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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

A message from His Excellency the Governor General transmitting the main estimates for the financial year ending March 31, 2017 was presented by the President of the Treasury Board and read by the Speaker to the House.

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● (1005)

[*English*]

FEDERAL TAX EXPENDITURES

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of tabling a document on behalf of the Minister of Finance, in both official languages, entitled "Report on Federal Tax Expenditures", pursuant to Standing Order 32(2).

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PROTECTION OF PREGNANT WOMEN AND THEIR PREBORN CHILDREN ACT (CASSIE AND MOLLY'S LAW)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (injuring or causing the death of a preborn child while committing an offence).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be standing here today introducing my first private member's bill, the protection of pregnant women and their preborn children act, also known as Cassie and Molly's law.

The building of a family and a new generation should be joyful and exciting. The tragedy of Cassie and Molly, along with too many other Canadian women targeted and harmed because of their choice to carry the child to term, affirms that the safety of women remains threatened.

My private member's bill would create a new offence to be applied exclusively against anyone who knowingly commits a criminal offence against a pregnant woman and harms or causes the death of her preborn child. It would also codify pregnancy as an aggravating

factor in our criminal laws and so require a judge to always consider this factor in sentencing.

These sentences in Cassie and Molly's law would enhance the safety of Canadian women, protecting a pregnant woman's choice to bring her child to term safely.

Families are the foundation of our country. Canadians deserve a legal system that protects all aspects of a family. The bill is a precise, common sense approach to fixing a gap in our Criminal Code to deter senseless assaults on pregnant women causing death or injury to their preborn children.

I look forward to working with all of my colleagues in this House to make Cassie and Molly's law a reality for Canadian women and their families.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING ACT

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-226, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences in relation to conveyances) and the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death in Canada.

Today, seconded by my colleague from British Columbia, I am proud to introduce a bill on impaired driving, a constructive and consensus-based bill to keep repeat offenders off our roads so they can never again take the lives of innocent victims like those whose families are with us today and who are mourning the loss of a loved one.

This bill includes measures to relieve pressure on the courts and speed up the process, as well as preventive measures to save people's lives.

I encourage my fellow parliamentarians to review the provisions in the bill and to vote unanimously to save lives and put an end to the scourge of impaired driving.

Government Orders

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

* * *

[English]

**CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT TO
COMBAT ISIL**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there has been discussion among the parties, and if you seek it I think you will find consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, on Wednesday, February 24, 2016, Government Orders shall be extended beyond the ordinary hour of daily adjournment for the sole purpose of considering Government Business No. 2 and, at 8:00 p.m. or when no Member rises to speak, whichever is earlier, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put, recorded divisions deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, March 8th, 2016, at the conclusion of oral questions.

• (1010)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of residents of Vancouver Island who have presented me with a petition to ensure that Canadians have a fair electoral system.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons to immediately undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act so that all can cast an equal and effective vote to be fairly represented in Parliament, regardless of political belief or place of residence; that we are governed by a fairly elected Parliament where the share of seats by each political party closely reflects the popular vote; that we live under legitimate laws approved by a majority of elected parliamentarians representing a majority of voters; and that we introduce a suitable form of proportional representation after these public consultations.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition this morning.

The petition sadly informs the House that 22-year-old Kassandra Kaulius was tragically killed by a drunk driver; a person who chose to drive while impaired. Kassandra's family is devastated.

Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have also lost a loved one killed by an impaired driver. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime called what it is: vehicular homicide. It is the number one cause of

criminal death in Canada. Over 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by a drunk driver.

The petitioners are calling for mandatory sentencing in legislation, similar to what has just been presented in a private member's bill, which the petitioners call upon Canadians to support.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today signed by residents of Kitchener—Conestoga and the greater region of Waterloo.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to immediately undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act to ensure that voters can cast an equal and effective vote to be represented fairly in Parliament, regardless of political belief or place of residence, and then to introduce a suitable form of proportional representation after these public consultations.

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QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

**CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT TO
COMBAT ISIL**

The House resumed from February 22 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, please excuse my raspy voice for the next 10 minutes, but I was not about to let a nasty cold sideline me during this very important debate on Canada's mission, this patch-up operation, which is the exact opposite of what the Liberals suggested they would do during the election campaign. I want to put you at ease right away and let you know that I will not make you listen to my raspy voice for 20 minutes. I will be sharing my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

Government Orders

It is especially important for me to rise and address the House given that the New Democrats are probably the only ones who are speaking in a single, united voice day in and day out, delivering a message that differs from that of the Conservatives and Liberals. During the last election campaign, I repeatedly found myself having discussions with people who did not necessarily agree with my stance on withdrawing Canada from the combat mission. In the course of our discussions, based on arguments and common sense on all sides, everyone would readily agree that there is no simple solution to a problem as complex as the fight against ISIL.

What was the best position Canada could take to be a major, effective partner and to truly address the root of the problem instead of putting a band-aid on a wooden leg, as the saying goes? That is what is happening with this new mission, and although the Liberals dare not utter the words “combat mission,” it certainly looks like one. This government's attitude is no different than that of the previous government. I do not think we are going to get the best results.

What should we have done?

We know that there is no sense in claiming that there is an easy solution to such a complex problem. However, trying to have us believe that extending the military mission is the only solution to the conflict that pits the world against ISIL is misleading.

The conversation gets tougher when it comes to clearly defining the objectives of the Canadian mission, the criteria that will allow us to measure our progress or to determine whether we succeeded or need to extend our mission after a set deadline. The deadline is two years, which seems like a long time before conducting a study or a targeted and ongoing follow-up of the situation.

There are a lot of questions that remain unanswered by the very people trying to convince us that we need to broaden the scope of the Canadian military mission, because that is what we are talking about. Although six CF-18s are being withdrawn, more soldiers will be deployed and they will be at greater risk than they were before. This is an extension of the combat mission Canada was already committed to.

When we study the government motion and the resulting plan, it becomes clear that the Liberals have broken an election promise. Although they promised to end the combat mission, the Liberals are extending the military mission and broadening its scope. This will not be the first broken promise or at least the first promise to be interpreted differently than when it was announced.

Quite frankly, with respect to lower taxes for the middle class, had someone asked people in my riding what is meant by middle class, they probably would not have expected that anyone earning \$45,000 or less would not get a tax cut. They also would probably not have expected a modest deficit to be in the order of \$18 billion. At every turn the Liberals misrepresent reality.

The former Conservative government dragged our Armed Forces into a military conflict with no clear objectives and no exit strategy. Instead of rectifying the situation, the government is continuing an ill-defined mission that has an uncertain outcome. You do not have to be a five-star general to understand that a military mission without objectives generally ends in failure.

●(1015)

The conflict we are facing today is the result of just such an approach, where, under false pretenses, the United States invaded Iraq and dismantled it. The country the Americans left behind needed to be reorganized. In addition to numerous tensions, there was no balance of power, and the governance structure was in disarray.

It should also be said that this combat mission is in no way justified by a UN or NATO mandate. Here again, despite the Prime Minister's rapprochement with Ban Ki-moon, the government continues to advocate the same approach as the Conservatives, an approach that disregards the traditional institutions under which Canada operated.

Does that mean that we should do nothing and that Canada should remain unmoved by the atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State? Of course not. The NDP is not saying that Canada should sit idly by and do nothing. On the contrary, we are saying that Canada's contribution to the fight against this terrorist group must involve the use of our internationally recognized expertise in providing humanitarian aid.

The humanitarian aid we provide must be separate from the political action being taken. By way of evidence, Doctors Without Borders has said that trying to coordinate humanitarian aid and military efforts is counterproductive.

In order for humanitarian aid to be effective on the ground, NGOs have to be able to earn the trust of local populations. Problems arise when local communities are suspicious of the work NGOs are doing because of the unholy alliance between military and humanitarian efforts, which can jeopardize the lives of aid workers.

In 2004, Doctors Without Borders withdrew from Afghanistan following the brutal killing of five of its aid workers. Some of the reasons why the organization had to withdraw were the population's lack of trust in its workers and the insecurity caused by the military operations. In the end, the most vulnerable individuals are the first to pay the price when front-line workers leave.

Governments often use humanitarian aid to seek public support and justify their political and military ambitions. This type of confusion is detrimental to the work of NGOs and prevents them from saving lives.

I am strongly opposed to extending the military mission, and that is why I would like to talk about three very important policies in which we believe Canada could have been a leader. Since my time is quickly running out, I will summarize the three points. First, we must develop a deradicalization strategy here in Canada. Foreign fighters are a major problem. Every country, starting with Canada, needs to bring in measures to prevent foreign fighters from joining the so-called Islamic State.

We also need measures to cut off this terrorist group's funding, something else that is completely missing from the motion. Lastly, Canada must sign the Arms Trade Treaty. Those are the three issues at the heart of the problem: the influx of arms, financing, and foreign fighters. The motion does not address a single one of these three issues.

Government Orders

Obviously, I could have gone on about the work Canada could do to decrease or eliminate cases of sexual violence in conflict. With the help of some NGOs, Canada has some extraordinary expertise that it could be put to good use.

I repeat, I am not saying that Canada should not be involved in the international community's efforts to eliminate ISIL fighters, but we need to see how Canada can bring a different kind of expertise that complements that of other countries and that addresses the root causes of the problem instead of the consequences.

I will stop here, and I am happy to take questions from my colleagues.

• (1020)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that our training mission is actually a combat mission. We are obviously sending people over to train those who will fight against ISIL.

Could the member give us a real example of a training mission if he does not consider this one to be a training mission?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Where I come from, we say that if people rob a bank, the person holding the bag is just as involved as the person who puts the money in it. It may not be the most elegant analogy, but I wanted to share it anyway.

Withdrawing the CF-18s but supplying refuelling aircraft amounts to the same thing. We are no less involved. When we triple the number of troops on the ground for so-called training missions, we are not talking about university training. They are not teaching theoretical courses in a university setting.

During training missions, our soldiers are on the front lines helping to target the enemy. Our soldiers could also be targeted by enemy fire or even friendly fire if there is a communication problem. They are in the thick of the action. Sure, they are training people, but they are also taking on the risks associated with combat missions because they are on the ground all day, every day.

• (1025)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some people say that the plan and the objectives are not clear.

Does the member agree? Has he found a single quantifiable, measurable objective with precise evaluation criteria that would enable us to determine whether the mission has been successfully accomplished?

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her question, to which the simple answer is “no”.

As I said in my speech, the motion contains no criteria for evaluating the success or failure of the mission. There will be no evaluation for two years, which is a long time from now. That kind of approach is tailor-made to enable them to keep doing whatever they want. Without objectives, they cannot fall short.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, I listened to many of the NDP MPs talk about the Liberal motion that is before us, the Government of Canada's motion. There is a great deal of substance, and a lot of answers to the questions that they often pose, within the motion itself. If the global coalition were to adopt the NDP approach for dealing with terrorism abroad, I am concerned that terrorism would be expanding, and at a huge cost to civil society.

My question to the member is similar to the question my colleague posed about the importance of international skills and experience. Canadian forces have learned a great deal with what took place in Afghanistan. Taking that knowledge and experience and bringing it over to northern Iraq could be beneficial in providing stability to the region by better educating and training the Iraqi forces.

Would the member not at the very least acknowledge that Canada does have a role to try to make the world a safer place by using the expertise we gained in Afghanistan?

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his pertinent question.

We are talking about an international coalition. I think the definition provides the beginnings of a response. When we talk about a coalition, it is not just a group of countries that all agree to do the same thing. Rather, it is a certain number of countries that get together and agree to pool as much expertise as possible, in order to achieve a positive outcome.

What I expected from the Canadian government is this: that within the coalition, it could offer something different in order to tackle the root of the problem, not the consequences.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak once again in this House on our current combat mission in Iraq. This is one of the most important issues of our times, so it is crucial that we debate it here. I thank the government for moving this motion so that we can talk about extending this mission. At least it had the decency to allow us this debate.

Unfortunately, many problems with this mission have not been rectified over time. We still have no plan and no clear objectives to define the mission. The member for Outremont asked the previous prime minister many questions, but he was unable to provide basic answers, for instance, on the cost and the length of the mission. Many basic questions remain unanswered.

We still have no idea what it is going to cost to transform the mission, and we still do not know how long the mission is going to last. We are told that we will debate the extension again in two years' time. There are too many unknowns, which is extremely unfortunate.

Government Orders

Without clear objectives, we risk once again getting mired down in a mission with no real direction. Perhaps a specific plan is hard to define because the mission is not under the auspices of the UN or NATO and no one is responsible for measuring the success of the mission. There is also no exit plan. The government says we will talk about that in two years, which shows it is not taking this type of military mission seriously.

Our resources will be used for training and arming Kurdish militias. We might be arming people who, years from now, could potentially turn around and become new enemies. Who knows? There is no plan to address that. Unfortunately, that is what tends to happen in the Middle East. There is a focus on one terrorist group while the rest fall off the radar, which creates a sort of rotation of terrorist groups.

For example, during our intervention in Libya, we armed rebels, some of whom later turned to ISIL. No comprehensive plan is in place for the Middle East to prevent a rotation of terrorist groups from taking control of the region and to achieve true stability in the Middle East.

In Iraq, we are seeing some of the same ineffective methods that were used in Afghanistan. At first, the mission in Afghanistan was supposed to be a short mission with a small contingent of soldiers, but it wound up being the longest mission with the most soldiers deployed. The mission produced over 40,000 veterans, 160 fatalities, thousands of injured, and thousands more with post-traumatic stress disorder. That is a major impact.

We also note in this case that no adjustment has been made to the Canadian Armed Forces medical personnel to treat physical or psychological injuries. It seems clear to me that the government is making decisions on the direction and impact of the mission as it goes along. It has no plan and no clear objectives.

• (1030)

During the election campaign, the Liberals promised that they would put an end to the combat mission in Iraq. Unfortunately, our forces are training people who are truly on the front lines. Therefore, we cannot say that it is simply a training mission. We are not talking about Iraqi soldiers being taught theory by Canadian soldiers in a classroom. Canadian soldiers accompany Iraqi soldiers directly to the front lines, where they are in danger and under enemy fire.

Moreover, unfortunately, we mourn the death of Sergeant Doiron. I would like to extend my sincere condolences to his family once again. This is a specific example that shows that the training we provide is not without risks. Our soldiers are in a combat situation and are risking their lives. We must call a spade a spade. When you are on the front lines, you are in a combat mission.

Had I participated in this type of mission when I was in the armed forces and had the government opposite told me that it was not a combat mission, I would probably have been insulted. I would have been fired on, people would have fired shots around me, and the government would have told me that it was not a combat mission. I probably would have been extremely offended because I would have risked my life and then I would have been told that it was not a combat mission.

Let us call a spade a spade. This is a combat mission, and it is not true that there is any classroom training being provided. The fact is that soldiers are accompanying people to the front lines. There are real risks. I would like to thank all the soldiers who are prepared to do this work. However, we are duty-bound to be honest with Canadians and tell them exactly what our mission entails.

There are a number of important measures that should be included in this mission, for example, deradicalization efforts. It is extremely important to ensure that our soldiers are not fighting forever. There was a great deal of confusion at the beginning of the mission. When the Conservatives first undertook the mission, they were talking about eradicating ISIL. Then, they talked about slowing it down and then about undermining it. There is confusion in that respect as well.

The best way to put an end to this situation, so to speak, is to prevent the radicalization of people throughout the world, but particularly in Canada. We need to stem the flow of fighters and have serious discussions with certain countries that tend to propagate extremist ideologies that are seriously undermining the stability in this area.

We need to do better, particularly when it comes to deradicalization. We need to make sure that we can have intelligent discussions about this situation and that no more fighters join ISIL. There is a lot we can do using information technology to find these people in time to prevent them from joining ISIL and terminate the radicalization process.

When it comes to weapons, we need a tracking system so that we can ensure that weapons sold by Canada do not end up, through devious means, in the hands of the terrorists we are fighting. That is another extremely important measure. We need create stability in the Middle East in general, and to do that, we need to look at the bigger picture. Canada and its allies need to look at the overall situation. We must not fight only in the short term. We need to have more than just a short-term vision.

There is a lot of work to be done, and I believe that right now, the mission does not address the issue intelligently. The direction the government is planning to take will not help to resolve the conflict.

• (1035)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her explanation.

My colleague said several times that there was no clear plan or objectives for Canada's mission in Iraq.

If she does not think that training an army to be able to operate in a theatre of operations and reclaim village after village and province after province, which is exactly what is happening in Iraq, and giving the Iraqi army the intelligence it needs for its planes to target ISIL positions constitute a clear plan and clear objectives, can the member explain what she considers to be a clear plan and clear objectives?

• (1040)

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, regardless the topic, clear objectives are objectives that can be evaluated. Terms such as "help" are very vague and cannot be evaluated.

Government Orders

If we are talking about reclaiming villages, we must know the names of the villages and the timelines. If the objective is to reclaim a particular village by a particular date, that is a clear objective. We know where we are going and we can evaluate whether the objective is met.

If we are talking about reducing ISIL forces by 10,000 fighters by a certain date, that is a clear objective that can be evaluated.

However, there is no clear objective in the current mission that can be evaluated. We do not know whether we need to redirect our operations on the ground, whether everything is going well, or whether we could set more ambitious objectives.

It would be impossible to evaluate whether the objectives the member mentioned are being met.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her speech. I am interested in discussing her idea that we should not have a combat mission, that we should take no military action whatsoever.

If we would not take action at this time, when Canadians have been killed and when Canada has been singled out by ISIL to be targeted, when would she suggest military action be taken, when ISIL shows up at her door to rape and kill her, cut off her children's heads and her husband's, as well?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I find my colleague's question and the language she used to be in poor taste, but I will answer it anyway.

If this military mission included very clear objectives and a detailed plan that says exactly where we are going, and if it were to be carried out under the aegis of NATO or the UN, the New Democratic opposition could give it serious consideration.

However, there is currently no clear plan and no clear objectives, the government is not acting under the aegis of the UN or NATO, and there is no plan for long-term stability in the Middle East. We therefore do not know if the mission will end up buttressing another terrorist group that is currently an enemy of ISIL and that will become our enemy in a few years.

That is why a combat mission is not reasonable. We must focus on stopping the flow of money to terrorists, deradicalizing our young people so that they do not become enemy fighters, and deploying our Canadian Armed Forces to provide humanitarian and medical assistance.

We can train our soldiers in such a way as to ensure that their lives are not in danger, not to send them to the front lines.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the motion to redefine Canada's mission against ISIL. I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

As Canadians, we must ask ourselves what victory over ISIL looks like. When our brave soldiers return from their tours of duty, what will have come from their efforts? What will they remember? What will they have achieved? How are we to measure success? Will

they see a land divided, still plagued by civil war, a people living among the ruins of their proud past, or will our veterans look back and see a people who have rebuilt their homes and their lives?

Let us not measure our success in Syria and Iraq by the number of air strikes we see on TV but instead by the circumstances in which we leave. The measure of success means defeat of ISIL, of course, but just as important is the establishment of a civil society. By developing essential services that Canadians sometimes take for granted, through the training of police and security forces, we can impart the tools necessary to maintain stability and peace, as well as providing the means for them to establish proper and effective government.

By no means can we call our mission a success if the people of Iraq and Syria are forgotten, left to fend for themselves in a notoriously unstable and unpredictable region, surrounded by nations that will wish to use this conflict to further their own political ends. Without ground assistance, the region will remain fractured, an incubator for violent extremism.

If we are to do right by our serving men and women, do right by our coalition partners, and do right by the millions of innocents caught in the crossfire, we must think long term. At its roots, insurgency is a political problem. What we are calling for is an all-government approach to form a comprehensive plan: that includes the ministry of foreign affairs; the ministry of national defence; the ministry of immigration, refugees, and citizenship; and the ministry of international development. A wider range of agencies, elements, power, and capabilities, in addition to the military, must come together in unity of purpose to defeat ISIL.

Defeating an insurgency requires more than just bombing. As it is, there are lots of bombers available in the region, as was so eloquently mentioned last week by our Minister of National Defence. Up until now, as we have discussed at length in the House, Canada has provided support for coalition forces through six fighter jets sent to the aid of the coalition air force of 300 jets. Canada's pilots and ground crews have supported the mission by supplying 2.5% of the overall coalition air strikes, and they have performed their duties admirably.

At a national level, we too have an obligation to look toward the next phase of the armed conflict. It is not simply because we faced an expiration date on March 31, and not simply because we received a new mandate from Canadians, but because the realities of the mission demanded it.

The Minister of National Defence has answered many questions in the House regarding the consultations his ministry has been having with our coalition partners. As the campaign moves forward, our government is proposing to provide the support Canadians are known for: providing stability through visible presence to assist local police forces; assisting coalition forces by providing intelligence gathering and reconnaissance assets to enhance regional stability; training local forces; increasing humanitarian support and development assistance.

The opposition has been pressing and continues to press for details of the plan going forward. The consultative approach our government is taking to get things right has required appropriate time in order to develop a plan in which Canadians can take great pride.

• (1045)

Our pilots and ground crews have honoured their commitment to Canadians and to our coalition partners by delivering such crucial support for this war-torn region.

In Afghanistan in 2010, the former government learned that the multinational coalition fighting against an insurgency had to adopt a new, sophisticated approach, known as the whole-of-government approach. This new approach was to examine the wide range of tools available among our allies and harnessing the individual strengths of the coalition members to get the job done.

The former government decided to refocus all its efforts on training local forces, increasing humanitarian support and development assistance, and working very hard and quite successfully to enhance regional stability. It provided additional intelligence and reconnaissance assets and focused and refocused on training. This is exactly what we are proposing to do in Syria and Iraq. We are applying the lessons learned in Afghanistan.

With respect to the military line of effort, we recognize that it will ultimately be the people of Iraq and Syria who will be responsible for stabilizing their countries. By working with them, we can help to bring a disciplined approach to the fight. We need to enable them to defeat ISIL, and we have the expertise to help bolster their capabilities and prepare them for that fight.

Going forward, this is where we will be focusing much of our effort, as we announced last week. We will triple our commitment to the train, advise, and assist mission in northern Iraq. At the same time, we are going to significantly increase our intelligence capability.

There is a complex interplay of forces that underlies the conflict in Iraq and Syria. We need to have a clearer picture of how all the pieces fit together, and we need to better anticipate the impact of our actions. Our enhanced intelligence contribution will be invaluable in this regard. Solving complex issues such as we are facing requires a thoughtful and equally complex approach that utilizes Canada's strengths to support the concerted international effort to root out ISIL.

