.

In Quebec, the homelessness partnering strategy is delivered in partnership with the Quebec government and community partners that are responsible for identifying priorities, launching calls for proposal and selecting projects to recommend for HPS funding.

Local organizations know best when it comes to deciding which projects will best serve the needs of their own communities. That is why we have given them the authority to make their own spending decisions. Local organizations retain the flexibility to invest in other approaches to reduce homelessness at a local level, such as shelters or transitional housing. It means they may continue to dedicate a portion of their funding to non-housing first projects just as they did before.

Housing first is being introduced gradually across the country over the next two years. It is true that a focus on that new approach will be a shift for some communities, but it is an approach that works.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, we have asked the Conservative government multiple times to maintain the general character of the homelessness partnering strategy. The NDP recognizes the excellent results obtained by the At Home program but believes that the housing first approach is not a panacea because it cannot respond to all types of requests. That is the subtle difference that must be understood and that my colleague opposite would do well to understand.

The NDP believes in using a variety of approaches to combat homelessness, and we believe in the importance of prevention.

I spoke about the jobs affected by these cuts. I am thinking of the Maison Richelieu hébergement jeunesse, where three jobs are funded by the HPS; the Centre résidentiel et communautaire Jacques-Cartier—my neighbours, the people who work across from my office—where two jobs are funded by the HPS. These organizations provide transitional housing for young people aged 16 to 35. As I was saying, the Fiducie de la Maison de Lauberivière has four jobs funded by the HPS. This organization provides budgeting services. It helps people to manage their income and expenditures and provides psychosocial evaluation and follow-up.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, we are well aware that organizations that help the homeless are concerned about the transition to the housing first approach. I want to reassure the hon. member for Québec that these organizations have time to adjust. Our two governments are currently discussing how we can effectively coordinate our approaches. We want to coordinate them in a way that respects the priorities of each level of government.

Discussions regarding the Canada-Quebec agreement on the homelessness partnering strategy 2014-2019 are nearing their conclusion. The two governments agreed to a one-year transition period beginning April 1, 2014. This ensured that certain organizations in Quebec continued to receive funding and avoided any gap in client services.

We will continue to ensure the effective delivery of homelessness programs and services in Quebec and, in fact, right across Canada.

SENIORS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we desperately need a plan to deal with Canada's aging population. There needs to be practical and effective planning for the nearly 10 million people who will be seniors in the next 25 years.

The Canadian Medical Association is calling for a comprehensive seniors strategy because it understands the social determinants of health and future needs. Being able to house oneself properly and feed oneself adequately makes one a healthier person, with fewer visits to the emergency room, fewer and shorter hospital stays, and less medication prescribed. In short, living in a dignified situation promotes health and reduces health costs for all of us in the long run.

When the current government enacts measures that increase the number of seniors living in poverty, it creates an increased burden on the health care and support system. It is the downloading of a federal responsibility to provinces, communities, and families. There is

absolutely no excuse to leave one Canadian senior living in poverty, and furthermore, the achievable alternative just makes good fiscal sense. We have the responsibility to do something about seniors' poverty and we cannot afford not to.

As I already said, the number of seniors in Canada is projected to increase from 4.2 million in 2005 to 9.8 million in 2036. With so many more seniors retiring in the years to come, we need to put measures in place right now to avoid dramatic increases in the rate of seniors living in poverty in the future.

A study released by Laval University in September shows that the change imposed by the Conservatives that raises the age of eligibility for OAS from 65 to 67 years adversely affects those who can least afford it. It will increase the percentage of seniors who live in poverty from 6% now to 17%. The study goes on to point out that any revenues the government would realize with the delayed retirement age could be achieved by alternate reforms without having such large impacts on seniors at the lowest income range. The current government is clearly not preparing for the increased number of seniors in Canada's future, let alone ensuring that no Canadian senior today need live in poverty.

In addition to the research done by Laval University, we have just recently heard from researchers at the University of British Columbia, who have demonstrated that a universal pharmacare plan, something that every developed country in the world with a medicare plan already has, would actually save billions of dollars. Such a plan would benefit every Canadian, especially those living in poverty, and it certainly would ensure that no Canadian senior need live in poverty as well.

A national pharmacare plan should be part of an effective strategy on aging, as should a national housing strategy that allows seniors to stay in their own homes as long as possible, as should a truly universal, affordable, and accessible health care system that addresses the particular needs of an aging population.