Canada needs to continuously work on the ground providing intelligence and training to ensure that local forces have the resources they need to maintain a lasting peace. To that end, our government is committed and stands shoulder to shoulder with our coalition allies.

This typically Canadian collaborative approach has earned Canada and its Armed Forces the respect of the international community. Upon their return, family and friends can welcome our soldiers back to Canada and congratulate them for a job well done.

Canadians can take great pride in the role our serving men and women will play in the establishment of security, and hopefully, the reconstruction of the nations ravaged by ISIL forces. Canadians can

also be proud of our military families at home that are supporting our forces overseas.

We are proud of the extraordinary generosity demonstrated by Canadians across the nation. They have stepped up to welcome families from Syria who have come to Canada in the hopes of starting new lives. Through these efforts at home and abroad, Canadians have proved that we are ready to help however we can.

• (1050)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Guelph, who is almost my next-door neighbour, for his speech, and I welcome him to the Parliament of Canada. It is a true honour to serve here. I also want to acknowledge the great work our men and women in uniform do for us every day in providing protection and security.

The member said that we should be doing more than just bombing. On this side of the House, we totally agree with that. In fact, we have been doing much more than that for many years. He indicated that we should be providing increased essential services and providing increased training for police and security forces. We agree with providing increased training and increasing our capability in terms of intelligence gathering. However, I have yet to hear one of the members on the opposite side explain how pulling our CF-18s out of the fight there, which are providing cover for our allies and for our own troops on the ground, actually improves our ability to restrain ISIS. I would like him to explain that.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, our government is looking at the key strategic role Canada can play. We are focusing on where our strengths have been developed over the years in providing assistance on the ground. At the beginning of the mission, we helped in the air. We still have air coverage through our coalition partners and have developed a strategy with our coalition partners, for the new phase of operations, to help stabilize the region in other ways.

• (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Guelph for his presentation. I listened to it with interest.

I am not sure if it is because of my cold or my slow-moving brain, but I did not find, either in the motion or in the hon. member's speech, an answer to a question I have had since the beginning of our debate on this issue.

Where in the motion or his speech can I find something to help me see that we are addressing the root of the problem, in other words, funding for ISIL, the flow of arms, and the influx of foreign fighters? What is Canada doing to stop these three threats?

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, the question of what we do, the details we take from the House of Commons to the theatre, and what we will do in terms of reducing the flow of arms and money is really a question left to the professionals in the theatre. We have military command and we have coalition forces we are working with to have the best strategy going forward.

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Canada will be available in being visible on the street and working with the local police forces and the local security forces. We will also be working, of course, to try to develop trade in the region to build up its economic stability.

It is a very complex issue. It is a complex problem, and there is no simple solution to it. We are discussing that at length. Even within the House ideas are being kicked around that we need to consider as we go forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since we started debating this motion I have noticed that when we ask questions about the mission we never get any answers. Correct me if I am wrong, but I believe we are currently deploying our special forces to provide training and security and our medical forces to go into the refugee camps. The last item in the motion refers to welcoming tens of thousands of refugees. We never talk about that part of the motion.

Is the mission becoming a mission to evacuate the people over there? Instead of engaging in combat, we are taking a position and bringing in refugees. Is that the work we are going to do?

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question and for his service to our country.

We are increasing the number of troops on the ground to 850, so we are not pulling out of the mission. It is an all-of-government approach. We are working with refugees to help them settle into Canada.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to proudly speak in favour of the government's motion and to praise a return to Canada's traditional type of international engagement. This motion is about understanding that Canada has an important role to play in the fight against ISIL.

As part of a coalition of over 60 countries, this government recognizes that the way for our country to make the biggest impact is to play to our strengths and ensure that our involvement represents contributions that rise above the noise of politics.

Members from across the way like to spread false information about Canada's decision to withdraw our CF-18s from air strike missions. There is a great deal of fearmongering the opposition parties are spreading about this decision. They like to use misinformation to confuse people and inspire dramatic reactions. One party says that we are running away from our commitments. The other party is claiming that we are committing Canadian troops to a combat role. Both of these positions are not only wrong but they lack any kind of understanding of the enemy that ISIL truly is.

The fact is that bombing missions are nowhere close to being a sustainable solution. Rather, only strong local ground forces will be able to successfully fight ISIL over the long term. In this way of thinking, Canada is well placed to help through our historic expertise in military training.

It was in Afghanistan that the Canadian Forces really solidified our reputation as one of the best training forces in the world. Our military personnel mentored the Afghanistan national security

forces, and to this day, the Canadian contribution in Afghanistan is regularly considered as still paying dividends.

Today, using our Canadian special operations regiment to train peshmerga fighters and using Canadian army trainers to focus on Iraq's conventional forces, Canada is making a long-lasting and direct contribution to fighting ISIL. Ultimately, these are the local troops that must directly fight those who invaded their homes, communities, and lands.

The fact of the matter is that pulling away from air strikes does not diminish Canada's military contribution to that region. We will be increasing our military personnel by 180 to a new total of 830. The Canadian Armed Forces will be directly involved in assisting coalition members and Iraqi security forces in planning military operations. This means a high level of involvement in operations, targeting, and intelligence. As part of this increase, we will also be tripling the size of our train, advise, and assist mission to help Iraqi forces conduct military operations against ISIL.

Medical personnel will be directly deployed to conduct casualty management in various battle theatres.

We will supply small arms, ammunition, and optics as part of the training of Iraqi security forces. We will enhance in-theatre tactical transport through our refuelling and surveillance aircraft.

No matter how the opposition parties want to describe Canada's military contribution, the facts are that this government is offering tangible and long-term support to our coalition partners. We are also doing more hard work.

● (1100)

We are also working with our defence partners in Jordan and Lebanon to target the spread of violent extremism throughout the region. As well, we are providing a team of strategic advisers to the Iraqi ministries of defence and interior.

We are also investing heavily in humanitarian assistance. Over the next three years, we will invest \$840 million to support those hit hardest by this conflict: the most vulnerable, including children and those who have experienced sexual and gender-based violence in that region. We are also contributing \$270 million over the next three years to provide basic social services, including education, health, water, sanitation, and employment to maintain and rebuild public infrastructure and economic opportunity throughout that region.

We are also contributing \$145 million over the next three years counterterrorism; stabilization; and chemical, biological, and nuclear security programming.

As well, we will continue to be an active and strong influence to assist in bringing together the region to find political solutions through joint programming and dialogue.

Government Orders

Finally, Canada has taken in 25,000 Syrian newcomers and is continually considering the next phase of our welcome-refugees efforts.

This is what we call a multi-faceted contribution in the battle against ISIL terrorism. This motion brings together the efforts of several federal departments working closely to enhance security and stability, while at the same time contributing to humanitarian efforts to rebuild the region.

It demonstrates, too, that the opposition parties must begin to have an honest conversation with the Canadian public. They have every right to disagree with this government's position and to offer alternative plans and solutions, but by spreading myths and dismissing all of the efforts I have just mentioned, the opposition parties are doing a disservice to our country, to our armed forces, to our diplomatic personnel, and to the Iraqi and Syrian people whom Canada's contributions are helping directly. This is a very important mission, and no amount of politics can diminish Canada's role.

Our coalition partners are very happy that Canada continues to step up through our actions. Today, I strongly encourage all members to remain committed to our efforts, even if we may differ in our opinions.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the House.

• (1105)

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my neighbour from Surrey—Newton.

I listened to his very passionate speech discussing the plan. As we know, the previous Conservative government began that plan and laid that groundwork for training, humanitarian aid, accepting refugees and, of course, our CF-18s, and our intelligence service. All of those measures were in place, so it is not about dismissing anything.

However, the one question I have is this. Which of the coalition partners asked Canada to withdraw the CF-18 fighters?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that the Conservatives did nothing. Rather, I said that this government is the one that has a long-term plan to fight and defeat ISIL. Bombing is not necessarily the only alternative nor the best solution to defeat ISIL. The best way to defeat ISIL is by providing the necessary training to local forces on the ground. That is why we have tripled our efforts in the mission to achieve that goal.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made reference to the fact that parliamentarians owe Canadians an honest conversation. I would submit to the House that it is even more pressing that government members do so as well.

My question centres on the two groups that we will be assisting and arming in this conflict, the Kurds and the Iraqi security forces. It is well known that the Kurds in the region have an overall goal of establishing an independent state, and it is also well known that Iraqi security forces under the current Iraqi government were playing a somewhat central role in fomenting sectarian violence in Iraq. It is no secret that a lot of ISIS' power base comes in the Sunni areas of Iraq.

Given those two facts, that the Kurds want to establish an independent state one day and that the Iraqi security forces have not really been the best of friends to Sunni Iraqis, can the member offer some comments about what the consequences of our current actions will be for the long-term peace and stability of the region?

• (1110)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the ultimate goal is to train the local forces so they are able to fight ISIL, which has invaded their lands, their communities, and their homes.

I also mentioned that for a long-term sustainable solution, we must have diplomatic and political dialogue to bring peace to that region. That is why we are accounting for other countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, to be part and parcel of our long-term plan, so that Canada can help to bring peace in that region. More broadly, it will be good for the region and the globe as a whole.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his explanation and would like to ask him to elaborate on two issues.

As we know, our forces are providing training and intelligence services that will disrupt the flow of ISIS' oil and cut off its financial resources. We are also working with our allies and the countries in the region for them to have better control of their borders and prevent other ISIS fighters from coming from abroad and joining ISIS in Iraq.

When the U.S. occupied Iraq, it dissolved the Iraqi army, and that is what led to ISIS. Therefore, how can the member explain to us that by training and strengthening the capacity of the Iraqi army, it will be a better service for the entire world and end the fight against ISIS?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the example is very clear. When our forces were in Afghanistan training the local forces, we left our mark, even today. Our contribution in Afghanistan of training local forces is seen as a landmark achievement, and I hope the same will prevail in this region.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of sharing my time with the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, whose good comments I am very much looking forward to hearing.

I have been listening to this very important debate over the last couple days and think I can maybe offer three distinct points about it and what it says about the mission in general.

First, I want to talk about how we are being offered false choices by the other parties. Then I want to talk about the lack of definition around what is actually going on in the mission and some of the terms that have been used to describe it and the situation in general. Finally, I want to talk more generally about the question of intervention, when we intervene, how we intervene, etc.

Government Orders

In terms of the first point about false choices, we have heard members of the government and the NDP talk about the importance of different things we should be doing in the region and, for the most part, I would agree with them. We have heard some good comments from our NDP colleagues about the importance of anti-radicalization, as well as the importance of addressing terrorist financing. These things no doubt should be part of a comprehensive approach.

The government has talked about humanitarian assistance, about helping refugees, and about training. These are all very good things as well, and on this side of the House in particular, we have emphasized the importance of the bombing mission, but more broadly than that, the importance of being involved in fighting Daesh, not just supporting those who are doing the fighting but actually doing some of the fighting ourselves.

More than that, I think what we have said is that there needs to be a multi-pronged approach that includes all of the things the other parties have been talking about. We believe in humanitarian assistance—the Liberals did not come up with that just now—and helping refugees, training, anti-radicalization, and addressing terrorist financing. These are things that we have all been involved in for a very long time as a country. However, it is also part of our historic tradition to be involved in fighting evil, in trying to protect the innocent and being willing to be there on the front line. This is the right thing to do and we have long tradition of doing it.

There has been discussion in this House of a multi-pronged approach. Our approach very clearly has the largest number of prongs. We all agree that there need to be multiple prongs in response to Daesh. What we are arguing against is what we see as a government trying to break off one of those important parts of the mission. It is a false choice. We are told we have to decide between training and humanitarian assistance, and being involved in the fight. We do not have to decide between those things. We can and should be doing all of them. That is our position on this side of the House.

Another false choice we are hearing is some members' comments about how Daesh will ultimately have to be defeated on the ground, as if somehow we have to choose between a response on the ground and a response in the air. Of course, Daesh has to be fought on the ground and of course it is important that we partner with local troops in the area that are fighting Daesh, but surely no effective ground combat mission can happen without some kind of support from the air. That much I should think is obvious, that any cohesive military response involves activity on the ground and activity in the air. Again, this is a false choice that we get from the government. We can be involved in the military component from the air as well as assisting training local forces on the ground.

We should not buy into these false choices as if we cannot be doing more than one thing at the same time. In fact, generally speaking, since these different parts of the mission are done by different parts of the government, it is not at all problematic to have different areas involved. Anti-radicalization, terrorist financing, these are things that are addressed either through law enforcement or at the community level. Humanitarian assistance, helping refugees, training, these are done by different parts of the government from those that would be involved in front-line fighting. We can be doing all of these things at once quite effectively. We have the capacity to do them.

The second point I want to make is that there is a real lack of definition around certain aspects of this mission. I recall a comment by the member for Surrey—Newton, who just spoke, the other day in questions and comments when he alluded to this as being some kind of peacekeeping mission. A number of other members have referenced the legacy of Lester Pearson in the context of peacekeeping, as if they are under the impression that these are people going into this region in blue helmets, which clearly is not the government's approach and clearly is not happening.

We have heard terminology around a humanitarian mission, around a training mission. There has been such a lack of clarity from the Liberal side on whether or not this is a combat mission. Whether or not we call this a combat mission has significant implications for the people involved, for the troops, because the kind of support they receive while they are there and when they get back home is informed by how we describe this mission.

● (1115)

There is such a lack of definition. There is such a soup of terms coming from the other side.

I recall another speech in which a member—I cannot recall which one—referenced Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage. The member who just spoke again talked about playing to our strengths. I do not know if they have thought through the implications of those kinds of arguments, because the implication of that argument is that being involved in the front lines, being involved in the bomber mission, is somehow not a strength we have.

I think that is a strength and we have a comparative advantage because of the effectiveness of our air force, because of the effectiveness of our women and men on the front lines. Therefore, the implication of that kind of statement suggests somehow that we are less able to do that than other countries, which is totally fatuous and frankly quite troubling.

We have all these terms floating around from the government without clear definition. I know we have heard the suggestion that somehow its approach is a more sophisticated one. I will say respectfully that perhaps it is so sophisticated that the government members do not even understand what the mission is all about, because we have heard so many different kind of things about the mission. They will have to get that sorted out, and they should be willing to answer some very basic questions about the nature of the mission.

There is another much more important area where there is a lack of definition. The members of the government are not willing to accurately describe the situation on the ground. The reason they are not willing to describe it accurately is that it has implications for how we would respond. Those of us on this side of the House have frequently pointed out that what is happening in Syria and Iraq right now is nothing short of genocide. The word genocide has been used by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton. It has been used in a resolution passed by the European Parliament. It has been used by many human rights groups.

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Why is the government unwilling to call a genocide a genocide? The reason it is unwilling to use that word is that it understands that the use of the word genocide entails a responsibility to protect. It entails a responsibility to respond in a much more serious way than the government is willing to do it.

If the government is fully confident that it is doing all it can do and that it is doing the best it can do, then why not use the word and describe the situation accurately? We see, in the unwillingness to use the word genocide to describe a genocide, a tacit admission that Canada is not willing to own up to the responsibility entailed in this idea of responsibility to protect. Therefore, we have a lack of definition both in terms of this mission and in terms of the actual situation happening on the ground.

As my final point, I want to address questions of intervention in more general terms. Often when we talk about Canadian troops being involved in a conflict in the Middle East, there is some discomfort, which is maybe people looking at past conflicts and wondering if we are getting into a similar situation.

There has been some discussion in this House about Canada's involvement in Libya. Nobody has pointed this out yet, as far as I have heard, but there was general agreement within this House about the mission in Libya. Liberals, and I think even New Democrats at the time, voted in favour of Canada being involved in a bombing mission in Libya. In retrospect, we can certainly say that what happened in Libya did not end up the way we would have hoped. However, that is a mission that all of us own, to some extent.

However, there are some important differences between the situation with the Daesh and the situation in Libya. For one, we are not going in to overthrow an existing government without a strong understanding of who we are fighting in support of. In fact, we are working very closely with an existing Iraqi government and with existing Kurdish forces. We are supporting ground troops, so we are involved from the air, but we are doing it in concert with troops on the ground. That is the best possible recipe for success.

There are many examples of intervention gone badly, but there are also many examples of non-intervention gone badly. I can think of cases where terrorist groups were left in power far too long and were able to wreak havoc as a result.

These are important points to consider: the government is offering us false choices in this debate; there has been a general lack of definition; and the questions of intervention should point us in the direction of getting involved in a multi-pronged way in this case.

Canada has a long tradition of being willing to stand up for our values in armed conflict, and we should do it in this case.

• (1120)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter has asked the coalition members to step up their contribution, and Canada has.

A Pentagon spokesperson said the Canadian announcement is the kind of response the secretary has been looking for, from coalition members.

Coalition commander Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland describes our mission as forward-looking.

A U.S. military spokesperson for the coalition characterizes Canada's contribution as "extraordinarily helpful".

I would like to ask the member if he actually disagrees with the U.S. Secretary of Defense, the Pentagon, and the coalition commander.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty incredulous at this approach, for two reasons.

First, obviously members of the coalition are not going to publicly criticize the Canadian government. To suggest that were even a possibility, that American administration officials would come out and say they do not like what the Canadian government is doing on an issue like this, just shows such a strange understanding of international politics.

What has been absent is the voice of nations on the ground supporting the Canadian approach. If she can show me Kurdish commanders saying they would rather Canada not participate in the military response, if she can show me quotes from Iraqi security forces saying that Canada really should not be involved in the military component, I would be quite surprised to see those, because we have not heard them.

In fact, the Kurds have said they want Canada to be involved in the military response to that.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member, since we are talking about being incredulous, what exactly it is that makes the member believe that bombing works.

We talked about intervention in past conflicts, a bit in the speech, and we have those examples. We have examples in this region that indicate that it does not in fact contribute to a peaceful outcome.

• (1125)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sure, Mr. Speaker. I guess that is a pretty fundamental question. Why does bombing work in some cases?

Not to be overly pedantic, it is because it destroys the enemy, because if we have ISIS fighters trying to kill innocent people and if we can stop those ISIS fighters, if we can take out their supply lines, if we can undermine their ability to operate, that obviously provides a strategic advantage to our allies, who are then more able to effectively challenge ISIS, who are more able to fight them and, thus, weaken them.

If the implication is that no intervention has ever worked, I think that is clearly incorrect. We can look at plenty of examples of countries that were previously not democratic and that subsequently became democratic, including some examples from this region.

The situation in Afghanistan is of course complex and far from perfect. However, before western intervention, it was run by the Taliban. There were great human rights abuses and it was a state that was able to support terrorist activity around the world, most notably of course on September 11.

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The defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the bringing in of a democracy, albeit imperfect, was a positive move, a positive development.

There are other examples, of course. As I said in my remarks, there are examples in which this has not gone as expected. However, there are also cases—arguably Syria for the first two years of the civil war—in which we chose not to intervene, and things did not get better. They continued to get much worse.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech, especially following on the speech of the member for Surrey—Newton, who said that we were finally seeing a return to Canada's type of international engagement. I think that is offensive to anyone who has followed Canada's military history. We were involved in the fight in World War I, in World War II, and in Korea.

In Afghanistan, there seems to be this whitewashing of the combat mission in which Canadian troops proudly participated and 158 of our men and women in uniform died in combat.

I wonder if the member might just expand upon some of the remarks he made, that this government motion does not take us back to Canada's type of international engagement; in fact, that Canada has had a proud reputation of taking the fight to those who need to have the fight taken to them.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, all members should be proud of Canada's tradition as a fighting nation, in some cases; as a peacekeeping nations, in some cases; and as a nation that always emphasizes humanitarian assistance.

We should be proud of our record as a nation that does all of these things, but yes, we should not ignore the military component in our history. Canada has played a vital role in virtually every major conflict over the last century, and we need to be involved in this one. Important things are at stake: lives are at stake, and our values are at stake.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to stress three things in my speech with regard to ISIS, our mission against ISIS, and the Liberal government's altering of the initial mission that our side began with.

First, I will start off by speaking of my son. He is 18 years old and an air cadet. He wants to serve our country, which has been his ambition since he was a little guy. I disagree with the other side who say we are war mongers, or that we go into war frivolously, or that we just want to go to war. I love my son, and I know a lot of parents across this country love their kids who serve in the military. We do not go into war ambitiously. We do it cautiously and do so when we have to as Canadians.

I want to see that my son is protected on the ground. I respect the Minister of National Defence and his military past. It is a great past, and he absolutely has my respect, but to pull out air support for on-the-ground troops, to me, is not good military strategy, especially with our sons and daughters on the ground over there. I think pulling out our CF-18s is a huge mistake. Regardless of political promises made during campaigns, I think we need to do what is best for our military on the ground.

I would also like to mention a few quotes by some respected leaders in Canada about the air mission against ISIS.

Every single ISIS leader should never have a single moment in their life when they're not worried about looking at the sky and having a missile come out and end their life, or go to bed and have that door blown in and have some commandos come in and capture or kill them.

They should be worried because if they're not, they're going to have more time to plan. And I believe Canada has to be a part of that.

That was from former chief of the defence staff Rick Hillier. I would say all sides in the House respect him greatly for his past experience and what he continues to do on the world stage today. This is one of the greatest military minds, who I respect, with his Canadian past, and he said that we need to be in the air against ISIS.

Another one of our international allies, the British Prime Minister, also spoke about involvement in a campaign. I think as Canadians we need to make sure that, if we are expecting to have some sort of role in the fight against ISIS, we are not going to let some other country take our responsibility and do it for us. We need to make sure we are there, doing what Canadians expect us to do in that fight against ISIS, because ISIS has affected us in our homeland in Canada. Prime Minister David Cameron said, "We shouldn't be content with outsourcing our security to our allies. If we believe that action can help protect us, then with our allies, we should be part of that action, not standing aside from it."

I think that statement says it all. Canadians have never shied away, and our men and women in the military still do not shy away. They are ready to do what is necessary when called upon to defend interests against ISIS.

Another topic I would like to address on the military mission against ISIS is one that is not talked about very often. Our critic on defence spoke about it last week. It is how much of an impact the actual bombing mission has had on ISIS and to its finances.

There was an article in the *National Post*, and it is an Associated Press article. It talks about the impact of air strikes against ISIS. They are hurting ISIS financially. I think any strategy that would pull back from something that is crippling ISIS and putting it on its knees is failed strategy. This is from the article I mentioned:

The extremists who once bragged about minting their own currency are having a hard time meeting expenses, thanks to coalition air strikes and other measures that have eroded millions from their finances since last fall.

To me, when we have somebody on the run, we keep going after them at their weakest point. I'm a former rugby guy, and I coached and played it for many years. One thing that was part of a winning strategy was that, if we saw a team's weakness, we went after the weakness and kept hitting it until we were successful. I think that is what we are doing in this military bombing strategy. We have ISIS on its knees and we need to keep going at it from the air.

• (1130)

This is another quote from the article:

"Not just the militants. Any civil servant, from the courts to the schools, they cut their salary by 50 per cent," said a Raqqa activist now living in the Turkish city of Gaziantep, who remains in close contact with his native city. But that apparently wasn't enough close the gap for a group that needs money to replace weapons lost in airstrikes and battles...

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Again, this quote states that air strikes are impacting ISIS and its weapons and its cash.

According to an estimate by Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, a researcher with the Middle East Forum, who sources Islamic state documents, those two expenses account for two-thirds of its budget.

ISIS is retreating. It is on its knees. We need to keep going at it.

This is another quote from the article, referring to the fighters, states. "You can sense the frustration. Their morale is down". It goes on to say:

In Iraq, where Islamic State has slowly been losing ground over the past year, the Iraqi government in September cut off salaries to government workers within territory...Between the loss of that money- and the U.S.-led bombing of cash warehouses - American officials are optimistic that the effect could diminish Islamic State's wealth.

As I am giving a speech, it is not for me to ask a question of the other side. However, I would question its withdrawal of air support. We have seen the impact it has had on the cash reserves and the military ability of ISIS. Why would we stop that?

Certainly, we can say that the Americans can keep doing what they are doing and that all the other allies that are providing air support to the mission against ISIS are having an effect. Why would we not be part of that? We have F-18s ready to go. We have airmen and women who are ready to go over and attack ISIS even further. Why would we reduce that effective strategy?

My last quote from the article states:

I don't think this is fatal for IS...I still don't see internal revolt as what's going to be the outcome. It's more like a scenario of gradual decay and decline.

We need to keep part of that ongoing air strike day after day, year after year, until the morale is so bad that ISIS is defeated. A good military strategy does not quit in the middle of good strategy. It keeps going until the mission is done.

Right now the mission is not done. We need to keep our F-18s in the fight. I think our airmen and women know that. I think our military knows that. I understand political promises, but the government needs to understand that good strategy is good strategy. It needs to send the F-18s back into the fight against ISIS.

I implore the other side. If those members care about our men and women who are serving on the ground over there, and my son may be there in the future, give them the support they need. These are our sons and daughters. The government should provide the air strike support so our kids are protected in the best way possible.

• (1135)

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member's son for volunteering to serve our country. Like the member, I had a son who served a mission in Afghanistan with 3RCR. As a parent, it is always worrying to know our sons and daughters are in harm's way, but it is also comforting to know that the government is taking the right strategy to ensure it is effective.

Leaders in our country and across the world have said that ISIL has somewhat adapted to a lot of the air bombing missions. It has infiltrated with civilians. I also agree that the air power needs to continue, but at this stage we still have a lot of air power. Russia now

has joined in, and the skies are pretty much crowded. Therefore, would he agree that the adjustment we are making now on the ground reflects more the reality of today's mission?

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his nice comments. We appreciate his son's service to our country. As members, we are all here to serve our country.

However, I do not think it is accurate to say that the air is too crowded over ISIS. There was room for us before, and there certainly is room for us in the future, especially as it is having an effect on the cash stores, on military aspects, and on the decline in the morale of ISIS. Probably the biggest thing we are doing is impacting the morale of ISIS through our air strikes. It is not a good strategy to discontinue the air strikes.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was great getting to know my colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies when we attended a meeting with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour yesterday morning.

In a battle with terrorists, I feel like we are in a battle with a Hydra. We cut off one head only to see two more rise in its place. ISIS did not exist as an organization three years ago. It had an extremely rapid rise in the Middle East. It is an organization that blends in well with civilian populations. Whenever civilian populations are involved, bombing missions come with inherent risks. There will be casualties. That is fact.

Could he give me his views on what conditions in Iraq and Syria led to the rise of ISIS? What prompts young men to give up an ordinary life to join this organization? Does the member see some signs of desperation that led to the rise of the organization in the first place?

• (1140)

Mr. Bob Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his nice words as well. I look forward to working with him on committee. We have had some good discussions already.

The conditions in Syria go back a long way. Many different regimes in the Middle East have been problematic, mostly due to extremism, and problems with other communities that are next door.

I know the member is not directing blame for the problem of ISIS being started in the countries that surround the Middle East. ISIS is a problem in and of itself. Islamic extremism is a plague around the world, and I think ISIS is the head of that.

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I appreciate the member's reference to Hydra. Captain America is a good show. Nevertheless, I still think that ISIS is the head, and we need to get that head. With that, we will get at the morale, and then we will seriously defeat the ISIS and the problems it brings.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, clearly, everyone in the House always prepares a nice speech or memo to begin their 20 minutes of speaking time. However, I want to digress for a moment. As a veteran who served in Afghanistan myself, the topic we are discussing here is understandably very close to my heart. I know I am not the only one in this House who has served.

These decisions weigh heavily on our minds and can even keep us up at night, or at least they do in my case. It is personal for me, but at least I can share the burden of the choices that we must make here in the House.

The Liberal government made a choice regarding the nature of the mission it plans to conduct in Iraq and Syria. That choice reflects its election promise, first and foremost. Withdrawing the CF-18s and increasing humanitarian assistance were two key promises made by the Liberals last fall during the election campaign.

Last week I went over the positive elements of the government's proposal. No one can oppose virtue and good intentions, because the situation is very serious. This is a war. Men and women have to be deployed, and we cannot forget the human suffering that people have been enduring every day for many years in the combat zone. Who could oppose increasing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable in the region? The victims of the civil war in Syria number in the hundreds of thousands, not counting all the displaced refugees. In Iraq, the number of displaced people is also very high. It is practically unprecedented since the Second World War.

ISIL surprised everyone in the summer of 2014 when it launched a major offensive through which it took control of vast areas in Syria and Iraq. Around the same time, the group also took possession of a significant amount of heavy weapons including Humvees, T-72 tanks, Abrams tanks, heavy artillery, and even an MiG-27 fighter jet. Those things are not toys.

That is a very heavy arsenal for a terrorist force, and we know that it could jeopardize stability. We cannot turn a blind eye. As a western country and a responsible society, we cannot bury our heads in the sand. Since the government intends to deploy our troops, the Bloc Québécois intends to reach out to the House, to the government and the opposition, so that we can find ways to ensure that this deployment happens under the best possible conditions.

Today, ISIL is present in a number of countries. Syria and Iraq are certainly the most affected, but the situation has not yet been resolved in Libya, Yemen, Lebanon or even Afghanistan. How many other Middle Eastern countries, particularly in Central Asia and Africa, are currently being threatened by this group, either directly or indirectly? The threat is there.

In 2011, many of the weapons used by Islamist rebels were sent to Libya and then to a theatre of operations in Mali. The enemy that we are facing and trying to combat is widespread. Right now, it is quite possible that Daesh will try to recreate the scenario and once again spread its cancerous cells throughout the region.

Given the considerable arsenal it has in its possession, ISIL has the strength and ability needed to destabilize a number of other countries. The entire world expects the influential states to take the initiative to combat this epidemic, this cancer that is ISIL. I said "influential states" and I believe that Canada, with the help of Quebec, is one of them, even though we have our differences.

● (1145)

Therefore, I must point out that the government has not failed in its duty. It intends to achieve a result. I recognize that and I intend to support its efforts.

I will reiterate that there are positives, but it is not all rosy. Like other opposition members, I am again wondering about the decision to withdraw the CF-18s from the theatre of operations. What we make of the Liberal Party's promise is that it intended to stop the air strikes. We can understand the intent. Is this justified as part of a renewed mission? Of course. However, the minister has already clearly explained to the House that we must retain everything we can use because the enemy and the threat is changing and the plan will have to evolve over time.

Therefore, the CF-18s, which currently have a support role, along with many other means, remain an important component of the modern equipment we can use against the forces we are facing.

It is not news that the Bloc Québécois supports continuing the air mission in Iraq and Syria. Nevertheless, there may be a way to redefine the role of the air force in the plan proposed by the government. An interesting compromise could be considered.

We believe that the air strikes managed to achieve, or at least partly achieve, their objective in the summer of 2014. As a result of these air strikes, Kurdish fighters in Kobani managed to push back the Daesh offensive in the fall of 2014. Members will recall that Daesh was spreading in the region at the time. The air strikes also helped the Iraqi peshmerga evacuate the Yazidis on Mount Sinjar. These people had been displaced and were facing a genocide, and the air strikes certainly helped prevent that.

Although the air strikes did not manage to destroy Daesh, to eliminate or wipe out ISIL, they still managed to contain the forces in the region. That is undeniable. As I already said, we are up against an exceptionally strong and unprecedented terrorist group. It has a massive arsenal and highly diversified sources of revenue.

I would also like us to rise above partisanship on this issue. I would like to close this debate by congratulating the government, and I would also like to see the government thank the opposition for its meaningful work on this issue. This is yet to be done.

Government Orders

Yes, we have different visions. The NDP caucus presented a more idealistic vision in which the terrorists exchange their AK-47s for olive branches with Daesh. That would be lovely. We do not oppose virtue. The Conservative caucus is a bit more hawkish. They would have us plunge Iraq and Syria back into the stone age to eradicate a threat that is, after all, limited. The government is bound by its election promise no matter what, but it may not have considered the ramifications of that. However, there is a middle ground in this debate, and if that can clarify things and bring us closer together, then I hope we can do that. I think we can. I believe we can, and I want to believe that some debates can rise above partisanship in the House. I want to believe that the fate of Syrians and Iraqis and, most importantly, our soldiers, does not depend on partisan games.

We are facing an extremely serious situation. Daesh is not just a terrorist group. It has become an empire within a short period of time and now controls more territory than many modern nations. Daesh wants to spread and destroy political entities, states, and especially human beings.

• (1150)

Entire populations in the Middle East are currently under threat of extermination by that organization, as are important cultural and historic elements of humanity, and all because the Kurds are Kurdish, because the Shia are not Sunnis, or because many people in the region dream of liberty instead of preaching barbarism.

Of course, Daesh does not have a monopoly on cruelty in the region, which has been seriously traumatized by its past; history speaks for itself. We must admit, however, that Daesh is a level or two above the rest in terms of the brutality currently on display in the region.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to take action. The threat posed to the people in the region, and to us in the west, is unprecedented. Whether the government should pursue a strategy other than air strikes is open to debate. This is just my opinion, but I think it warrants discussion.

After all, the strikes alone helped contain the enemy force. What we need is a real plan, real leadership, and decisions by government leaders to achieve this objective. To that end, I am prepared to work with the Minister of National Defence. I do not want to play partisan politics on the backs of our soldiers. No one can ask me to do that. It is out of the question. I am therefore reaching out to the minister in good faith.

I think only of the soldiers and the victims of the conflict when I debate the conflict between the world and these barbarians. There is no compromise on this. In the past, many great world leaders demonstrated that we could come to this sort of agreement. I am thinking about de Gaulle, Churchill, and Roosevelt, to name a few. There is no shortage of examples to guide us in our decisions.

I want to come back to the government's decision to withdraw the CF-18s from the theatre of operations. Although I do not believe that is the right strategy, I am prepared to work on ensuring that the new mission is a success. That is clear.

However, for that to happen, I believe that we must ensure that the men and women deployed on the ground are given protection in a

professional way. We are about to send troops into Kurdish territory in Iraq. The dynamics in the area are complicated.

At this point, we have many doubts. Much analysis must be done when sending 850 men and women into a mission of the scope and size of this one. There remain many doubts and questions about this issue.

I am convinced that we can still reach a compromise with respect to the CF-18 fighter jets. We must remember that ISIL is an enemy with a widespread reach. This organization could again use its usual destabilization strategy. We can never be sure of having eliminated this organization even if we curb its ability to control large areas of Iraq and Syria.

I believe it is advisable to keep the CF-18s in the region, without necessarily having them continue their traditional role of carrying out air strikes. They would be on standby in case something went wrong. It is not complicated. This is already being done in an area of operation we no longer talk about: six CF-18s are already in Ukraine and are not being used for anything at all.

If Canada is able to maintain an air strike force that is not being used for anything at all in a so-called theatre of operations, I do not see why we could not keep four measly CF-18s on standby in case something goes wrong, should the nature of the mission change or new threats appear.

That is the compromise that we are suggesting to the government regarding the CF-18s. We hope that the government will consider it. The government has a choice. It can stop launching air strikes while still maintaining a preventive strike force, as I was saying.

• (1155)

That is necessary in order to keep our ground forces safe, but also to continue to contain ISIL. We live in a military era where air combat is a key element of modern warfare. No one can deny that. Why give up an asset, a strategic advantage that the enemy force does not have? The answer is obvious.

That is why I have serious doubts about the government's decision to withdraw our fighter jets from Iraq and Syria. It seems to be more of a political decision than a strategic one.

We will soon have nearly 880 armed men and women in Iraq, in Kurdish territory, and possibly in Jordan. I have reason to believe that these men and women will not have sufficient protection, given what they are being asked to do.

Government Orders

I think that the government would have everything to gain right now by saying that we all hate war, that it is never an easy decision to make, as I said earlier, but that sometimes we have no choice but to reconsider our decisions and reconsider the situation. That would be the responsible decision to make right now, especially since we are organizing a significant humanitarian mission at the same time. However, I have some concerns about our ability to ensure the security of our humanitarian assistance and of our military intervention as well. If the objective is to put an end to the war, we need a professional mission.

I am not in charge of the decision-making. The opposition has no control over the decision to deploy our men and women, but we have a duty today to influence the decision to ensure that everything is done as professionally and securely as possible.

The Bloc is eager to get an answer to the big question of who will truly be in charge of protecting our troops on the ground.

When our troops are on training missions, they are not in charge of security. They are not in charge of their own security. Other parties on the ground are in charge of their security. I would like some answers about this, but I assume they will depend on private security forces on the ground. I also assume that it will be the Iraqi armed forces or the Kurdish peshmerga protecting our trainers, if that is indeed what they are, but the peshmerga are already overwhelmed. They are fighting valiantly against Daesh, but they are exhausted and stretched thin on their front line. The Iraqi Kurdish government is coping with a disturbing reality in the region. It may be that the Turkish air force will bomb the territory in response to potential PKK action in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In short, deploying troops to that region exposes them to fire on all sides. This decision should not be taken lightly.

Training is training. This implies that our troops are training other forces. While they are doing that, they are not serving as mentors to regular troops, like the Iraqi army, and they are exposing themselves to risks. I urge the government to make sure that our troops deployed on the ground to provide training are in fact giving training, if that is the government's intention. However, it is important not to confuse operational mentoring and training. Those are two very different things.

Deploying 880 men and women on several fronts in small groups, as special forces are often deployed, could expose them to danger. The Chief of the Defence Staff has already confirmed that there will be enormous risks. I hope that we will play it on the safe side and not put the lives of our men and women in the hands of forces that cannot even defend themselves. Is that not in fact the reason we are being asked to train them in the first place? However, we must not expose our troops in an irresponsible manner, without real protection. We need to ask who from the coalition will be on the ground with us.

• (1200)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

The Minister of National Defence has all the necessary qualifications and experience to manage this type of mission. The commanders on the ground work with the Minister of National

Defence daily on monitoring the situation in the theatre of operations.

Our government has faith in the Minister of National Defence and our commanders on the ground. When they see that other measures are needed to make the fight against ISIL more effective, they do not hesitate to take action. The government supports their recommendations.

I have a simple question for my colleague. Does he trust our Minister of National Defence and the commanders on the ground to operate and manage this mission?

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, I trust the minister. I hold him in high regard. However, as he himself said, the situation in Iraq and Syria is constantly changing.

It is good to be on top of the information because that is an important part of conflict management. Nonetheless, doing without some key equipment does not seem right to me. I would even say it is a bit risky. We must avoid making impulsive choices.

What I am saying and what I am asking is that we ensure that we are well prepared in this situation in order to be in a position to deal with unforeseen circumstances if our troops are deployed. The minister is capable of managing the situation, but I have just as much confidence in our armed forces, who are very skilled.

The minister is not the one who will be managing what is happening on the ground; that is up to our men and women and the commanders of our armed forces. We must ensure that they have equipment, materiel, supply support, and secure supply lines for both their humanitarian efforts and their work in a combat zone like the one we are working in. Providing humanitarian assistance without security is very difficult.

This is not about whether I have confidence in the minister, or whether I respect him, but about ensuring that the forces we deploy and our NGOs in the field find themselves in the safest, most secure environment possible.

• (1205)

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, I have the privilege of representing Canadian Forces Base Borden, the largest training centre for the Canadian Armed Forces. I am concerned that this mission increases the risks to Canadian Forces members, such as those at Borden, whom I represent.

[English]

I would like the member to tell us what he thinks we should be doing to support our troops in the field.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, this is really not rocket science. Whether it is this mission or some other one, we must always ensure that we have the resources to match our ambitions. There is no miracle solution in such situations. At a very minimum, when the decision is made to deploy forces, no matter the type of mission and whether we do or do not agree with its objectives, we must ensure that they are deployed under the best possible conditions and that nothing is improvised or left to the vagaries of ever-shifting circumstances. It is not complicated. A good plan is a simple plan. At least that is what I remember from military school.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I would also like to commend him for his past contribution to the armed forces. However, I am a bit surprised.

The Bloc Québécois has always been an advocate of peace, international aid, and solidarity with and respect for international institutions, such as NATO and the United Nations. We are dealing with a military venture that does not fall under any international framework. This is a break from tradition for the Bloc Québécois, which has always advocated for peace and outright rejected any military ventures, particularly when there is no oversight and no objective.

First, I would like my colleague to explain the reason for his party's change in position.

Second, I would like him to explain to me why he is mixing military action with humanitarian aid when everyone knows these two things should be kept separate. These two objectives, or two movements, should not be combined.

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that I am a separatist.

I will turn my colleague's question around. If Quebec had control of its own foreign policy, it would take a completely different approach. However, as I said at the beginning of my speech, it is not our decision. We have to live with a decision that is not necessarily the one we would make.

An important thing for my colleague to remember is that one-third of the forces to be deployed will be from Quebec. We have no say in that matter. That is a big concern for me.

My colleague could at least listen to the answer to his question. Since he is not listening, I will stop there.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate a number of the comments that the member has made today. One of the statements as part of the motion is that we will bring the matter back before the House in the next couple of years, and re-evaluate. There is an attempt in doing that to show that we are open and want to have a higher sense of accountability. We see this as a positive thing.

I wonder if the member might recognize that this is an ongoing thing; that at times we need to have a reassessment, but for today, given commitments that have been made and the experience and

expertise we garnered from Afghanistan, this is the right way for us to go. To support this motion would be admirable; to see the Bloc come behind it, and see whether the Bloc has actually taken a position as of yet on the motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, there is some grey area around the word “plan” in the motion we will be voting on. There is not much substance to allow us to make a fair and informed decision. We are in the dark.

All we can do now is analyze this issue, since the Chief of the Defence Staff is the one who will, unfortunately and fortunately, give the order that the government is going to give him. As for the nature of the deployment and the equipment required, the real plan will come from the armed forces, at the end of the day. We will then perhaps be in a better position to make an informed decision.

Earlier I raised some serious concerns about the safety of our troops. There are still too many questions without satisfactory answers. We still have time to debate. We will vote, of course, but our position is evolving. Nothing is decided. The Bloc Québécois's approach is to enlighten the House so that the government considers the conditions in which it plans to deploy our forces to fight ISIL. The decision we are debating today is not a simple one. The government is completely overhauling the existing approach.

• (1210)

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague's view on the CF-18s having already been pulled before the parliamentary vote has even been taken. Does the member think that meets the standards of openness and transparency that the Liberal government claims to have?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Boudrias: Mr. Speaker, if the government had any decency, it would have waited for the debate to conclude, in order to be consistent. At the very least, the jets could have been grounded while we debated and made a decision. However, the decision has already been made. What can we do? It is what it is.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by stating that I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

Of course we all agree that ISIL is committing horrendous crimes, absolutely barbaric acts in Iraq and Syria, and furthermore, that it poses a threat to global security. We all agree that, basically, we need to destroy ISIL, destroy its message of hate, and I think we need to do it without creating other monsters at the same time.

Last week the government finally unveiled its plan to address this huge challenge. I will begin by saying right away that some aspects of this plan are interesting, at least on paper and in principle. This includes the increase in humanitarian assistance, something that we have been calling for for some time. I am happy to see plans to increase our humanitarian assistance.

Government Orders

Development assistance is another thing we have been calling for for some time, and I am pleased to see it in the plan, to prevent the destabilization from spreading throughout the region and into fragile countries like Lebanon and Jordan.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that diplomatic efforts will be a key element of the solution to this problem.

[*English*]

It all looks good on paper, but there are gaping holes. First is the issue of the combat mission. It is a combat mission even though the government refuses to acknowledge it. During the election campaign when the Liberals said that they would withdraw the CF-18s, I think most people understood that Canada would stay away from the military mission and put the emphasis elsewhere. It is a strange way of withdrawing from the combat mission.

When it comes to the air strikes, let us be honest, we will not have CF-18s any more, but we will provide refuelling, targeting, all kinds of things. We are still participating in the bombing mission.

Then we are going to triple the troops on the ground and we are doing so with no clear parameters, no exit strategy, and no criteria for success or when we feel we have achieved what we want to achieve. It is a combat mission, and it is a combat mission with boots on the ground. We know that under the Conservative government, the troops were spending a significant part of their time on the front lines. Sergeant Doiron died on the front line. Now we are tripling those troops and General Vance has acknowledged that we are increasing the risk to our troops.

It was interesting this morning when I heard some Liberal MPs say in their speeches that the government is ready to fight ISIL on the ground. If this is not a combat mission, what is it? Is it an elephant? Interestingly, the Prime Minister, while in opposition, said the government must be clear about what is and is not a combat role. Now the government is using the same ambiguity. The government should acknowledge that this is a combat mission. It owes it to Canadians and, above all, it owes it to the troops themselves, the men and women serving in the forces.

We are also going to give arms to the Kurds. We cannot even track the arms that we are selling to Saudi Arabia, which are now finding their way to Yemen. Who knows what we are going to learn tomorrow? What exactly is the government going to do to make sure that those arms are not used for the wrong ends or do not fall into the wrong hands?

• (1215)

Will the training of the Kurds only be about fighting? Maybe human rights and respect for international law should be included, because this is part of the problem. I say so because there are recent reports from Amnesty International saying that in their fight, the Kurds have possibly committed war crimes, so the training certainly needs to include that.

There are other issues. The plan talks generally about governance, but there is no detail. There is not much information.