The current government's solution to seniors' poverty and seniors' access to resources is to offer tax breaks to those who do not need them and to trumpet ineffective strategies like the pooled registered pension plan. We have heard all about how much revenue the government will lose with tax-free savings accounts, another luxury that a very small proportion of Canadians will be able to receive. Interestingly, when they were first elected, the Conservatives increased the GIS. They have forgotten all about this.

The New Democrats have a plan that would work, and when we are in government, we will implement it.

● (1900)

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada is facing major demographic changes. Our population is aging. Our birth rate is declining. Boomers are retiring in large numbers. People are living longer and healthier lives. By 2036, nearly 1 in 4 Canadians will be over the age of 65, compared to 1 in 7 today.

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Just 40 years ago there were seven working-age Canadians for every person over the age of 65. Today there are only four. In less than 20 years, there will be only two. This has far-reaching repercussions on the sustainability of some of our benefits and programs. That is why the government is determined to ensure that programs, like old age security, continue to be there for Canadians, not just now, but in the future.

In 2012, changes were introduced to eligibility to ensure the program's future sustainability. The eligibility age to receive the OAS benefit and the guaranteed income supplement will gradually increase from 65 to 67, beginning in 2023 and will be fully implemented by 2029. This provides a significant transition period, allowing Canadians adequate time to adjust their retirement income plans to minimize the impact of these changes.

In the meantime, to help Canadians plan for financial security, Service Canada has updated the Canadian retirement income calculator. This online tool provides Canadians with important information on retirement income from a variety of sources, including old age security and the Canada pension plan.

We have also made changes to income security programs to provide Canadians with more choice and flexibility in regard to life, work and retirement. In addition, Canada's public pensions have played a major role in reducing the incidence of poverty among seniors.

The low-income rate for seniors has fallen from 21.4% in 1980 to 5.2% in 2011. This is one of the lowest rates in the industrial world. Together, the OAS pension and the GIS ensure a minimum income for seniors.

Last year, the OAS program provided nearly \$42 billion in benefits to more than five million Canadians, including 1.7 million low-income pensioners. In recent years, we increased the GIS with an investment of \$300 million per year. This is the largest increase for the lowest-income seniors in more than 25 years.

The Government of Canada is committed to doing everything we can to ensure that seniors in Canada enjoy the highest quality of life possible. We have cut taxes for seniors and removed hundreds of thousands of seniors from the tax rolls completely through topping up the GIS and introducing pension income splitting. We offer the targeted initiative for older workers, which assists unemployed older workers in upgrading their skills and gaining valuable experience to help them stay in the workforce.

The Government of Canada has taken other actions that benefit seniors, such as addressing affordable housing for low-income Canadians. In our last budget, the government reaffirmed its commitment to provide more than \$1.25 billion over five years to renew the investment in affordable housing.

We increased funding for the new horizons for seniors program by nearly \$5 million per year, in addition to the \$45 million invested annually. This \$5 million will be added on an ongoing basis.

• (1905)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, we all know about their unfair and ineffective plans. Conservatives think that creating the environment for every Canadian senior to retire with dignity costs too much. Why can we not just admit the truth? OAS, GIS and CPP are entirely sustainable and they can be relied upon to carry us forward.

Doubling the CPP would go a long way to addressing the needs of all Canadians for retirement security, without lining the pockets of the banks in service and administration fees. A universal pharmacare program would save the government money in the long run.

All of these measures constitute the tools we have at our fingertips to ensure that no Canadian senior need live in poverty. Instead, the Conservatives have raised the age of eligibility for OAS by two years and virtually guaranteed an increase in the number of future seniors living in poverty. Why are the Conservatives ignoring the facts and leaving Canadian seniors without hope?

Mr. Scott Armstrong: Mr. Speaker, our country is recognized as having one of the best retirement income systems in the world. Last year, the old age security program provided nearly \$42 billion in benefits to more than five million Canadians, including 1.7 million low-income pensioners.

In recent years, we increased the guaranteed income supplement with an investment of \$300 million per year. That is the highest percentage increase for the lowest-income seniors in more than a quarter of a century.

Canada's public pensions have played a major role in reducing the incidence of poverty among seniors. The low-income rate for seniors has fallen from 21.4% in 1980 to 5.2% in 2011, one of the lowest rates in the industrial world.

Our government is committed to continually improving the programs we have for seniors and the benefits and services we provide our seniors. We are getting the job done for seniors across the country. We hope the NDP will support that.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. 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 7:09 p.m.)

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