[*Translation*]

What exactly is the government going to do about governance? Apparently it is going to send advisers to the ministry of defence. I think that has more to do with gathering intelligence. There is so much that needs to be done with respect to governance. ISIL got a foothold in the country because of the breakdown of Iraqi society. We have to work on that or else it will be ISIL today and some other armed group tomorrow.

Why not get involved in facilitating a reconciliation process in Iraq? That is the only way to solve the problem for the long term. The same goes for diplomatic engagement. They talk about diplomatic engagement, which is great, but what then? What exactly are they proposing?

Some of the core elements of our UN mandate are critical to defeating ISIL, not only in the Middle East and Libya, but around the world. We must cut off its supply of arms, money, and fighters. The Liberal plan has little if anything to say about that.

One thing that really bothers me is that there is nothing here about deradicalization. We know that the attacks in Paris, Jakarta, and Ouagadougou, which bolstered the will to destroy not just the armed group, but its hateful ideology, were carried out by people who were homegrown radicals. Why does the Liberal plan not even touch on deradicalization?

• (1220)

[*English*]

I have just a few minutes to say that I am afraid we may be repeating the errors of the past. We have tried to rely on the military approach in various parts of the world and, unfortunately, the result is not that good. In fact, we may have been winning battles for the last 20, 30 or 40 years, but losing the war on terrorism.

It is a new kind of war, a war of the 21st century. It is a war of propaganda and it is a war that breeds on chaos and unaddressed grievances.

We hear that some of the towns that have been retaken are completely destroyed. Seemingly 80% of Ramadi has been reduced to rubble. The population cannot go back there.

After the attacks in Paris and in parts of Europe, certain rules of engagement have been relaxed, which will inevitably mean more civilian casualties. Are we creating more chaos? Are we creating more grievances? If so, we are just exacerbating the problem.

Let us give hope to what I think can actually work. Yes, indeed, humanitarian assistance will work, but above all, cutting what has sustained these groups—arms, money, and foreign fighters—and let us try to find a political solution both in Syria and Iraq.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member seemed surprised by some of the Liberal speakers talking about Canada's role, and I found that interesting. Let us be clear: the bombing is going to continue to occur. The global coalition will provide that. There is going to be combat, obviously, at the ground level too.

Government Orders

The motion clearly sets out Canada's role. Contrary to what my colleague and other members of the New Democratic caucus might say, it is very clear. All one needs to do is read the motion and listen to some of the speeches being given by many of my Liberal colleagues.

We will increase the training force based on Canada's expertise acquired through our experience in Afghanistan and so forth. This is significant. Canada has a lot to offer. The government has determined that it will triple the size of the training force.

Does the member not believe that Canada can use the expertise it acquired in Afghanistan to combat ISIL?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, but I disagree with him on one important point.

[*English*]

My colleague says that all one needs to do is read the motion. One needs to read the motion and the background papers and hear answers from the minister to get at the reality of things.

General Vance says there is a risk of more casualties as a result of the training we will be doing. If we have in-theatre transportation, if we just continue, there is nothing to indicate that the mission will be changed from what it was before. This means targeting at the front line. This means our military personnel will be spending a significant amount of time at the front line with the Kurds. Our Liberal colleagues say that our troops are ready to fight on the ground.

We have to go a bit beyond the motion, take all of this into account, and everyone will see that it is a combat mission.

• (1225)

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the position of NDP members. I do not agree with them but at least they are ideologically consistent. They oppose the use of our military force in combat, especially when it occurs outside of our borders, as it usually does.

The Liberal government seems to want to have it both ways. On the one hand, it wants to expand into humanitarian assistance and other things that were already happening on the ground and, on the other hand, it wants to pull out of the bombing. My colleague referenced this in her speech. Our forces will be participating to a large extent. They will be painting targets on the ground. They will be refuelling the fighter jets. They will be providing recognizance with the Auroras so that the coalition can pick targets.

If our troops are to enable the bombing, does my colleague think the government will go the next step and leave our CF-18s in theatre?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for what I think is a very important question.

The hon. member will understand that we do not agree with keeping CF-18s in the region. However, it is true that the government seems to want to have its cake and eat it too. It says one thing and does another. It is withdrawing from the combat mission, but when we take a look at the details, it really is not

withdrawing from it at all. There seems to be a pattern here because we have seen this attitude before on other issues where the government opposed certain things, but voted in favour of them. It is rather interesting.

I would like the government to provide more clarity, including on the issue of whether or not this is a combat mission, as I said in my short speech. The government owes Canadians and the men and women in the armed forces the truth.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I will be speaking on what I think is a very misguided motion presented by the Liberal government.

It is a fairly wordy motion, and I should say that there are some positive aspects, such as “investing significantly in humanitarian assistance”, increasing efforts for “finding political solutions” to the conflict and, of course, “welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada”.

However, the key point is that the Liberals have decided to expand and enlarge Canada's military mission in Iraq, and I cannot, in good faith, support this decision.

This issue has been a point of contention within the Liberal Party for some time now. Canadians have watched them flip and flop, back and forth, on what should be done against ISIS. Indeed, the party seemed to disagree with itself at every turn, both opposing the military mission and supporting it.

After months of waiting for the promise of bringing home our CF-18s, we find out that the Liberals have a new plan that has left more questions than answers regarding our role in this war. The most important part of this motion is missing.

There are no parameters to define success. Indeed, I am having trouble seeing more than cosmetic changes to the original Conservative mission. Again we find ourselves calling it an advise and assist mission, exactly as the Conservatives did before. The Liberals are tripling these advisers to the Iraqi military, while some forces will be working within a battlefield context.

The promise to end the bombing mission has morphed into an increased Canadian military presence. We will still be conducting targeting missions for other countries' bombers. The Liberals have stated in the past that there must be a clear line between combat and non-combat roles. This is indeed a good point, but this motion before us makes that line even blurrier than before.

We know that in practice, Canadian troops have already come under fire on the front lines with ISIS during their advise and assist mission. The Prime Minister cannot, in good faith, deny that troops will be involved in combat. When we lost Sergeant Doiron, I think Canadians were starkly reminded of the risks of a deployment on the front line.

The Prime Minister has not provided parameters for Canadian engagement on the ground for the duration of this expanded role. Afghanistan showed us that training missions, especially those within a battlefield context, are just as dangerous for our Canadian women and men as active conflict zones.

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The government is now calling this an open-ended mission with no end date. We all know how well that went in Afghanistan. Have no fear, because the Liberals have assured us that this open-ended mission will cost \$264 million. The government is not being transparent with the people. If we do not know when the mission will end, how can we possibly know what it will cost?

The history of western military intervention in the Middle East goes back centuries. The Crusades were the first of a series of organized campaigns, but it was not until the 19th century, starting with the Napoleonic Wars that European powers unleashed a mad scramble to carve up the region.

The modern day borders drawn as straight as a ruler were imposed largely by the French and British on the remains of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, and little regard was given to the different cultures, religious sects, and ethnic groups that were forced into the same national bed, the consequences of which we are still seeing to this day.

The Kurds saw their homeland split between five different countries, including Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, three countries that are at the heart of the present conflict. We are sending weapons to the Kurds, which obviously raises many questions about the long-term consequences of such action.

I feel that this debate has not given enough answers on this issue. How do we make sure that these weapons do not fall into the wrong hands, or that human rights abuses will not be committed with these arms? Has the government given any long-term thought to the goals of the Kurds, which include establishing an independent state in the region? These questions have not been addressed and represent a glaring hole in our foreign policy for the region.

There are other questions that have not been addressed at all with this motion. Three years ago, ISIS did not exist. What conditions created a favourable climate for its rapid growth and the horrific atrocities it has committed? This is the heart of the issue, and we ignore it at our peril.

• (1230)

Simply put, ISIS is the product of a genocide that continued unabated as the world stood back and watched. It is the result of more than 200,000 Syrians murdered and millions more displaced and divorced from their hopes and dreams. It is no accident that ISIS has seen its growth in Sunni Arab territory in both Iraq and Syria. Both governments have fomented sectarian violence on their respective Sunni populations.

The Liberal motion before us today shows that we have not learned our lessons from the 2003 U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, which created the chaos and conditions favourable to the rise of terrorism in the region. If we continue to use a military response to a problem that needs a political solution, we will never find success in the region.

ISIS, like al Qaeda before it, is but the next head of the hydra. We may cut it off only to find that more have rushed in to replace it.

Our men and women in the Canadian Forces do a fantastic job. They will undertake any mission they are given, expertly and professionally. The problem is that this is an ill-defined mission, with

no timelines or victory conditions. We went through this in Afghanistan, and we do not want to see it happen again.

We always talk about giving our troops the tools they need, but we as parliamentarians also owe it to them to give them a clear mission, with an exit strategy and goals for success. Another open-ended mission is just putting our troops in more danger.

Since 2011, the unrest and conflict in Syria has caused over 4.5 million refugees to flee to neighbouring countries. This has led to a massive requirement for humanitarian solutions. It is not just the refugees who are hurting but also 13.5 million people inside Syria who require urgent humanitarian intervention.

We have an important role to play in addressing the threat ISIS poses to the global community and in alleviating the suffering of civilians caught in the conflict.

New Democrats have always been clear on this issue. There are things that must be done. Canada should absolutely not be playing a military combat role. We should focus on stopping the flow of arms, funds, and foreign fighters to ISIS. These actions would not only be effective but would be in line with the UN resolutions and mandates.

The Liberal government has been silent on the signing of the Arms Trade Treaty. Ratifying this treaty would be a more effective deterrent to ISIS than would contributing Canadian soldiers on the ground.

The idea that we are actually ending the bombing mission is a ludicrous rationalization. We have changed the mission from dropping bombs to one where we paint targets so that other countries may do the physical act of dropping bombs. I may not throw the stick myself, but if I point to someone else who is throwing the stick, I am just as guilty. I am participating in that combat. Rationalizing it any other way does a disservice to this argument.

I remember in the last Parliament when the Prime Minister criticized the Conservatives because they wanted to increase Canada's participation in a vague and possibly endless combat mission. However, this is exactly what we see here: a Liberal government promising something and then hiding behind smoke and mirrors to act as if change is really happening.

There is no way the Liberal government can be honest if it claims that Canadian Forces will not see combat in this expanded advise-and-assist role. The idea that augmenting a Conservative plan will make this a non-combat mission is not grounded in reality.

It is a good thing that the Liberals are bringing this debate to Parliament. I hope they see the points the NDP are proposing so that we can have the most effective opposition to ISIS.

We cannot just expand the Conservative advise and assist mission, putting even more boots on the ground, expecting that we can solve this great problem through military means.

New Democrats will continue to oppose this government motion while proposing alternative solutions to solve this crisis.

Government Orders

• (1235)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am interested to hear more about how the member thinks we can reduce the recruitment of these extremists to the fight, both here and overseas.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I alluded to some of that in my speech when I talked about the conditions that led to the rise of ISIS and extremism in Iraq.

People do not take up arms for no reason. There is a sufficient reason. If we take a detailed look at the way the Sunni Arab populations have been treated in Iraq and Syria, I think many of them have been driven to a form of extremism. There is no excuse for terrorism. However, but I am trying to examine the conditions that have led to its rise.

This organization is attracting people from all around the world. One of the ways in which Canada can be effective is to have a much-needed deradicalization strategy here at home to prevent the flow of foreign fighters to that country, because it is just adding fuel to the fire there.

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member makes a good point in that we should understand the causes that brought ISIL to bear. It is a commendable thing to do. However, I do not think anyone in this House would argue that ISIL is an enemy that does not need to be defeated. One side of the House would say, “We will do the fighting for you”. The other would say, “We will talk to you and try to talk you out of what you are doing”. What we are saying is, “We will teach you to fight”.

There is an old saying that one can give a man a fish and feed him for a day or teach a man to fish and feed him for life. Our approach is to teach them to fish. We are not going to fight for them, but we are not going to abandon them. We are going to teach them to fight.

I would ask the member how that would not work to stop ISIS.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, after 2003, the Americans spent billions of dollars in Iraq trying to train Iraqi security forces. When ISIS came, the forces folded like a cheap tent.

These forces are not going to be effective if one-half of the population simply does not trust them. The problem is larger than just training forces on the ground. We have to arrive at a political solution. The fact is that in Iraq, the Sunni and Shia Arab populations do not trust each other. Until those two populations can come together, having Iraq continue as we wish it to is simply an impossibility.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two of my NDP colleagues raised new fascinating questions that we had not yet discussed. Therefore, I would like to go back to a question asked by my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie concerning the type of training provided on the ground by Canada.

Since we do not know what kind of training will be provided, she asked whether it would be strictly military training or also humanitarian aid training. The last Liberal member to speak said, “We’ll train them to fight”.

If that is the Liberal vision, how is it different from the Conservative vision?

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question from my colleague, and it goes to the heart of what I am saying.

The motion before us is blurring the lines even further. I think it is a bunch of smoke and mirrors. We are simply seeing the old Conservative mission changed somewhat. We are still having a military mission, still with boots on the ground. As I said before, I do think that is the most effective way Canada could be using its resources. Based on what we have seen in the region over the last decade and more, it is not going to be successful. We cannot have a military solution to this problem. It needs to have a firm political solution on the ground, and I do not see enough effort being put into that particular area.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this very important subject. I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my neighbour, the member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital.

[*English*]

I am honoured to speak to this government motion, a motion that is extremely important, because it will broaden, redefine, and improve, which is important, the war against ISIL.

The significance of this war to the people of Nova Scotia, particularly in my riding, is extremely important. In my riding, about 22% of people are either veterans or active members of the forces.

In Nova Scotia, we are home to 40% of Canada's military assets. The Canadian Forces base in Halifax is Canada's largest military base. In addition, Nova Scotia is part of the Maritime Forces Atlantic, the largest naval presence in Canada. Nova Scotia has contributed to the defence and security of Canada and has participated in all of Canada's military operations, including both world wars, the Korean war, peacekeeping operations, the Gulf War, and our mission in Afghanistan. This is evidence that this country relies greatly on our brave men and women who have and continue to contribute to the success and security of our great nation.

We call on those individuals often to support us. I must say that during my campaign, when I knocked on doors, I met veterans and active members, and they are very proud Canadians who accept whatever the government asks of them with open arms. That is extremely rich and something I am not sure I could do personally. I am grateful for their contribution.

This debate is extremely important. I am confident, after long reflection, that this is the right direction we are taking. I want to talk about five issues in our strategy.

Government Orders

● (1245)

[Translation]

Our strategy has five components: expanding our training role, which is very important; reinforcing our diplomatic role; increasing our humanitarian role, which is extremely important; our role with respect to the refugees who continue to arrive in Canada; and the appreciation of the House for our armed forces, which is extremely important.

When seeking information and opinions, we often consult experts who are on the ground as sources of information. I would like to quote Colonel Warren, the U.S. mission spokesperson:

[English]

We are not going to bomb ourselves out of this problem, right? It's never going to happen.... and as we see nations like the Canadians agree to triple their presence, we find that extraordinarily helpful.

[Translation]

That is quite powerful. It is impressive to hear our allies speaking that clearly and supporting us with such confidence. Why are they supporting us? They are supporting us because Canadians have long been known for their expertise in training. They are also putting their trust in us because of our armed forces and the expertise they have on the ground. That is certainly very impressive. I agree with the colonel. Bombing alone is not going to end the war against ISIL.

That being said, if we want to make a difference, we have to strengthen and train local forces, and provide them with the tools they need to win the war against ISIL.

[English]

The second part of this broadened mission is an increased level of diplomatic involvement. As our Prime Minister has said, the solution must, first and foremost, be political.

We have to ensure that we engage allies on the ground in the discussion to ensure that we are a coalition working closely together. We must ensure that we speak with the international community if we are going to ever have lasting peace for the people in that region.

Third, I want to speak on the increase of humanitarian aid. We must do our part. Canadians have always been looked at as strong contributors in that area. We do so because millions of individuals have been displaced. We do so in order to support the most vulnerable people. That is why our government is investing \$840 million over three years to support the basic needs of those hardest hit. When I speak of basic needs, I speak of food, shelter, health care, and water. Those are essential, and we are going to be contributing greatly in that area.

We will also invest \$270 million to provide social services to rehabilitate local infrastructures, to help foster growth in the economy, to help support women, children, and newborns, in the areas of health, gender equality, and so forth. Those are extremely important issues to which we are going to be contributing as we move forward.

[Translation]

Fourth, there is the matter of refugees.

[English]

There is no question that Canada is a leader by far in opening up its arms and accepting refugees, which is extremely important during times of need. There is no question that now we are dealing with a crisis such as we have not seen in the world for at least 30 years. Nine million people have already been displaced. They are in terror and we need to support them. I am extremely pleased about the international community's support, but also about how our government is moving forward in doing that, and we are doing it very well. There have been well over 20,000 people so far.

I want to mention in my riding the RiverLake Syrian Refugee Project, co-chaired by Sue MacLean and Laura Jayne Hambly-Fournier. I mention them for their hard work in working with the community to raise funds, to find housing, and to accept families. It is those individuals and many individuals in the community who make us so strong, and I thank them for that.

As I said earlier, 22% of my riding members are very proud servicemen and women who work on the base, abroad, or serve in the conflict of war. The House needs to recognize their contribution in Canada. In Canada, we have the most professional, talented, and dedicated servicemen and women on the planet. Some of them are even serving in the House here today.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion.

● (1250)

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for an impassioned speech. I understand because our government as well administered humanitarian aid, food, water, and shelter.

The member mentioned the \$850 million, and some of that going toward the rebuilding of infrastructure. Typically we must have peace in a region in order to be able to build infrastructure and have it stay intact. I would like the member to elaborate on what his government is intending to do when its members talk about building infrastructure over the next three years.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, this is not a one-pronged approach. This is an approach where we will be doing many facets of supporting this community. For example, I mentioned our expanded role in training, which is essential. If we are able to do that and also support families in need in that area, there is no question that once the locals are trained and continue the work we have started, then of course we will be able to contribute more in infrastructure areas. However, we are still able to identify some areas where we could begin the process at this time.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I represent a riding that has a large base in it, Base Borden. There are many families who obviously support our men and women in uniform, continually.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Now that the mission involves more risk, all Canadians, particularly the families of the soldiers being deployed, will want to know how Operation Impact is going. Will the government hold regular technical briefings on the mission for these families?

[English]

The families on the base that I represent need information.

Will technical briefings be given on a regular basis to these families so they know exactly what is happening to their loved ones on the ground?

[Translation]

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her question. I do not know the details, but there is a protocol for information sharing between the military and the families. We will obviously see to it that the families are updated as often as possible and given as much information as possible.

[English]

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for the very passionate discussion this afternoon.

I know he is an educator, and has been an educator for a long time. I would like to get a sense from him of what Canada could do in supporting the local community and educating and training the population toward anti-radicalism, as well as to ensure that they are able to engage in a proper process toward peace.

• (1255)

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question because when we talk about education, we talk about the future. The strength of any society is through education, and it is extremely important.

We need to stabilize the situation first, of course. Local training will be effective and we need to ensure a humanitarian approach when supporting families with shelter and housing and health care. Education should be a main focus. I think that is an excellent idea and I will pass that message along to our government.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, I am honoured to rise today to speak on the motion calling for the refocusing of our Canadian mission against ISIL.

[Translation]

I am very pleased to take part in this debate that is very important to our government, our country, and our closest allies. I want to start by talking about the approach our government took in redefining our contribution to the international coalition against ISIL.

We distanced ourselves from overheated rhetoric and focused on a serious analysis of the current situation. We considered the needs of our allies and took into account our own military, financial, and diplomatic means.

[English]

Unlike the previous government, Liberals refocused our contribution to the international coalition by engaging our allies, by

determining the most effective role we can play, and by allowing our Canadian Armed Forces and other departments, such as global affairs and international development, to contribute in the manner that can be most effective.

As the Prime Minister has said, our new policy in Iraq, Syria, and the surrounding region reflects what Canada is all about: defending our interests alongside our allies and working constructively with local partners to build real solutions that will last. We will work with allies to defeat ISIL and the terrorist threat it represents. At the same time, we will help address the needs of millions of vulnerable people, while helping lay the foundation for improved governance, economic growth, and long-term sustainability.

The men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces are well prepared and equipped to take on this new role. There is risk, but necessary risk, that can and will be mitigated to the greatest degree possible. Our commitment to enhance our train, advise, and assist role carries with it an increased likelihood of contact with the enemy while our troops perform their daily duties. This is not a combat mission. However, our troops will always possess the right to self-defence and will always take the necessary precautions to protect themselves, our coalition partners, and local forces.

As part of our new and expanded commitments to fight against ISIL, Canadian Armed Forces personnel are not the principal combatants, but are training, advising, and assisting those who are. To be clear with Canadians, our troops are and will be operating in a conflict zone, supporting local forces that are fighting to rid Iraq of the scourge of ISIL.

[Translation]

Based on the experience we gained during our military involvement in Afghanistan, Canadian trainers are particularly well equipped to provide support, advice, and training to local forces that will be combatting ISIL forces on the ground. Our international coalition partners have stressed the importance of this support and the need for training.

• (1300)

[English]

As our coalition partners have indicated, to paraphrase Colonel Steve Warren, the spokesman of Operation Inherent Resolve, we cannot lose sight of the fact that we have to train local security forces. It is one of our primary lines of effort and our contribution is extraordinarily helpful to achieving the goals of the coalition. To say, as the official opposition has said, that we are cutting and running from the coalition's fight against ISIL is patently false. As Colonel Steve Warren has said, "everybody likes to focus on the airstrikes, right, because we get good videos out of it and it's interesting because things blow up — but don't forget a pillar of this operation, a pillar of this operation, is to train local ground forces. That is a key and critical part."

Government Orders

We are extremely proud of the critical role that our CF-18 pilots have played in limiting ISIS' movement on the ground, but the coalition has sufficient air power to continue this phase of the mission. Dr. James Stavridis, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander, said it best when he stated:

...you're going to shift to doing training, which is...perhaps the most important of all. So I applaud the fact that our Canadian military and NATO colleagues will be working on the training mission with the Iraqi security forces, potentially with the Kurdish peshmerga in the north because we don't want to send 100,000 troops, or 150,000 troops like we did in Iraq and Afghanistan. We want local forces to fight ISIS. We need to train, advise and mentor them. NATO can do that very effectively."

We will also deploy medical personnel and a helicopter detachment to northern Iraq to support and care for our personnel. Our surveillance and refuelling aircraft will remain active, addressing key requirements of the coalition. During 370 sorties, the CP-140 Auroras have surveyed over 3,200 points of interest, including some 20,000 kilometres of main supply routes. The CC-150T Polaris aircrews marked a milestone on January 5, 2016, when they passed 20 million pounds of fuel delivered since the beginning of Operation Impact, an incredible achievement, one of which Canadians should be proud.

We are also working with the Government of Iraq and the coalition to establish ministerial liaison teams to work with select Iraqi ministries. I am convinced that these measures will be welcomed. These teams would assist with the coordination, the planning, and the process in support of Iraqi governance. Canada will also provide capacity building in Jordan and Lebanon.

[*Translation*]

This is a broader mission, a whole-of-government approach that will involve a number of federal departments, and a mission that entails a military component as well as increased humanitarian assistance.

[*English*]

This is a broader, deeper, and more dynamic military contribution than we have had previously, and it is made all the more effective because it is integrated with expanded contributions in humanitarian assistance, development efforts, and diplomatic presence in the region.

We are part of a broad, international coalition. Air strikes are planned, coordinated, and executed based coalition priorities and tasks. Our CF-18s never operated exclusively in support of our troops in northern Iraq. Air support was there when needed, provided by whichever member of the coalition was in the air or planning cycle.

This will not change. Our troops will have the air support they need when they need it, but our military contribution is just one part of the mission.

As we have heard from my colleagues, we are taking a whole-of-government approach to achieve these goals.

With the hard work of our Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canadians have currently welcomed more than 22,000 refugees of this conflict to Canada.

These courageous refugees have beat the odds and found themselves a new home among us as part of a diverse Canadian social fabric. We welcome them with open arms and are here to support them in becoming an integral part of our Canadian society.

Furthermore, we will deliver \$840 million in humanitarian assistance over the next three years to support the basic needs of those hardest hit by this conflict, including food, shelter, health care, water, sanitation, and hygiene. Assistance will target the most vulnerable, including children and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

We will also deliver \$270 million over the next three years to build local capacity to provide basic social services like education, health, water, and sanitation; maintain and rehabilitate public infrastructure; foster inclusive growth and employment, including by enhancing women's and youth employment; and advance inclusive and accountable governance.

Our programming will focus on helping women and youth, improving maternal, newborn, and child health, and advancing gender equality.

We simply cannot accept opposition rhetoric that we are cutting and running from this mission. Unlike the previous government, we are taking a conscientious and principled approach to a complicated problem.

We are engaging in every area of this conflict. We are presenting a truly coordinated, collaborative, and integrated plan for a problem that deserves nothing less: a long-term vision and a coherent strategy to achieve our goals.

• (1305)

Ms. Dianne Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of the multi-faceted approach that the Conservatives also put forward in terms of training, humanitarian aid, refugees, the CF-18s, intelligence services, and all of those things, understandably elements of those will be expanded.

I would like to come back to some comments that the member made on a couple of fronts. The comments referenced that the CF-18s make good video and blow things up. He also made mentioned the Aurora helicopters, so I would just ask whether the Aurora helicopters are armed, and whether the member feels that the CF-18s did not assist the coalition in the fight against ISIS.

Mr. Dan Vandal: First, Mr. Speaker, that was not my quote. That was the quote of a colonel who was active very close to the battle in Iraq. That was his quote.

I think what is important in this whole initiative is that we are taking a multi-faceted approach. We are increasing the number of soldiers in the area by 200. We are tripling the size of our train, assist, and advise mission to train local forces to fight their wars.

Government Orders

We are adding \$145 million over three years to counterterrorism; we are adding \$840 million for humanitarian assistance; and finally, we are adding \$270 million to help rebuild local infrastructure.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, which was my home for the first 14 years of my 38-year marriage. It is a great place to come from.

The scale of the previous military operations is something the member mentioned. Something that I have not heard mentioned yet in the House was the type of operations previously and the scale of those operations.

Could the hon. member expand on the difference between the numbers of troops involved in this engagement versus previous engagements?

Mr. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, it is actually quite interesting, the number of people I meet who were born at the St. Boniface Hospital.

As I previously stated, one of the things we are immediately doing is increasing the number of soldiers in the area by 200. We are tripling the size of the train, advise, and assist mission to train local Iraqi soldiers to actually fight the wars in their homeland. That is really the major difference.

We do not want to send 100,000 soldiers or 150,000 soldiers, as we did to Afghanistan. We want to train the local forces. We are tripling the size of the train, advise, and assist mission to achieve just that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the many comments the member has put on the record.

Could I ask the member to reflect on the importance of the debate we are having today? Within the motion, we actually have a commitment to bring this debate back to the chamber, at some point in time in the future—we are talking about around the two-year mark, or just before two years—and that is an important thing in the sense of what the Government of Canada is trying to do, to show accountability and transparency.

There is a lot of detail in the motion, and a lot of detail has been added in the debate. This is a positive way to deal with going into these situations like the one happening in the Middle East.

We appreciate all the valuable contributions our members of the Canadian Armed Forces provide, both abroad and here at home.

• (1310)

Mr. Dan Vandal: Mr. Speaker, we cannot overstate the valuable contributions of all our veterans, from all over the country, coast to coast to coast. I think I speak for everybody in this House when I put that on the public record.

To me, this is really about accountability. We know that the people of Canada spoke loudly on October 19. The people of Canada have given us an endorsement to change the nature of the situation and make our involvement in it more comprehensive. That is exactly what we have done.

We are committed to bringing this issue back. I believe the member said it would be in two years or approximately that time. I want to read a pretty important endorsement we received a few weeks ago.

U.S. President Obama publicly endorsed Canada's decision. Through a state department spokesperson, President Obama said:

The new Canadian commitment is in line with our current needs, including tripling their training mission in Northern Iraq and increasing their intelligence efforts."

That is a pretty impressive endorsement.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this important resolution. This is a difficult issue. Contrary to the implications in some of the speeches we have heard in this place since the government's motion was put forward, this is not a black and white issue. It is one of the most complex and intractable issues that has been debated in this place in many years, and that is because it is not black and white. It is not simple.

I want to start by paying tribute to a veteran, Captain Trevor Greene, who lives in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. I have been inspired by him and his example. Many in this place will remember him as the Canadian soldier who in Afghanistan was attacked from behind. He had taken off his helmet as a sign of respect for the Afghani villagers with whom he was meeting, and he was attacked with an axe. He still struggles with the physical impacts of that attack. His brain is as sharp as a tack, but his body does not always co-operate. He spends most of his time in a wheelchair, as he learns to walk again. I have heard him speak publicly, saying that when he planned his career in our Armed Forces, he most wanted to wear the blue beret and become a peacekeeper. I read in the Speech from the Throne that the current government intends to return Canada to its peacekeeping role, and I want to apply that lens and look at those things that a young Trevor Greene wanted to see his country doing, for which he was prepared to risk his life, for Canada and for peace and for the peoples of the world.

This mission is intractable because it is so very difficult to figure out whose side we should be on, especially when it is described solely as a war against terrorism or a mission to get rid of Daesh. I do not like to call this group Islamic state. The resolution refers to ISIS and ISIL, but I do not like to convey any sense that this terrorism group has any legitimate claim to statehood.

Let us talk of Daesh. If this is a conflict solely directed at Daesh, then we have missed out all the complicated bits that make this so hard. This is a sectarian conflict. This is a Sunni-Shia religious war within which there are multiple proxy wars, with superpowers all over the place moving in and out of the region to their own advantage, and also neighbours in the region, for good or for ill. We have essentially a civil war in Syria.

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The speech by the hon. leader of the official opposition made it sound as though this is simple. There is this group of horrific actors, a horrific army, a death cult. Daesh, according to the official opposition, marauds at will. There is no context, no history, no understanding that this group would not exist at all except for the fact that the U.S. waged an illegitimate and illegal war in Iraq. This gave rise to the creation of this group, literally and physically. The people who founded Daesh met in a prison camp run by the U.S. army. They organized there. They saw their radicalization in what appeared to be the west oppressing the region.

Thank goodness Canada said “no” to going into Iraq at that time. The rhetoric in this place around why we should be bombing in Syria or Iraq tends to come with the tagline “Canada always steps up to do our part”. When there is a mission that is wrong-headed and contravenes international law, Canada is quite right to stay out of it. That is why I am so pleased that Canada did not overtly participate in the Iraq war. We used to think there could be nothing worse than al Qaeda until Daesh came along, which created itself through the Iraqi conflict. If we lose track of history and we lose track of context, how can we possibly know the right way forward?

Let me return to this issue of a civil war in Syria.

● (1315)

The current government of Syria, if we can still call it a government given that Syria is rapidly a failed state, is led by the brutal dictator, Bashar al-Assad, who has killed far more people within his own country than has Daesh.

Bashar al-Assad, of the Shia minority and Alawite family, has led Syria with a fairly iron grip for a long time. In the Syrian civil war, Assad is supported by Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia. I read a lot of the journalists who have been covering this issue. Terry Glavin, a Victoria, B.C. area journalist, is right that when this first civil war began in Arab Spring, a lot of the people opposing Assad were people who deserved to have been supported because they represented an effort for democracy and against Bashar al-Assad.

However, the rebel forces now are an unsavoury concoction of al Qaeda's branch, al-Nusra, and of course Daesh, or as it is called in the motion, ISIS, working to defeat Assad. Therefore, as we take up arms to defeat ISIS, are we incidentally keeping Assad in place? We are in very tricky territory here.

I completely support the decision of the current government to withdraw the CF-18s. One of the reasons I voted against the bombing mission in the first place was that inevitably we would be responsible for killing civilians. That by itself is a horror, but beyond that every civilian killed is part of the recruiting for Daesh. It gets more people who might have been moderate to feel that they must go to war because their own people have been bombed by Canada or the U.S. Now Russia is claiming to have come in to bomb ISIS targets, but, incidentally, seeming to bomb more of those other rebel forces that are trying to unseat Assad. It is complicated.

Let us look at what has happened so far. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which is an independent organization, coalition air strikes so far have killed 4,256 people, among which 322 were civilians. In Iraq, coalition air strikes so far have killed a further 1,000 civilians. This killing of innocent civilians is

always described as “collateral damage”. However, in a situation like this, where we are trying to stop radicalization and create an argument against radicalization in a context that is so fraught with appeals to particularly young men but others around the world to come and join the fight, when there are large military efforts bombing targets on the ground and killing any civilians, we lose ground in the fight against radicalization. Therefore, I completely support the decision to withdraw our planes.

I am definitely affected by this by being the daughter of a dad who grew up in London during the blitz. He always said that there was no surer way to build the resolve of civilians on the ground to oppose an enemy than to see it come over in planes and drop bombs. It did not work to break the resolve in North Vietnam. It has not worked to break resolve so far in Syria or in Iraq.

Therefore, the coalition air strikes are wrong-headed. It is a good thing to be out of them. However, I then am puzzled by the Liberal government's insistence that we stay involved in them by providing refuelling and reconnaissance missions. This muddies the waters. It can only be explained, because in stopping something that was not going to work and adopting more humanitarian, diplomatic, and even peacekeeping type of work, and training, we did not want to, in any way, alienate our so-called allies that are working in the region, including through continued air strikes.

Who are our allies in the region? We really need to talk about what is going on with Turkey. Turkey is more concerned about the growth of Kurdish nationalism than it is with ISIS at its borders.

● (1320)

We saw the frontier land along the Turkish-Syrian border being reclaimed by Kurdish fighters, and where Kurdish fighters were under siege by Daesh fighters, Turkey held back and did not go forward.

Turkey is ostensibly a NATO ally. Yet Turkey has also been accused of aiding, through its intelligence, extremist militants from China making their way across Turkey to join ISIS fighters. This is an allegation that is contained in a highly controversial article, and I know it is controversial. The article published in the *London Review of Books* by Seymour Hersh on U.S. intelligence sharing in the Syrian war was called “Military to Military”.

Seymour Hersh is a journalist of great renown. He was right about Abu Ghraib. He was right about the My Lai massacre going way back. However, he may be wrong about the central allegation in the article, which is that the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. military chose to ignore President Obama's central effort to bring down the Assad regime. They, the Joint Chiefs, felt that it was important to protect the Assad regime and so deliberately shared intelligence with other allies in hopes it would reach Assad.

Another claim in the article is that U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff replaced access for the rebel forces against Assad with less sophisticated weaponry, older weaponry, so that the Assad regime would be aided basically through neglect. These charges may not be true, but they also point to the enormous complexity of the fight in the region.

Government Orders

What of Saudi Arabia? We are still prepared to sell it armoured vehicles despite the evidence that those armoured vehicles are used against civilians within Saudi Arabia and in Yemen. However, we also have very consistent reports of Saudi Arabia aiding ISIS. Why? Well, it does not really like the idea of seeing Assad staying in power. Again, these proxy wars continue.

All through the region there is black market activity, selling black-market oil across the border, and selling antiquities. When I was discussing the matter with one of the leading journalists in the world on this subject, Robert Fisk who writes for the *Independent*, he said that he had reliable intelligence that the oil refineries inside Syria, which are shipping out black market oil for the benefit of the ISIS coffers, were being run with Turks on the inside of the refinery, and Turks at the border turned a blind eye to the black market oil.

This is surely a place where Canada could play a much stronger role, working with allies, particularly along the border. If we are going to have boots on the ground and put ground troops in the area, surely we should be prepared to say that we will make that border with Turkey less porous and ensure that we stop the flow and the sale of black market oil. Interpol needs to play a stronger role.

Another place where the millions that fill the coffers of Daesh come from is the horrific destruction of antiquities in the region. Before it blows up a temple, Daesh takes out valuable artifacts. Apparently, there are art collectors, speculators, and billionaires of no conscience, who are prepared to buy these black market antiquities. The sale in black market antiquities also funds the horrific activities of Daesh.

Again, we have a civil war with no really good options for good guys. There is al-Nusra, ISIS, versus Hezbollah, Iran, and Russia trying to support Bashar al-Assad. In all of that, I can see why the Minister of National Defence and the new government think that the only good guys they can find on the ground are the Kurdish forces. At least one knows that Kurdish forces are not likely to do what other so-called more moderate rebel groups have done when they have received training, weapons, and equipment from the west. Some of those moderate groups have just sold it to ISIS. They can get good coin and they are not that committed to being against Daesh.

We know one thing about the Kurdish forces: they have a real commitment. However, their commitment is not solely of getting rid of Daesh; their commitment is to a Kurdish state.

● (1325)

With Kurdish nationals and a Kurdish dream of nationhood that extends from Iraq to Syria to Turkey to Iran, one can see that our efforts here must be made with great caution because our allies will not thank us when they find, having been emboldened by military victories pushing back the horrible Daesh forces, that the Turkish state turns its own guns on the Kurds instead of on ISIS.

This is a complicated mess, and I am not saying it is simple. If there is anything I am saying today it is that it is anything but simple, and our debate about it should not pretend it is black and white.

I have one last point about the damage we have done in other countries.

When that illegal war ended in Iraq and the U.S. installed some puppet governments, it decided to ban any members of Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party from office. As a result, there are a lot of people who have skills, who know how to run a government and an army, and who are not allowed to have a job. We have created a group of people that was ready to go to work for Daesh, because through its black market activities, it had money to pay people. It is time that we talk to our allies about removing the ban on the Baathist forces and Baath Party members, whether they were part of Saddam Hussein's former government or former army, from having legitimate jobs in a new Iraq. We must stop the flow of people who were not previously radicalized to the Daesh army just because it could pay for them.

There is more here than one can possibly scrape the surface of in a 20-minute speech.

I am honestly torn about how I will vote on this resolution. I support much of what is being proposed. I support the increase in humanitarian assistance. I am pleased to see any discussion of diplomacy, because this cannot just be about how to get rid of Daesh without a strong focus on how we bring peace and stability to the region. If that is not our goal, we will never get rid of extremist factions in an ongoing Sunni-Shia war in the context of a civil war and in the context of a brutal dictator like Bashar al-Assad.

Where does Canada stand in an argument with no easy solutions and no easy answers? There is only one safe place to stand, and that is on international law. Bombing a country at which we are not at war is illegal under international law. We should not be in a bombing mission. Helping where we can on the ground makes sense, but we need to do much more in this country to oppose radicalization. We must not do anything to increase the propaganda value of those who want to recruit youth from any country anywhere in the world to come into this sick world of a death cult thinking they have gone for some higher moral purpose.

Canada can play a significant role in the world. We always did, and I hope we always will. However, we should move with great caution. We should be constantly reassessing what Turkey and Saudi Arabia are doing, and what we can do by working and creating much better diplomatic channels with Russia. The U.S. Secretary of State, in this very inadequate partial ceasefire, would never have gotten anywhere if the U.S. had not established the ability to at least talk with Russia. We need the help of Russia, China and the U.S. together to end the conflict in Syria. We must not allow it to become yet another failed state like Libya.

I was the only member of Parliament in June 2011 to vote against the bombing missions in Libya. One of the reasons was I simply did not buy it when our then minister of defence said that although the government did not know what would follow Moammar Gadhafi, it could be sure that it could not be as bad. A failed state in Libya, the rise of ISIS, and all of those warehouses full of armaments in Libya going into the hands of terrorists are worse than Moammar Gadhafi.

Government Orders

We must find our role in diplomacy. As hard as it is, we must work to stop the flow of money to Daesh. We must ensure that when we ask Canadians to go into as problematic a region as Syria in the middle of a civil war that they are adequately protected at all times, that we do everything possible to ensure their safety, and that as they train other forces, we are very careful about who we decide wears the white hats and the black hats in a war that really does not have any good guys.

● (1330)

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her contribution to the debate and her support for the government's decision to withdraw the six CF-18s.

However, in her comments, I also noted that she did question some of the other additional contributions the government is making to the coalition efforts. On my part, I support a lot of those efforts, for example, as they relate to the humanitarian front, the diplomatic front, on which I think she eloquently outlined some of the very challenging issues in that particular region.

However, does she not think it is still appropriate to contribute military assets as part of an effort to contain a very unstable part of the world?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that we should not have military forces engaged. Not at all. I do not believe the situation is one where we should stay on the sidelines and watch this horrific organization increase in its capabilities. However, as I said before, sometimes in looking at these issues, it is almost like a physician's credo: first, do no harm.

We had all the good intentions in the world when we went to Libya, but we did harm. When there was a peace plan on the table and Gadhafi was willing to accept it, we should not have said, "At this moment, we recognize the rebel forces of Libya as the legitimate government of Libya", knowing that al Qaeda was in that group.

When we look at an issue like this, if we completely withdraw from efforts by our allies to contain Daesh, do we incidentally allow them to increase the black market trade in oil? I think there is a legitimate role for Canada and our military in stopping the flow of black market oil. This is a devilishly difficult problem. I am not suggesting, for a moment, that there is not a role for our military.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my colleague, the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her contribution. Certainly, she has given this a lot of hard thought to and has struggled with a very complex issue. It is in no way simple. I think all of us in this room struggle with this issue of military involvement and what our contribution should be.

The one comment she made in saying that we should not continue with the CF-18s is the risk of possibly killing innocent civilians. I share that concern. However, the struggle I have is how do we balance, on the one hand, the risk of having innocent civilians killed from the mission of our CF-18s with, on the other hand, seeing many hundreds of innocent civilians killed if we stand by and do nothing to try to protect the most vulnerable in these situations?

● (1335)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, again, the position that I take on this is that air strikes are never going to end the war in Syria, nor will air strikes ever end the horror of Daesh.

What do we do instead? I would say, for example, since I have an opportunity with this question, that we should do much more to support those few governments in the region that still bear the name "government". We should be doing whatever we can to support Lebanon and Jordan. We should be working and normalizing our relations, and I support the new government's decision to normalize relations with Iran. We need to do much more to prop up and support whatever legitimate governments we see.

However, air strikes in Syria are not the way to stop Daesh. I believe very strongly that as long as a civil war is taking place in Syria and there is confusion on the ground, including the fact there are still al-Nusra fighters present, a branch of al Qaeda, fighting alongside Daesh, we just cannot single out one rebel force against the government of Assad and hope to come to a successful conclusion. We would still have the problem of collateral damage and killing of innocent civilians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the leader of the Green Party of Canada for her excellent and well-informed speech.

We do not necessarily agree on everything, but we completely agree that we must not use the term "Islamic State", since this gang of barbarians and terrorists cannot dare think that they represent Islam.

My colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie said that the best way to eliminate Daesh was to cut off the flow of money, weapons, and new recruits. The leader of the Green Party pointed out that there was nothing in the Liberals' plan regarding the sale of black market oil from the oil fields under Daesh control.

Why does my colleague think that the Liberal government left out this key factor in the activities and the civil war going on over there?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, for his question.

The government's plan does not say anything about curbing black markets. I asked that question when members of the opposition parties participated in a teleconference with National Defence experts. They replied that battling black market activity is one of the objectives of all parties belonging to the coalition against Daesh.

I hope that Canada will do more on that front. It is also very important that we sign and ratify the Arms Trade Treaty.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the leader of the Green Party. Just listening to her comments, I can really appreciate that there are certain aspects of the resolution she is fairly supportive of.

I just want to reinforce a couple of those points. She talks about humanitarian aid and development and the commitment by the government to increase our diplomatic role in helping to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria by supporting the UN-sponsored peace process and assisting the efforts of the Iraqi government to foster reconciliation. We are looking at expanding our capacity-building efforts with Jordan and Lebanon to help stop the spread of violent extremism. There will also be a great effort made to increase our intelligence-gathering resources, and there is the increase of our training force in the region. I should say that there is also the idea of withdrawing the F-18s, which happens to be a commitment we made in the last federal election.

If I can call upon the leader of the Green Party to look at this as an overall package that is being proposed, how does she believe Canadians are inclined to want us to vote on this particular motion, from her perspective?

• (1340)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. He is quite right that if it were not for the inclusion of mid-air refuelling capacity for bombers and reconnaissance missions to aid others in targeting bombing, I would support the resolution. I certainly support removing the CF-18s. I think that most Canadians do.

There has been a general effort to say after the Paris attacks that Canadian public opinion shifted. I do not believe that to be the case. I have not seen it in my own community, and this issue was hotly debated in all the town hall meetings I held through the month of January in my community. There is a horror and a revulsion at the events that occurred on November 13 in Paris. Of course, being at the climate negotiations just two weeks later, the pall was still across Paris. However, there was a resilience and a resolve that I think extends from Paris to Canada that we may not be able to stop individual attacks by terrorist operations, but we can do whatever we can to do to improve intelligence.

My memory is long enough to remember what used to be called the “Irish Troubles” in Northern Ireland and the attacks and horrific events there. These are not new. We have to say that Daesh has something novel in that it has taken very modern, sophisticated film-making techniques and used social media to attract people to its cause. I think we should spend a lot more time on how to ensure that no one is attracted to its so-called cause.

As for the anti-radicalization efforts that we have yet to see from the current government, I hope we will see soon ways and means to that end. Canadians care deeply about stopping radicalization, whether it takes place in our prisons or our schools, which are the two institutions that U.K. anti-radicalization efforts have focused upon.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

I am privileged to rise in the House to speak to this motion. I come from a family that has been involved with the Canadian Forces for many years and I have a profound level of respect and gratitude for our men and women in uniform. Each and every one of them has made a sacrifice to protect the great country of Canada, and not just they, but their families as well.

Because of this deeply rooted level of respect, I find it difficult to make sense of the government's actions when it comes to the global fight against ISIS. One of the biggest issues is the withdrawal of our CF-18s. Canada has been the fifth-largest contributor to the air combat mission against ISIS. This is a mission that has helped our allies, as they have stated in the past.

The foreign minister for the Kurdistan regional government said that not only were the CF-18 air strikes helpful and effective, he requested that they continue. If this is not a clear request for assistance by the Canadian Forces, then I do not know what is.

Canada has a long history of defending innocent and vulnerable people by taking on those who have committed mass atrocities, which is exactly what ISIS has done and continues to do. Why then does the government refuse to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies and assist them in this fight?

Not only is there a lack of air combat support, but also a lack of clarity as to why the CF-18s were withdrawn. Not a single person has been able to explain why our CF-18s must be removed from the air campaign. Even more unclear is the decision to keep our refuelling and reconnaissance planes as part of the mission despite the fact that our fighter planes that provide air cover to victims of ISIS in Iraq and Syria have been withdrawn.

This logic is completely incomprehensible. The Liberals are trying to play politics and keep campaign promises while people's lives are at stake. The lack of clarity surrounding the use of military assets is astounding. According to the government, we are willing to paint targets, conduct surveillance, provide fuel for bombers, yet we will not drop any Canadian bombs or provide air coverage for our own troops. This is not the kind of help that our allies need, nor is there any type of logic behind this decision.

A few hours south of my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain lies the Little Bighorn Battlefield historic site in Montana. It is a beautiful location in the great western plains. The history of Custer's last stand where the U.S. 7th Cavalry under Colonel Custer was wiped out by the Lakota and their allies has been well explored by military historians.

An enduring lesson from the battle in 1876 was that conflicting military objectives would lead to the needless deaths of soldiers. Custer split his troops and resources in what he believed was a useful way, only to be wiped out by the Lakota, who took advantage of an untenable plan, a lack of resources, and a simple unwillingness to agree with what Custer wanted to do.

Government Orders

I reference the past not only because it allows me to talk about an area near my beautiful riding, but because it is a bit of history the government can learn from as we discuss the motion on Canadian military involvement against ISIS. Much like Custer who believed his plan was right but was proven to be impetuous, the government, believing it is right, is presenting Canadians with an incoherent plan that appears to be impetuous.

The government would like us to believe that it was elected by Canadians to refocus Canada's military contribution against ISIS to training local forces, providing more humanitarian support, and to immediately welcome refugees to Canada. To fulfill one of the many tales it promised Canadians in order to get elected, the Liberal government is now ending the combat mission against ISIS.

The government has announced it will increase humanitarian funding in the area to help those displaced by the scourge of ISIS. It is announced that it will increase the number of Canadian troops in the area in a training and advisory role so that it may better prepare the allied forces to fight against the scourge that is ISIS. It was announced that it will pull some military resources from this arena and that all will be good in the plan on how to deal with ISIS.

Unfortunately, I do not believe that ISIS would agree with the government. The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Vance, said the Canadian mission is not a combat role, yet ISIS has not agreed to that plan by the government.

● (1345)

I am uncertain how the government's plan to withdraw against ISIS yet leave our troops active to counter the scourge of ISIS without proper resources and scattered in different locations will be a benefit in defeating an enemy that has declared its intention to be at war with the values of religious diversity, human dignity, economic freedom, and a belief in individual human rights that we, as Canadians, believe help to define us.

Canada's air campaign against ISIS has helped to destroy ISIS troops and supplies. It has contributed to ISIS not being able to do as it pleases in trying to create the caliphate of terror and destruction. To pull the CF-18 resources no longer allows us to participate in these activities.

The biggest military difference between the forces of ISIS and the Canadian military is an air force.

The Battle of Britain in World War II was won thanks to the many brave pilots of the Royal Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and others. This battle led to the defeat of the Nazi regime. The ISIS air force is non-existent. Canadian Forces had an advantage, but have now decided to play fair, despite the fact that ISIS is not playing fair, and therefore removed that advantage.

While our allies are stepping up with contributions to the destruction of ISIS, Canada is cutting and drawing away. Canada is placing humanitarian aid at the forefront of its activities before ISIS is defeated. Canada is offering to train forces in Iraq to counter ISIS. Canada wants to do all the administrative tasks of monitoring, training, education, provisions of social services, before the war against ISIS is finished.

The Canadian resourcefulness that the government talks about appears to be "let others do the work, while we stand in the background and offer our advice". We are becoming the back-seat drivers in a war zone. Canada is showing its back to its allies. Sunny ways indeed.

We, as Canadians, have an obligation to stand up for the victims of genocide, to fight against the extremist ideology, and to protect Canadians at home and abroad. I am sure everyone remembers the tragic events that took the lives of two Canadian soldiers back in 2014. These were ISIS-inspired attacks that happened right here at home. How can the government justify the decision to step back from this international fight against terrorism when Canadians are being murdered, both at home and abroad?

The public opinion of Canadians is also being ignored by the government. A February 6 poll found that 63% of Canadians say that they would like to see Canada continue bombing ISIS at the current rate or go further and increase the number of bombing missions it conducts; 47% say that withdrawing Canadian CF-18s from the mission will have a negative effect on Canada's international reputation.

We know that the 47% of Canadians are right. Canada was snubbed by our own coalition allies when we were not invited to attend an anti-ISIS meeting that was held in Paris in January. The snub happened just after the government signalled its intentions to withdraw our CF-18s from the air combat effort. Under our previous Conservative government, Canada was hosting these meetings, and yet now, due to decisions made by the Liberals, we are not even invited to attend.

The opinions of Canadians are clear. The requests for assistance from our allies are clear. The only thing lacking clarity is the reason behind the government's choice to step back from the fight against ISIS. The government motion mentioned significant investments in humanitarian assistance, which while necessary do nothing to solve the issue of the root of the problem. This is putting a band-aid over the issue. It is forcing our allies to fight without the help of our combat resources for no reason other than the Liberals wishing to keep campaign promises.

It is disingenuous and dangerous to our soldiers for the government to believe that combat training, humanitarian interventions, and dialogue with countries affected by ISIS in an active war zone is a coherent plan. A whole bunch of highly trained assets are being sidelined by a government that promised to let facts and science guide its decisions. The Lakota were not interested in Custer's plan, and wiped him out. I do not suspect ISIS will care much about the government's plan either.

In closing, I wish to offer my sincere thanks to each and every woman and man in our Royal Canadian Air Force, Royal Canadian Navy, Canadian Army, Canadian Reservists, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police who partake in these dangerous operations. I wish them Godspeed and a safe return to their family, friends, and country.

• (1350)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of passion in the speech by the member opposite.

On one side, the party opposite wants us to do more and on the other side, the NDP wants us to do less. With all due respect, I think the member opposite does all Canadians a disservice by suggesting that we are pulling back and pulling away from the fight against ISIS. The Liberal Party wants to step back, analyze, and then go forward with what it feels is the best and most effective plan for us to combat ISIS. Liberals were elected by Canadians to move forward with this kind of plan, a plan that we feel is most effective.

Will the member opposite not agree that our plan is the best plan for Canadians and the best plan to attack and defeat ISIS?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, we are supposedly in a non-combat role. We are stepping back. We are putting soldiers out there and not protecting them with the forces that we have. We have to make certain that we, as a country, can send our forces and troops into a situation where they have air cover to protect them throughout the whole region and throughout their endeavours.

• (1355)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could also provide my colleagues opposite a brief history of how this all unfolded. The caliphate spread through Iraq and on to Syria at a pace that we have never seen in modern history. The only option was for the joint forces to align and do strategic air strikes to slow ISIS down. Now the Liberals have this view that, magically, some other things can happen, but we know that is not the reality.

Can the member provide a brief history of how we have gotten to this point and how these air strikes are effective and how Canada's role would be effective with them?

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, as we all know, this has transpired extremely quickly. At one point, we saw that ISIS forces were attacking the outskirts of Baghdad and we came to their defence. By using our fighters, we have managed to slow down that progress.

Our CF-18 fighters have done 1,378 sorties, there have been 251 air strikes, and we have hit and destroyed over 399 targets. This has defended our troops and enabled us to push this scourge back.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this debate there are really three positions. There is the government position, which is fairly well articulated in the motion before us. Then there is the Conservative position that says if the CF-18s are not engaged, then Canada is not engaged. Canadians cannot be fooled. They understand that the CF-18s do not need to be involved for Canada to be playing a strong leadership role. Then there are the New Democrats who say that there has to be an exit plan. Their vision of an action plan is to have a no-entry plan in the

situation. They believe that there is no role for the Canadian Forces in a real and tangible way.

My question to the member is this. Would he not agree that Canadians have a certain expectation and, at the very least, that expectation was reaffirmed in the last federal election when Canadians supported the Liberal Party forming government? That made a very clear statement that the CF-18s needed to be pulled out and Canada needed to refocus, and that is exactly what this motion is doing.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, we are having this debate in the House after the CF-18s were withdrawn. This debate was set up for hon. members to discuss how this mission should be carried out. Yet, after the motion was put forward, we find out that the bombing mission was actually stopped before we even had a chance to have this debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on December 15, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission submitted its final report. Of the commission's 94 recommendations, the 84th concerns CBC. CBC has already acted on that recommendation by creating an English website with first nations content. It provides a platform for information and dialogue about first nations and fosters the training and integration of people from communities that are still under-represented at CBC.

However, there is no good reason why a French version does not yet exist. I am thinking of the Innu nation of Manicouagan, which is primarily francophone and has the same rights as the other nations. They want the public broadcaster to reflect their culture too.

I would be pleased to provide a copy of the proposal to the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs. I am available to meet with them and I look forward to working with—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine.

* * *

LONGUEUIL—CHARLES-LEMOYNE

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise here in the House as the member for Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine. I want to thank my constituents for placing their trust in me.

Statements by Members

I would like to take a moment to showcase my riding. Located on Montreal's south shore, Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine is home to wonderful neighbourhoods like Vieux-Longueuil, Saint-Hubert and Greenfield Park. Many citizens of Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine have been key players in our vibrant history, which has been based on such values as duty and public service. Prime Minister Mackenzie King even said that Greenfield Park was the community that gave the most men and women, per capita, to the Canadian forces during the two world wars.

I rise today to commend the work and courage of our everyday heroes, our firefighters and police officers.

* * *

• (1400)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the protection of pregnant women and their unborn children act, also known as Cassie and Molly's law, is a much-needed amendment to our Criminal Code. Because of the vicious murder of Cassie Kaake, a mother just weeks from giving birth to her daughter Molly, and too many other Canadian women who have been targeted and harmed because they chose to carry their child to term, the safety of women remains threatened.

My private member's bill would create new offences applied exclusively against anyone who knowingly commits a criminal offence against a pregnant woman and causing injury or death to her unborn child. The bill would also codify pregnancy as an aggravating factor in our criminal law, requiring a judge to always consider this factor in sentencing.

Canadians deserve a legal system that protects all aspects of a family. This bill is precise and is a common-sense approach to deterring assaults on pregnant women and causing death or injury to their unborn children.

I look forward to working with all of my colleagues in the House to make this law a reality for Canadian women and their families.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us take a moment to recognize the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, which contribute over \$11 billion to our GDP.

The Canadian Produce Marketing Association members bring fruit and veggies from the farm gate to the dinner plates of Canadian families right across the country. Covering every segment of the supply chain, from growers to retailers and everyone in between, CPMA members are responsible for 90% of the produce sales in Canada.

As farmers and members, my wife Pam and I grew vegetables and strawberries for many years. We also helped growers around the world.

Eating more fruit and vegetables makes for a healthier lifestyle, which leads to happier and more productive citizens. It also helps create a more sustainable health care system.

I hope everybody will join us tonight in recognizing the contribution CPMA makes to our economy and the health of Canadians. The event tonight will have chef Michael Smith serving up many dishes for everyone to enjoy.

* * *

[Translation]

PEOPLE OF ROSEMONT—LA PETITE-PATRIE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, individuals and community groups in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie have shown their generosity and support to Syrian refugees. As we know, the immigration process can be quite challenging, and teamwork is vital to achieving successful integration.

What I witnessed back home fills me with joy and hope. I am proud of the people who called my office to offer their help, proud of the involvement of countless organizations, such as the Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes, an umbrella group providing services to refugees and immigrants; the Canadian Council for Refugees; La Maisonnée, which provides child care services; and even la maison de la Syrie, the Syrian cultural centre. There are so many initiatives I am proud of, including that of illustrator Élise Gravel and her partner Marie Brodeur-Gélinas, who created a button in honour of the Syrian refugees.

Their generosity provides hope for a peaceful life to families who survived and fled a terrible war. Welcoming refugees is not just about meeting quotas. It is also about providing all these newcomers with a place they can really call home, and that is something we all have a responsibility to do.

Again, I say bravo and thank you to the individuals and community groups in Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

[English]

JOAN SMITH

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable woman, Mrs. Joan Smith, a political and philanthropic trailblazer and a London, Ontario icon, who passed away earlier this month at the age of 88.

Joan was a former Ontario MPP and the first female solicitor in the province's history. Never afraid to speak her mind and stand up for what was right, Joan championed social change and led the charge in the provincial legislature to amend the Ontario human rights code to include gay rights.

Joan was well known for helping establish Vanier Children's Services, a children's mental health agency. She offered unwavering support to her husband Don as he co-founded the construction conglomerate EllisDon.

Joan will be remembered as a community leader and a visionary who fought for those who needed support the most.

I say to Catherine, Lynne, Robert, Geoff, Michael, Donald, and David, their mother made London a better place.

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● (1405)

NATIONAL AVIATION DAY

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is National Aviation Day. This year marks the 106th anniversary of Canadian aviation, a day when Canadians celebrate Canada's aviation safety, strength, and success.

On National Aviation Day, Canadians commemorate the past, celebrate the future, and look forward to the future of aviation in Canada.

This is a celebration of excellence. Canadians are proud to have one of the safest and most efficient air transportation systems in the world. As the world's second-largest country, airlines play a critical role in linking our regions and our citizens. Canada's airlines facilitate business and tourism and serve as a major source of jobs and investment opportunities.

Due to the important economic and social contributions of aviation in Canada, we look forward to the tabling of the CTA review and its recommendations on the future of this industry.

Please join me and the National Airlines Council of Canada as we mark this very important anniversary.

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HALF YOUR PLATE CAMPAIGN

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to pay tribute to one of Prince Edward Island's most accomplished citizens, Chef Michael Smith.

Members have probably seen him on television as the host of *Chef Michael's Kitchen*, *Chef Abroad*, or *Chef at Home* on Food Network Canada or Global, or as a judge on *Chopped Canada*.

Chef Michael is a strong believer in the importance of getting Canadians to eat more fruits and vegetables and the need to make the healthy choice the simple choice. That is why he is proud to be the culinary ambassador for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's Half Your Plate campaign, a healthy initiative that empowers Canadians to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Although truly a chef and citizen of the world, Chef Michael's favourite role is dad at home on P.E.I. with his wife Chastity and his children: Gabe, Ariella, and Camille.

On behalf of the House, we salute Chef Michael's many accomplishments and look forward to seeing him in action tonight at the CPMA reception, where he will show how easy filling half one's plate with fruits and vegetables can be. Eat healthy.

Statements by Members

CLAUDETTE MILLAR

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in this House to pay my last respects to an inspirational Cambridge leader, Claudette Millar, who passed away on February 10.

Mayor Millar was elected in the town of Preston in 1969 at the age of only 35. She was the youngest mayor in Canada. She went on to be the first mayor of Cambridge following amalgamation and served until 1988, forging the community we enjoy today, leading us through the devastating 1974 flood, and bringing Toyota manufacturing and thousands of jobs to Cambridge.

After her terms as mayor, she continued in public service as a member of the Ontario Municipal Board until 1992 and as a regional councillor from 2003 to 2014.

She will be forever known as a steadfast and loyal community builder. From the bottom of my heart, I thank Claudette for dedicating so much of her life to us. We are forever grateful.

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THE OTTAWA HOSPITAL CIVIC CAMPUS

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Civic Hospital is almost a century old, so old that its CEO said it is under constant repair and maintenance.

"[D]espite our efforts with the ongoing patchwork, we have parts of the hospital that are permanently closed. They are, literally, too unsafe to use". He added, "with a modern facility they could save more lives and limit more suffering".

After studying 12 potential locations for a new building, the hospital told then minister John Baird that the best place was right across the street, using less than 10% of the Experimental Farm land, with plenty of time for scientists to transition to the remaining 90%.

Mr. Baird did the right thing. He fought for a hospital in his home town. If the new government thinks there is a better location, it should tell us where. Instead of attacking a great champion of our community, John Baird, we should all focus together on building a new and better hospital for all our people.

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● (1410)

THOMAS SUTHERLAND

Ms. Karina Gould (Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to fondly remember a constituent in my riding, Thomas Sutherland.

Tom lived his life to the fullest and possessed boundless energy, a never-ending curiosity, a deep sense of commitment to community, a love of theatre, and a passion for politics, but his greatest joy was in singing and entertaining others.

He was called to the bar in 1965 and practised family law in Hamilton and then in Burlington for over 30 years. Following retirement, he was appointed an Ontario civil court deputy judge and was affectionately known as the singing judge.

Statements by Members

Tom was a devoted Liberal and ran twice, in the 1979 and 1980 federal elections, and served as president of the Young Liberals in Hamilton and Toronto. He was Canada's representative at the NATO youth conference in The Hague, a delegate to the UN, and an appointed election observer in the Ukraine, Armenia, Albania, Montenegro, and Kosovo. He was also a tireless volunteer and served on over a dozen committees in his community.

Tom loved to sing his old Sinatra tunes, and I can proudly say that Tom did it his way.

* * *

[Translation]

MARY TRAVERS, AKA LA BOLDOC

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of the passing of a pioneer of Quebec song, Mary Travers, who is better known as “La Bolduc”.

Ms. Travers was born in 1894 in the Gaspé in Newport, the same village where the Minister of National Revenue and the member for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine were born. La Bolduc is considered to be Quebec's first female singer-songwriter.

Her eloquent and comical songs, which were intertwined with “turlutes”, Acadian mouth music, were like a breath of fresh air for workers in the Great Depression. Just recently the Quebec government officially designated this remarkable songstress as a historical figure. She is the second woman, after Jeanne Mance, to be awarded this honour posthumously.

La Bolduc, who was ahead of her time thanks to her financial independence and determination, paved the way for the emancipation of women.

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PIERRE MOREAU

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness and much emotion that we learned yesterday that Pierre Moreau, a minister in the Quebec government, is fighting what could turn out to be cancer.

Pierre is a real fighter. He has often proven this, and we know that he will do so once more. He was elected to the National Assembly for the first time in 2003, and held senior cabinet positions. He is a courteous, engaged, attentive, and intelligent man. Everyone paid tribute to his courage yesterday.

Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard said that “Despite his physical condition, I feel that he has an intense desire to fight and win, which is no surprise to anyone who knows him”.

Pierre, I am speaking on behalf of everyone in the House of Commons. We believe in you. We know that you can beat this illness. We wish you well, Pierre.

[English]

GRAHAM DOWNEY

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating Black History Month across Canada, so I rise today to acknowledge Graham Downey, a late constituent in my riding of Halifax, who made history. Mr. Downey was Halifax's first African-Nova Scotian city councillor and the city's first African-Nova Scotian deputy mayor.

In September 2015, at 76 years old, Mr. Downey passed away. However, he left an indelible mark. He was first elected to Halifax City Council in 1974, at the age of 35, and served his constituents in the north end of Halifax for 26 years. He was a tireless advocate on matters like upgraded and affordable housing, street lighting, clean neighbourhoods, education, and community recreation facilities.

He was a recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal and a Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities citation.

It is an honour to shine a light on the truly inspiring legacy of Mr. Graham Downey.

* * *

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to wish my son Russell a happy 29th birthday today.

On a more serious note, all Canadians have been witness to the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Syria. The devastating images of entire families risking everything to flee the violence have pushed many of us to help.

In my riding, people from Naramata to New Denver, and many places in between, have been opening their hearts, their homes, and their wallets to accept refugees with housing, ESL programs, job placement supports, and integration plans in place.

The people of South Okanagan—West Kootenay have stepped up to privately sponsor refugees, and many are in a position now to accept government assisted refugees. Today I want to thank all those who have lent their helping hands.

We want the government to know that our communities are ready, willing, able, and indeed anxious, to work with the government, and we look forward to hearing more about how our communities can help.

* * *

● (1415)

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two years ago in Ukraine, the Heavenly Hundred were gunned down on Kyiv's Maidan during the revolution of dignity. It was two years ago that President Putin's little green men invaded and occupied Crimea and then Putin illegally annexed it. Today, Russian officials continue to arrest Tatars in Crimea and have closed their legislative assembly, mosques, and cultural centres.

Oral Questions

Russia wants to normalize relations with the Liberal government. Normalization is code for appeasement. Unfortunately, our Prime Minister wants to engage Putin.

I remind the government that Crimea is Ukraine, and whether it takes five months or 50 years, Canada should never recognize it as Russian territory. Russian soldiers fighting in eastern Ukraine is not interference. It is called an invasion. If Russia wants to avoid its Cold War number two, then Russia must get out of Ukraine.

The previous Conservative government strongly supported Ukraine with sanctions, military assistance, government reforms, and fostering economic growth.

I invite members to join Ukraine's deputy speaker, Andriy Parubiy, at 3:30 today at the Centennial Flame for a vigil in remembrance of the Heavenly Hundred and the victims of the Euromaidan.

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COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR FUNDRAISER

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothsay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are the sobering facts. At least 200,000 Canadians experience homelessness in any given year. At least 150,000 Canadians use a homeless shelter at some point, and tonight 30,000 Canadians will be homeless.

That is why I was proud to participate in the Coldest Night of the Year walk to support homelessness and to support outflow ministries that provide shelter, hope, and so much more for those who are hurting. Thanks to Tony Dickinson, Jamie Hall, Phil Appleby, Colin McDonald, Chanelle Morgan, and Laura Duncansen for their leadership.

Coming from a city with the highest child poverty rates in the country and some of the highest homelessness rates in the country, fighting poverty is my top priority. As we know, this will not be an easy task, but working alongside Minister Jean-Yves Duclos and his department and putting a strong case forward to make Saint John a model city on poverty, we can bring outside-of-the-box thinking, fresh ideas, and innovation to an issue that has plagued my city and our country for far too long.

The Speaker: I remind the member and staff of members who advise them on statements in the House not to use the names of members in the House but rather only their titles.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are three very big problems with the Prime Minister's new borrowing spree. First, of course, is that it breaks his promise to Canadians. Second is that all the borrowing he is doing actually is not going to create jobs right now. Third is that he has no way to pay it back unless he actually raises taxes.

Does the Prime Minister realize that all this borrowing with no plan to pay it back is just a recipe for waste, higher taxes, and more intrusive government?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in last October's election campaign, we highlighted that we saw clearly that what Canada needed was investment and growth and that, for 10 years, the previous government was unable to create the kinds of opportunities and growth that middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join the middle class truly needed.

That is why we put forward a plan to invest in our communities, to support the middle class and those working hard to join it, and to create the kind of growth that Canada has too long lacked. That is what we committed to do; that is what we are doing.

[Translation]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives led this country through the worst global recession and Canada came out of it in the best condition of all G7 countries. We created about 1.3 million jobs and we left a surplus of more than \$3 billion.

Even the NDP acknowledges that we had a surplus.

Why are the Liberals so determined to destroy Canada's enviable position as a leader on the international stage?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we very clearly saw, is that no one in Canada believed what the Conservatives were claiming. They did not create the growth and the prosperity Canadians needed.

For that reason, Canadians chose another way of doing things, a way of investing in our communities, creating economic growth and helping the middle class instead of the wealthy. That is exactly what we promised to do, and that is exactly what we are going to do now and in the March 22 budget.

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was in Alberta last weekend, and I can tell the Prime Minister that people are hurting. Families are losing their homes, food banks are overwhelmed, and suicide rates are up. Transferring money from a federal politician to a provincial politician is not going to fix the problem.

Alberta businesses need to be able to thrive, invest, and create jobs; and Albertans need opportunities to get back to work. That means fast-tracking pipelines and calling off the Liberal plan for a carbon tax. When is the Prime Minister going to understand that throwing borrowed money around does not create jobs?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it humorous that the member was calling on us for a long time to help Alberta, and then when we finally deliver \$250 million to Alberta through the fiscal stabilization program, the Conservatives call it insignificant.

The fact is that we understand too well that the previous Conservative government's approach of trying to bully its way into creating pipelines was not working because the Conservatives ignored the fact that they need strong environmental protections in order to create a strong economy. That is what Albertans expect of us; that is what we are going to deliver.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance was happy to break another election promise by putting Canadians another \$25 billion in debt and creating structural deficits of \$90 billion over four years.

How can the Minister of Finance justify putting Canadians into debt when we are not even in a recession?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our objective remains a balanced budget, but our priority is to make investments in Canada for Canadians and the middle class. We know that they chose our plan to grow the economy, and that is exactly what we will do.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the plan was a small \$10-billion deficit. Now, we are talking \$25 billion or \$30 billion. Where will it end? Why sink future generations into debt?

The Minister of Finance has lost control of his department, he has lost control of public spending, and he has lost control of the deficits. He should pull himself together and get control of his department. If he cannot do so, he should make way for someone else who can.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are starting with a deficit we inherited from the Conservatives. Furthermore, we have an additional \$150 billion in debt. That is what we are starting with, but fortunately, we are in a position to invest in our economy because, as a result of the measures taken by the government in the 1990s, our debt-to-GDP ratio is the lowest in the G7. We will invest and this ratio will grow at a lower rate than in the past 10 years.

* * *

AIR CANADA

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister claimed that Air Canada had a maintenance agreement for the C Series aircraft here in Canada. His minister even said that Air Canada "will build a centre of excellence for...maintenance." However, there is no such agreement, and no clear commitment to build such a centre.

On exactly what authority can a Prime Minister relieve Air Canada of its legal obligations, which are very clear under the terms of a piece of Canadian legislation that is still in force? Why is he not enforcing the law?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada's commitment to purchase 45 C Series aircraft with an option to buy 30 more is great news for the entire Canadian aerospace industry.

Air Canada also committed to establishing a centre of excellence and aircraft maintenance and to have its C Series aircraft maintained there for at least 20 years. This is great news for Canada's aerospace industry. That is why the government is working hard with its partners in Quebec and elsewhere. That is what we will continue to do for the workers.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when 2,600 aerospace jobs were threatened under the Conservative government, the Liberal leader protested with the workers about how dishonest and unfair it all was.

Now in government, he is abandoning those same Canadian workers, and there is no deal and no guarantee for any future jobs.

Will the Prime Minister commit to meeting with these workers in Montreal, in Mississauga, and in Winnipeg, to explain why he has changed his mind and why he no longer supports their rights?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we continue to support a strong and thriving aerospace industry. That is why we were so pleased when Air Canada announced it was going to purchase 45 C Series aircraft, with an option for 30 more.

[Translation]

In addition, Air Canada is going to create a manufacturing and maintenance centre that will help workers and create jobs for another 20 years.

We see how important this is, and we will continue to work with the industry and with other governments to ensure that this gets done.

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[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has nothing to offer struggling Canadians but empty rhetoric.

As unemployment goes up and the number of Canadians receiving EI benefits actually does down, Canadians are demanding action to help families pay the bills and to put food on the table.

Yet again, the government's response is empty platitudes rather than commitments to action.

Will the Prime Minister take immediate action to create a universal threshold of 360 hours and to extend EI benefits, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Yes, Mr. Speaker, we committed during the election campaign to strengthen EI and to do so without having to cut massively into government spending, which the hon. member would have had to do if he had been elected, because of his commitment to balance the books at all costs.

The fact of the matter is that we got elected on a commitment to invest in EI, to invest in helping workers. The member opposite knows that and picked a different path.

The fact is that Canadians chose us to lead on reforming EI, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were very critical of the EI reform when they were in opposition. Now that he is in power, the Prime Minister is content to give evasive answers and spew the usual empty rhetoric.

Only roughly one-third of the workers who lose their jobs qualify for EI, and the benefit period is far too short to find another job. The Prime Minister must understand that urgent action is needed now.

Will the government extend the EI benefits period, yes or no? We would like a clear answer for once.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are going to reform employment insurance. During the election campaign, we promised to invest in the system and make sure that more Canadians who need employment insurance can have access to it. That is what we have always stood for and what we will continue to do now that we are in government and have the ability to do so.

* * *

[*English*]

FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we left the government with a surplus. Ask the finance department officials. They could be working with a balanced budget. They could be strengthening the Canadian economy.

However, my question is about testimony at the finance committee today. I have to ask the Minister of Finance this. Was he really serious when he said that running a balanced budget is going to put us in a recession?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was deadly serious. What the people on the other side of the House said was that what they wanted to do was to balance the budget at all costs immediately. What that would mean is that we would have, right now, tens of billions of dollars of cuts, cuts that would increase our unemployment rate, that would reduce our ability to be flexible, that would certainly put us in a very difficult situation.

Our plan is to make an investment to actually improve our rate of growth in this country for the middle class and those most vulnerable.

• (1430)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of worrying about what our great government would have done on this side of the

House, perhaps he should worry a little more about what the government is not doing on his side of the House.

He did believe in fiscal prudence at one point in time. This is a quote from CBC in November:

...because we want to go into deficit in order to make significant investments that we think are really important...[it] doesn't give us licence to be in any way flexible about how we deal with our finances more generally.

What has changed in the last three months that causes the Minister of Finance to feel like he has a licence to spend?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the quote because it is a quote that I stand by today. Our commitment to Canadians is to actually do something about the low growth bequeathed to us by the previous government. We are going to make investments that will make a real difference for Canada, investments in infrastructure, investments in innovation. We are going to do things for the middle class that will include giving them tax breaks and improved growth for the future. That is exactly what we will do while being prudent along the way.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to correct two statements made earlier by government members that do not reflect reality. The Minister of Finance said he inherited a deficit and the Prime Minister also said that we Conservatives are the only ones who believe there was a surplus.

That is not the reality. The reality is that according to the *Fiscal Monitor*, an official document published by the Department of Finance, there was a budgetary surplus of \$1 billion from April to November 2015. That is the reality as written by the government's own officials.

No matter how much the Liberals shout at us, that is the truth. Will the minister—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there was a question, but what I can say is that six months, two months, does not make a year. We looked at the entire year and we saw that the Conservatives left a deficit. In the last three months of the year, there was less revenue and more spending. That means the Conservatives ran a deficit.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that was an answer, but what I do know is that a real document from the Department of Finance, his own department, showed that there was a surplus. That is a fact.

Another thing I know for sure is that the Liberal Party spent the whole election campaign saying that it had a plan. The fact is that they do not have a plan to deal with today's economic reality.

Will the Prime Minister stand up and say that he really will manage the public purse carefully and seriously so as not to put our children and grandchildren in debt?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, our budget will be tabled on March 22. We have a plan. Our plan is to invest in the middle class across Canada. Our plan is to invest in infrastructure, innovation, and the country's most vulnerable people. Our plan is to grow the economy, and we are going to start right away.

[English]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Conservative government's first two years, we paid down the national debt by \$38 billion. When the global recession hit, we provided a low-tax plan and economic stimulus, infrastructure, and other things to keep Canadians working. We left the government with a surplus. The Liberals' exploding deficit has all but wiped that out in 100 days.

Why is the only Liberal plan to spend, spend, spend?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan is to invest, invest, invest.

Unlike the Conservatives, we were not left with a surplus. The Liberals left the Conservatives with a \$13 billion surplus. They turned it into \$150 billion of additional debt for Canadians.

We are going to spend to increase our growth rate, to make Canada better for Canadians.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remind that Minister of Finance that those are Canadian taxpayer dollars that he is spend, spend, spending.

Following the global economic downturn, Canada was in the best position of the G7 countries. Canada was the first to emerge from the recession, and we went on to be ranked as one of the best places in the world to start a new business and to create jobs.

Why is the Minister of Finance so insistent on destroying Canada's enviable position around the world?

• (1435)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that something really important happened on October 19, 2015. Canadians had a choice. They had a choice between dealing with a low-growth economy and investing or making cuts so that we would actually have a more difficult situation.

Canadians made the right choice. They chose to invest. We are making investments in the middle class, we are making investments in infrastructure, and we are making investments in innovation, so that over the next period, the next generation we will have a stronger Canada for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the former parliamentary budget officer, Kevin Page, questioned the figures put forward by the Minister of Finance in his update.

Today, in committee, the minister insisted on using these figures, and who knows where they came from. There is nothing to reassure Canadians, especially since the minister refuses to confirm whether he will keep his election promises.

Does he realize that Canadians, especially low-income earners such as seniors, families and the unemployed, are the first to be affected by an economic downturn?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a promise to Canadians. We promised to be open and transparent.

Yesterday, I explained that our current situation is difficult. The economy is volatile, and that is why we used a lower level of growth for next year than we did in November. It is a good starting point, and it allows us to consider how to prepare a budget for the future.

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is still about those numbers coming out of a hat.

The former parliamentary budget officer has warned that the Minister of Finance's latest fiscal update is full of holes and fudge lines.

The minister is even less clear on whether he will deliver help for struggling Canadians. While the update confirms that his tax scheme will cost over \$1 billion more than first claimed, seniors, families, and the unemployed are left to wait for promised help.

Why are those most in need last on the minister's mind?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer this question.

We made promises in the last election to make investments. We made promises to help the middle class. We have already moved forward. We also made promises to help those who are most vulnerable.

I am proud to say that we will be moving forward with our Canada child benefit in budget 2016. This is an historic decision to make an enormous difference for people in this country. We are going to help 9 out of 10 Canadian families with children. We are going to bring hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, helping the most vulnerable.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, stock options allow new small businesses to hire the most talented employees by giving them a piece of future gains in stock values.

However, the government plans to double taxes on shares. As a result, many entrepreneurs will have to set up shop elsewhere, which will eliminate jobs here in Canada.

Will the Minister of Finance announce today that he will abandon the tax hike on entrepreneurs and job creators?

[English]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I would like to announce today is that we have an absolute commitment to making our country more innovative.

Oral Questions

We have an absolute commitment to dealing with the productivity challenge in this country. We are moving forward to do what has not been done for the last decade, and that is to invest in innovators, invest in innovation across this country.

I will be delighted to present my budget in just a few short weeks to give more details on this subject.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we cannot invest in our innovators by increasing their taxes, which is what the Liberal government is currently proposing.

Stock options allow us to attract the most talented employees by giving them a piece of future gains in stock values, enticing today's talent with a piece of tomorrow's treasure. That is why so many entrepreneurs have been so successful across this country.

This tax increase will not only hurt high-tech entrepreneurs but also junior oil and gas companies that are cash poor but rich in promise. I invite the minister to rise in his place and announce that he is on their side and that he will keep taxes low.

● (1440)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that very kind invitation to stand and tell people that we support innovation, because we absolutely do.

We know that supporting innovation in this country is a rather complex job. It involves more than just one tool in a toolbox. We are going to make investments in basic science that will make a real difference for future innovation in this country. We are going to make investments in innovation clusters that will make a real difference, attracting companies that want to do research in our country.

We are going to make a real difference for innovation and productivity in this country through multiple measures that can help Canadians now and in the future.

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MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Oshawa needs low taxes to keep well-paying manufacturing jobs. Liberal policies, like high payroll taxes, new carbon taxes, and the highest electricity rates in North America, have given the competitive edge to places like Michigan. Instead of lowering taxes now, the Prime Minister is taking these job-killing policies nationally.

When the Prime Minister told the minister to transition away from manufacturing, was the plan to kill every single manufacturing job in Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the manufacturing sector. We will never turn our back on the manufacturing sector.

We understand the importance of the sector. We understand that 1.7 million Canadians contribute to the manufacturing sector and that it contributes greatly to our economic growth. This is why we have a plan.

We are going to be making investments not only in manufacturing but in infrastructure, helping those who want to join the middle class

and helping reduce the burden on middle-class Canadians. We are going to put forward a growth agenda, an innovation agenda, that will help all sectors in the economy, including manufacturing.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not get it. So far the current government's only plan for the auto sector is higher payroll taxes, higher energy costs, and job-killing carbon taxes. These policies failed in Ontario, and they will fail nationally.

Oshawa families wonder if they are going to have the same Liberal fate as workers at Bombardier. Is that what the minister meant by transitioning away from manufacturing?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the 21st century digital economy, it is very important that we invest in manufacturing so that it can compete in the new digital economy. Therefore, we are not going to turn our back on manufacturing. If anything, we are going to make sure it is more competitive, not only in Canada but globally as well.

I had the opportunity, with the Prime Minister, to meet with the leadership of GM and other OEMs at Davos to make sure that we work with them to make investment, create good quality jobs, and invest in innovation, and this is going to help our growth agenda.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, reports suggest that Canadian arms sold to Saudi Arabia are falling into the hands of fighters in the Yemen civil war. Armoured vehicles made in Canada and bought in the last decade appear to be used by the Saudis themselves in the same civil war.

Government policy is clear: an assessment of human rights has to be conducted before allowing arms exports.

Can the minister confirm that arms made in Canada are being used in Yemen? Will he make public, finally, the assessment made before the sale of these arms?

[Translation]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

I want to assure Canadians that we take this issue very seriously. Yesterday, the minister asked the department for more information on an investigation into the matter. During the election campaign, we promised that we would be more transparent and more accountable on this kind of issue and that is exactly what we are going to do.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we want transparency, but it is long overdue. The government took an interest in this situation yesterday, but we have been talking about it for months.

Oral Questions

The government's policy is clear: before arms can be sold abroad, the government must ensure that they will not end up in a combat zone and will not be used to violate human rights.

However, we have now learned that Canadian arms sold to Saudi Arabia have fallen into the hands of fighters in the Yemen civil war.

Can the minister confirm whether that is the case, and will he commit to making public the assessment that his department had to make before allowing arms exports to Saudi Arabia?

• (1445)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that this contract was signed by the previous government. During the election campaign, we promised to be more transparent in the future. However, at that time, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe was clear about the fact that we would not reopen the contract. We promised to improve the situation and that is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to welcome Syrian refugees, who need the help of all levels of government in order to obtain immediate access to health care and other essential services.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell the House about the government's announcement regarding the interim federal health program?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that good question.

We have restored the refugee health care program that the Conservatives did away with. The courts ruled that cutting this program was cruel and unusual. It was a good program for refugees and a good public health program. Restoring the program is simply the right thing to do.

* * *

[English]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first we learned that the Liberals may lease foreign-built tugboats. Now they are bringing in a foreign consultant. Do they think no Canadian can do the job?

The Liberals seem to prefer creating jobs overseas for foreigners, but there are no plans for jobs here at home.

Could the Minister of Procurement explain why the Liberals do not trust the Canadian shipyard workers and Canadian businesses?

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government hired Mr. Steve Brunton as a shipbuilding expert to provide the government with independent expert advice on multiple facets of the national shipbuilding procurement strategy. Mr. Brunton

has extensive experience in overseeing shipbuilding programs and naval acquisitions in the United Kingdom, one of our closest allies.

The government will benefit from unbiased expert advice on shipbuilding.

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first the Liberals wanted to have ships built abroad rather than here in Canada. Now they have hired a foreign consultant to work on the Canadian naval strategy. That is one job less for a Canadian.

Did the procurement minister clearly indicate in her mandate that the ships would be built here in Canada, or is this a trick on the part of the Liberals to wash their hands of the matter and have our ships built abroad?

[English]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government remains committed to the national shipbuilding procurement strategy and buying our ships in Canada openly and transparently. No decisions have yet been made with respect to the naval tug requirement. The project is still at an early stage of planning.

As part of the national shipbuilding procurement strategy and the defence procurement strategy, the government is committed to ensuring that the replacement of the National Defence large tugboats will result in significant benefits for Canadians and Canadian industry.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the spending decisions of the current government and the resulting deficits are dragging down the economy and killing jobs. So are Liberal policy decisions. The Liberals have shut down the Billy Bishop runway expansion, and with it \$2 billion in plane orders to Bombardier are gone.

The Liberals are costing jobs and killing choice and competition in Toronto for travellers, tourism and businesses. Why the reckless attack on Toronto's economy and jobs in the vulnerable aviation sector?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted with the great news that came out last week concerning the fact that Air Canada decided to purchase 45 C Series jets, and possibly 30 more, and that it will be undertaking the maintenance of those aircraft in Quebec for the next 20 years at least.

This is great news for Bombardier. This is great news for Quebec. This is great news for the aerospace industry. Everybody should be very happy about it.

Oral Questions

●(1450)

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last fall, the Minister of Immigration travelled to Lebanon to a refugee camp so that, in his own words, he could see the people we were helping with his own eyes. At the Zaatari camp in Jordan, he was joined by his two seatmates, left and right, where they told refugee families that Canada was there to help.

However, last week at the public safety committee, we heard from government officials that virtually none of the 25,000 Syrian refugees came from those camps.

Why has the minister misled Canadians and, more important, why has he offered false hope to those families for the purposes of a photo op?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a misguided question. When we went to bring the refugees from these countries, we took the lists provided by the United Nations, which were lists of the most vulnerable people in the region. We contacted those people and many of them, thankfully, are now in Canada.

We never said that they were from camps. In Jordan, for example, some 75% of the refugees are outside camps. They are from the region. They are the most vulnerable. I, for one, am very proud that almost 25,000 of them are now in Canada.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans passed a motion to review the imminent closure of the Comox communication safety station. There have been serious concerns raised about the safety of our coast if this station is shut down. Spills, accidents, and longer waits for emergency service are all likely. Lives are at risk.

Will the minister now do the right thing, hear from witnesses, listen to residents, and abandon the plans to shut down the Comox station?

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Coast Guard has modernized its marine communications and traffic services centres with 21st century equipment. I have visited these centres and have seen first hand these new systems that have replaced the 30-year-old technology. Members of the Coast Guard staff are highly trained, highly skilled, and they need the right tools to do their jobs.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the minister really believe that technology alone can replace these communication centres? It is simply not the case. In fact, over the weekend the Victoria station went down, leaving Georgia Strait, Howe Sound, and Vancouver harbour completely unprotected. This was not the first communication failure either, but still the government seems determined to shut down the Comox station.

Why is the Liberal government showing such disregard for marine safety? Why are the Liberals continuing with this failed Conservative approach?

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have invested in new technology. It is like I said last week, switching from a dial phone to a smartphone. This technology is exactly what my staff members need in those centres to keep people safe. They have the training and the ability to do it. Now they have the equipment as well.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice sits on six cabinet committees, including one responsible for strengthening the relationship with indigenous Canadians. Her husband is a registered lobbyist who will lobby the government on issues related to first nations. Her husband's lobbying work is a direct conflict of interest, since the justice minister will now deal with legal matters involving first nations.

How can the Prime Minister justify this obvious conflict of interest?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we want advice on conflict of interest matters, we go directly to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Ms. Dawson, and that is exactly what my colleague did. She proactively went and sought the commissioner's advice. The minister and her husband are following the Ethics Commissioner's advice to a T.

Obviously, my colleague has an enormous amount of difficulty understanding that. I invite him to go and see Ms. Dawson. Her office is on Slater Street, here in Ottawa. She can tell him exactly how all this works.

●(1455)

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hardly surprising that the government House leader knows the address all that well.

The Minister of Justice is directly responsible for projects that are funded under the federal government's aboriginal justice strategy. That means she gets to decide which groups receive taxpayer funding.

Given that her husband is now a lobbyist for the Westbank First Nation and the First Nations Finance Authority, will she recuse herself from any decision with respect to aboriginal program funding?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are not surprised that member does not know where the Ethics Commissioner's office is.

Oral Questions

Let me be clear. The Minister of Justice has done exactly what is expected of honourable people who have shown throughout their entire career integrity and respect for good governance. She went to see the Ethics Commissioner with her husband, who has been in a business for 30 years, and asked for the advice of the Ethics Commissioner. The minister is following that advice, something the hon. member would have enormous difficulty doing.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the city of Kelowna's website, the Kelowna RCMP supports victim services in the Westbank First Nation. This is the same first nation that has hired the Minister of Justice's husband as a lobbyist.

The justice minister is the vice-chair of the government's cabinet committee for intelligence and emergency management, two issues that are integral to the RCMP's mandate. This is a blatant conflict of interest.

Given her husband's lobbying activities, will the justice minister step down from the secret government committee?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only secret here is why that member continues to imagine all kinds of problems where none exist. Let me explain for him exactly what happened.

Our advice with respect to conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest comes from the person whom Parliament has chosen to provide that advice. Her name is Mary Dawson. She is the Ethics Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. We are happy to take her advice and follow it meticulously. That is what my colleague has done. I wish the hon. member might inform himself as to how the process really works.

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INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people in my riding of Calgary Skyview have been hit hard by the recent downturn in oil prices and are concerned about the economic future of their province. With the low price of oil and mounting job losses, they are worried there will be less revenue for the government.

Will the Minister of Finance please provide an update to the House on what our government is doing to assist Alberta in this difficult time?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Skyview. I would also like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, and the member for Edmonton Centre. All of them have been advocating on behalf of Alberta.

I was proud today to announce that we had fast-forwarded the stabilization fund for Alberta of \$250 million, which is the maximum amount payable per person. This is an example of the spirit of co-operation between federal and provincial governments to work on behalf of middle-class families and those in particular who are struggling in places where it is very difficult due to the downturn.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has told Canadians that the Liberal government is significantly increasing the number of trainers who will be participating in the campaign against ISIS. General Vance has confirmed that these soldiers will be painting targets near the front lines and will defend themselves if fired upon. They are risking their lives in what the Liberals say is a non-combat mission. Will the soldiers involved in this training mission be eligible for the post-combat reintegration allowance?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad for that question. I want to quickly mention that the HMCS *Winnipeg* just returned today from Operation Reassurance. I want to commend its work.

However, yes, all our troops, regardless of where they are deployed, have access to all the benefits. It is a priority of this government to look after our troops.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after being called out several times in the House on the issue of milk protein that is coming across our borders, the minister finally decided it was time to act. That is great, but that was nearly three weeks ago and we have heard nothing since. Dairy producers are still very worried. This loophole in the supply management system is costing our producers roughly \$1,000 a week.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food reassure our producers and tell them when and how he plans to take action?

• (1500)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We are well aware of the industry's concerns regarding the use of diafiltered milk to produce cheese. We are working with departmental officials in order to ensure that the standards are clear for everyone. The Government of Canada is fully committed to protecting supply management.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Fraser River is an important waterway in my riding and the depletion of the sockeye salmon population has greatly impacted my constituents, including indigenous peoples.

Could the minister please provide an update to the House on the implementation of the recommendations of the Cohen commission?

Oral Questions

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how important sockeye salmon is to British Columbians. That is why we committed to acting on the recommendations of the Cohen commission. I have met with Justice Cohen as well as the Fraser River Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat and other key experts and stakeholders in the area. Many of those recommendations have already been implemented and we are in the process of developing ways to move forward on the remaining ones.

I am confident that working together we will be able to restore the sockeye salmon stock in the Fraser River.

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TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's tourism sector is a nearly \$90-billion-a-year industry that employs more than 600,000 hard-working Canadians.

At the tourism ministers' meetings there was nothing new from the government, only a reaffirmation of initiatives that our Conservative government had already undertaken, including investing \$30 million for tourism marketing in the United States.

Could the minister indicate whether the Liberals will make any attempt at all to build on the good work done under the previous Conservative government?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great time to visit Canada.

We are meeting with Canadians from coast to coast to coast. We have been present. On the weekend I was at the Boston Globe Travel Show with provinces so that we could promote the tourism industry. We will be supporting the connecting America program so that Americans know to visit Canada. We will continue to have a presence on the international stage.

I urge members to stay tuned for the budget, because there might be some surprises.

I am sure the member looks forward to working with us.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport is so glad that Quebec is dropping its case against Air Canada, thereby sacrificing 1,800 Aveos workers on the pretext that Air Canada may create 1,000 C Series aircraft maintenance jobs within 10 years.

What is clear here is the Air Canada Public Participation Act and the conditions governing its privatization, and most of all, the fact that Air Canada is not obeying that law.

Instead of amending the law to make it easier to export our jobs to other countries, will the minister finally enforce the existing law?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Air Canada's decision to buy 45 C Series aircraft and as

many as 30 more is good news. This will create both short-term and long-term jobs at Bombardier.

Air Canada has also committed to having those aircraft maintained in Quebec for at least the next 20 years. That is good news. We also know that the Government of Quebec is about to drop its case against Air Canada. That will enable the government to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

* * *

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in the dying days of the federal election campaign, 14 permits were issued by Fisheries Canada and Transport Canada to allow the construction of the Site C dam in northern B.C. on the Peace River. It is highly controversial and manifestly opposed. Its sole purpose is to provide electricity for LNG development. The joint panel found it directly offends Treaty 8 treaty rights.

Will the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs commit to no further permits being issued while the issues for indigenous people remain outstanding?

• (1505)

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2014, the former government approved the project and set legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply.

The project is now at construction phase and BC Hydro must meet the requirements set out in the environmental assessment decision as well as other regulatory requirements.

We are committed to a new relationship with indigenous peoples. I have been and will continue to be engaged in discussions with indigenous leaders on how we can work together to ensure better consultation, environmental assessments, and natural resource development.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Allen Roach, Minister of Finance for the Province of Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

L'hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

In the finance committee this morning, finance officials appeared before the committee and they were able to answer questions with respect to the "Fiscal Monitor", not only of November but December 2015.

I am seeking permission from the House in order to table these "Fiscal Monitors" showing the great work done by the Department of Finance.

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The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to table these documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EFFORT TO COMBAT ISIL

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to the motion before us today. Even though the Prime Minister and his Minister of National Defence ended the air component of Operation Impact before this debate even began, it is important for all members to have the opportunity to present our views and those of our constituents.

Canada is known around the world for our values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. As a mother and grandmother, I believe that there is no better place than Canada to live, work, and raise a family. Throughout history, Canadians have always given more to protect our values abroad than a country this size would be expected.

Today, our freedoms and very way of life are being threatened by ISIS. This is an organization whose main stated purpose is to eliminate all peoples who do not share its theology. It is a death cult that is trying to impose on the Middle East and the world a very violent iteration of 7th century sharia law. It seeks to form a caliphate in the Levant region, which includes Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Lebanon, Cypress, and southern Turkey by converting or killing non-Sunni populations.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order please.

I want to ask members to take their conversations outside. Perhaps the government House leader could help by encouraging members to take their conversations into the lobby. I would appreciate that very much.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek has the floor.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that ISIS has between 25,000 and 30,000 fighters across Iraq and Syria, of which a number are foreign recruits. It is in possession of all kinds of weaponry, including tanks. Around the world, the repercussions of ISIS are being felt. Thousands have been killed simply for trying to do the things we take for granted, like practise the faith of our choosing or raise our daughters to believe that they can be or do anything they choose. People are fleeing because ISIS has revolutionized the use of torture, murder, and mutilation. Anyone who does not share its perverse and inexplicable world view is being stoned, beheaded, burned alive, or crucified.

More than 2.5 million refugees are now in Turkey, nearly 500,000 in Germany, nearly 1.5 million in Jordan, and the list goes on. None of these refugees will be able to return to their homes until there is peace and stability in the region and critical infrastructure has been rebuilt.

The shocks of the attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, and Burkina Faso remind us that the horrors brought on by ISIS are not limited to a geographic region.

Lester Pearson once said that, whether Canadians fire a rifle in Korea or in Europe, they are protecting people at home themselves.

It is beyond debate that ISIS needs to be stopped.

Today, we are debating the size and scope of Canada's mission to stop ISIS. The Liberals are trying to make this an either/or debate, and the NDP is trying to make this a neither/nor debate.

This debate is not about deciding upon whether Canada should provide more humanitarian aid or contribute a robust military contribution, as the Liberals are trying to frame it. It is not an either/or decision.

This debate is not about ignoring, as the NDP has, the clear and present danger that ISIS poses to Canadians. It is not a neither/nor decision.

This debate should be about the maximum contribution that Canada can offer to the people of Iraq and Syria, our allies, and the entire region.

On this side of the House, my colleagues and I continue to support doing our part on both the humanitarian level and the combat level.

The facts are that the Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18 aircraft have, as part of a broader coalition, stalled the spread of this horrible caliphate. Over the past year, air strikes from coalition forces have limited ISIS to 25% of the territory it once held.

From their first sortie on October 30, 2014, to being grounded on February 15, 2016, Canada's CF-18 Hornets conducted 1,378 sorties and destroyed 267 ISIL fighting positions, 102 pieces of ISIL equipment and vehicles, and 30 improvised explosive device factories and storage facilities.

The threat imposed by their presence has undeniably held back further advances by ISIS.

The Liberal Party will argue that our CF-18s have had minimal impact because of their numbers relative to some of our allies, but this is not a justification for stepping back.

Does the government believe that our Dutch allies should remove their six F-16 fighter aircraft from this theatre of operation because they are not contributing enough aircraft to be effective?

The fact is that, if we remove our CF-18s from this fight, other nations will have to take up the slack left by the absence of our pilots and aircraft.

The Liberals have not said which of our allies will fly the 1,378 sorties that Canadian pilots would have flown in the coming months. The Liberals have not said who will destroy the hundreds of military targets that our aircraft would have destroyed had they not been grounded.

Furthermore, the suggestion by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence that Canada is better suited to a training mission than an air combat mission is an insult to the fighting capacity of the Royal Canadian Air Force, our pilots, and the entire team supporting them in the region.

I cannot speak on behalf of our pilots and support teams, but I dare say that they are immensely proud of the personal contribution they have been able to make.

The skill of our men and women in uniform is clear. That is why our allies want our CF-18s, our CC-150 Polaris aerial refuelling aircraft, and our CP-140 Aurora aerial surveillance aircraft, along with associated aircrew and support, to stay active and present in the air.

• (1510)

The RCAF regularly trains with its American counterpart. Our pilots speak the same language as our largest allies. We use similar aircraft. There is no reason why Canada cannot increase our ongoing and long-running humanitarian and diplomatic efforts in the region and our training of local troops on the ground, as the government has said it will do, while continuing to target the enemy from the air and halt its progress. Stalling the progress of ISIS through air strikes gives our soldiers, who are training local militias on the ground, time to build a durable legacy of an effective combat force. These are not contradictory measures but complementary measures.

Since this debate started, I have yet to hear a reasonable explanation for why Canada is withdrawing its CF-18 aircraft. I am hopeful that I will eventually hear a response to this basic question: if this is not a fight that Canada should be involved in militarily, then what is?

I urge all members, especially those from the government side, to support the amendment brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition and re-establish Canada's influence within the international decision-making process in the fight against terrorism and rebuild the trust Canada has lost with its allies by reversing its decision to withdraw the CF-18s from the air combat mission, which has essentially removed Canada from any combat role.

• (1515)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments from the member opposite, and I thank her for acknowledging that we are stepping up and stepping toward a significant increase in our contribution to dealing with the challenges in Syria and Iraq, by doubling and tripling both our intelligence and our training methods, to consolidate and to make permanent the gains that the campaign has achieved in the last year.

I am curious why a change in strategy constitutes walking away from our allies when they have embraced that change in strategies. Also why would a democratic process, which elected a government with a commitment to change the approach, be something that our

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democratic allies would not understand? Why would they not understand exactly what had happened, that an election happened; and why is it not a legitimate way to test a foreign policy with the Canadian people and with our allies?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, in my estimation, the changes that have been made to our mission have neither broadened nor improved our contribution in combatting ISIL, as the motion that has been put forward suggests.

As I stated in my remarks, determining what our support in this mission needs to be is not an either/or decision. We can and should be ensuring that our troops have every tool available to them.

In my estimation, the government has failed to provide a clear explanation to Canadians as to why we are stepping back from Canada's contribution to the air mission. It is extremely irresponsible of the government to whittle it down for political purposes.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her wonderful speech, and for her commitment to and support for our troops.

In the member's reply to the last question, she commented that this is not an either/or situation. The Liberals have failed terribly at trying to explain why we had to stop the CF-18 bombing and air combat mission.

I ask if my colleague could provide some detail as to why the CF-18s are so important to this bombing mission, and why Canada has the capabilities, the training, and the technology to do everything that we have requested of the government: bombing, training, and humanitarian assistance.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question and for the very important work he is doing as the critic to the Minister of National Defence.

On this side of the House, we understand our responsibilities as a nation to stand with and assist our allies in halting and degrading ISIL, which is why we do support providing our troops with whatever tools they need to get the job done.

The current government's inability or unwillingness to be forthcoming with its reasons for withdrawing our CF-18s, and the lack of details surrounding the deployment of troops, military assets, and the allocation of humanitarian funding, is extremely irresponsible and demonstrates that this is only being done for political purposes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today's debate on the motion to extend the military mission in Iraq and Syria is definitely extremely important.

One important thing the previous government unfortunately failed to do was to ratify the Arms Trade Treaty. The Conservatives did nothing on that, and I still find it hard to understand why, especially now that questions are being raised about the transparency of contracts for the sale of Canadian arms to Saudi Arabia, for example.

Would my colleague agree that it is important to ratify that agreement and have greater control over the flow of weapons?

Government Orders

● (1520)

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, as I stated in my remarks earlier, the NDP is trying to make this a neither/nor decision. The member's question is simply, in my estimation, an attempt to deflect scrutiny of his or her party's non-position. Should that member have an opportunity at another time to speak to this very important issue, I would like him to explain what level of military action against ISIS the New Democrats would support.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my honourable colleague from Beauport—Limoulou.

As we all know, and I think we all agree, regardless of what side of the House we are on, Canada has a long, proud history of defending innocent and vulnerable populations by taking on those who commit mass atrocities. Canadians do not stand by while atrocities are committed, but stand up against them. Whether it was in the trenches of Europe, the beaches of Normandy, or in the Kapyong Valley in Korea, Canadians have always fought against tyranny and oppression.

I, therefore, cannot support this Liberal government's motion to leave the heavy lifting to our allies while Canada stands on the sidelines. ISIS has declared war on Canada and our allies. It is paramount that this government stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies to defend and protect the safety and security of Canadians, both here and abroad.

This is a group that has called for and inspired attacks against Canada, including killing two members of the Canadian Armed Forces. It is no longer a regional issue, as ISIS and ISIS-inspired attacks have spread beyond Iraq and Syria. It is now a crisis that affects the world and requires a world-wide response. I support providing our troops with whatever equipment they need, whether it be helicopters, or in this case, fighter jets.

Canadians expect the government to be transparent and accountable for its actions. Including with its reasons for withdrawing our CF-18s while simultaneously deploying Griffon helicopters. We, on this side of the House, believe that Canada should maintain its combat role in the fight against ISIS and terrorism, and that our CF-18s should be part of that fight.

The Liberal government plans to increase its deployment of military personnel to approximately 830, up from approximately 650. This military plan increases the risk to our members of the Canadian Armed Forces, while reducing their security via that air support. If we are going to send more boots on the ground, we need to ensure that the proper protection is in place. We should not have to rely on our allies to protect our soldiers; we will have that capability if we keep our CF-18s in this fight. We need those assets in place.

With regard to ISIS, we are talking about a group that believes in the destruction of people, cultures, and priceless historical artifacts, targeting Yazidis and other religious minorities, and destroying centuries' old artifacts and UNESCO sites like Palmyra and Hatra.

This is a crisis that must be addressed, and Canada has an obligation to do its part and work with our allies. Many of Canada's closest allies are involved in this fight. France declared the attacks on

Paris an act of war. The United Kingdom approved a motion to expand air strikes against ISIS in Syria. President Obama declared that the United States is at war with ISIS.

At the same time, Canada is withdrawing our CF-18s. However, this is not a singular national issue, but a multinational crisis. Even the United Nations Security Council has recognized the threat ISIS poses. It even took the step of urging member states to intensify their efforts to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters into Iraq and Syria, and to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorism.

Let us take a look at the statistics about our Royal Canadian Air Force assets in the fight. Our forces were successfully able to carry out 1,378 CF-18 sorties, 783 support aircraft flights, 251 air strikes, destroying 399 ISIS targets. All of that happened between October 30, 2014 and February 15, 2016.

Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces have the capacity to continue these air strikes alongside training and humanitarian support, which our forces have already been doing very well. This is Canada's fight, and withdrawing from direct combat against ISIS sends the wrong message to Canadians and to our allies. Canadian air strikes have been an integral element of the coalition's campaign. There has been no justification provided for ending the bombing mission.

The Liberal government is reportedly deploying RCAF Griffon helicopters, but the motion that the government has put before Parliament makes no mention of this deployment of those helicopters. The use of our helicopters in close combat support will significantly increase the danger of our members on the ground.

● (1525)

Is the government withdrawing the RCAF assets in the country or replacing our CF-18s with Griffon helicopters? Canadians deserve to know what their government is planning to do at this crucial time of the fight.

I must admit that I am quite perplexed by the Liberal plan. While the Liberals have made it clear they are against the CF-18 bombing mission, they are fine with having Polaris aircraft refuelling allied planes that conduct air strikes and with using Canadian Auroras to identify targets for them. The Liberals' plan for the air combat mission is a bit irrational in that sense.

The fight against ISIS requires a multifaceted response, and I do not believe that removing one of Canada's most effective assets in the fight will help Canadians or the people living under this ISIS regime.

Canadians have been clear in their support for the bombing of ISIS. A February 2016 Angus Reid poll found that 63% of Canadians said they would either like to see Canada continue bombing ISIS at its current rate or go further and increase the number of bombing missions it conducts; 47% said that withdrawing CF-18s from the mission would have a negative effect on Canada's international reputation, while fewer than one in five, just 18%, said that it would have a positive effect.

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We have an obligation to fight against ISIS and the views and oppression it represents. It was just one month ago Canada was snubbed and not even invited to an anti-ISIS meeting. The Prime Minister's decision to withdraw Canada's CF-18s is seen by our allies as stepping back rather than standing shoulder to shoulder with them.

How is the current Liberal government planning to repair our relationship with our allies? Does it believe this movement toward humanitarian and security assistance will promote and strengthen our relationship with our allies? I am highly doubtful, because we are missing the part of the CF-18s in this fight.

The current government needs to provide further details to the House and Canadians on the deployment of troops, military assets, and the allocation of humanitarian funding.

I would like to conclude by thanking our men and women in uniform for putting their lives on the line to protect our freedoms every day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He talked about the multi-dimensional aspect of the mission that we presented to the House.

The most important aspects are diplomacy, which we plan to use in the region at the political level, and increased humanitarian assistance for the people affected in the region. Furthermore, the assistance and military training mission in the region is also extremely important.

[*English*]

A lot of those people who will be overseas have received top-notch training at our military training bases across the country, including many who have passed through Base Gagetown in the riding of Fredericton.

Does the member not think that the multidimensional aspect speaks to just how important a role Canada has to play in this mission in Iraq and Syria to defeat ISIL and its terrible atrocities? Does he think that this multidimensional effort is not important and is not the role that Canada has to play in the world?

• (1530)

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, what we are debating here is the taking of our CF-18s out of the fight against ISIS. We are not debating whether or not we have to shut down our humanitarian response. We believe that needs to be part of a multifaceted approach. We need to be able to provide air support to our troops on the ground, and if the governing Liberals are going to increase the amount of boots on the ground, we need to be able to protect them.

Take, for example, our allies' plans to hopefully retake the city of Mosul. It is a city of one million people. Air support is going to be critical in that fight. How we can send them in relying on our allies to protect them is a bit irresponsible in my opinion.

I know it was said during the campaign, but a lot has changed since the campaign. I think we need to seriously reconsider what is being said here, because taking our planes out of this fight is not

what our allies are calling for. Everyone else in this fight is calling for more help. Therefore, I believe Canada is on the wrong track here.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked briefly in his fantastic speech about how things have changed significantly, and we have heard from our Liberal colleagues across the floor.

This was a campaign promise, something they promised Canadians in the election, that they would pull out the CF-18s. I would argue that things have changed drastically since October 19, with the attacks in Paris and by Boko Haram.

How does my colleague feel that the changes on the global scene make the decision to pull out our CF-18s the wrong decision?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that we all believe that ISIS is a threat to regional and global security.

Shortly after the attacks in Paris, Africa, and elsewhere, we saw our allied countries, our friends, calling for more attacks on ISIS. They want to dismantle ISIS so that it no longer controls even one square kilometre of land in our world.

By pulling back, it is sending the wrong message to our friends and allies who are stepping up their attacks. France has declared war on ISIS; the United States has. Why we are pulling back is completely beyond me.

It was a campaign promise that was made, and as the hon. member for Foothills has said, quite a bit has changed since the election.

I think it is time we reconsider this campaign promise. According to the Angus Reid polls, Canadians are against taking our planes out of this fight. I think we seriously need to reconsider that before it is too late.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to the unfounded and wrong-headed nature of the mission the current Liberal government has adopted in the fight against the so-called Islamic State.

There is no doubt that this group poses a real and tangible threat. No one in this chamber can deny it. This armed terrorist group claims to be the equivalent of a sovereign state, although nothing could be further from the truth. This clearly illustrates its clear desire to be a lasting, structured organization.

To achieve that, this group and its acolytes have managed to embroil a region of the world that has never truly known peace even more deeply in extremely violent armed conflicts and by so doing, pushing that region even further away from becoming the just and peaceful society that every population in those imperilled areas certainly dreams of.

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Peace defined as an in-between period is a consequence of war and not the opposite. Thus, before we prepare for peace, we must face war. For that reason, since the start of Canadian air operations in Iraq and Syria, there have been almost 250 air strikes resulting in the destruction of almost 270 fighting positions, 102 pieces of equipment and 30 explosives factories by only six Canadian jets. In light of this objective and factual statement, we will simply say that operation Impact is aptly named.

However, in light of these facts, I would like my dear parliamentary colleagues, especially those in government, to realize that this is not the type of record often associated with the fight against a simple terrorist group. On the contrary, we must unfortunately acknowledge that we are at war with an organized and well-funded group, not to mention one that is motivated by certain intangible spiritual considerations, obscure reasons and other irrational motivations.

This democratic institution of the Canadian Parliament must provide a qualified and strong response, that is, a response that makes use of the entire arsenal available to Canada.

As we have heard many times in this House, it is true that we have access to all kinds of advantages in this combat, but, from the beginning, our greatest advantage against the so-called Islamic State has come from the air. In all of the chaos caused by its recent appearance, this terrorist group has managed to get its hands on tanks, heavy machine guns, and a staggering amount of ammunition.

This is a sophisticated and well-armed enemy, which means that Canada's involvement must be equally aggressive. I have to wonder why this government insists on sending Canadians and, indirectly, our allies, an incoherent, inconsistent, and deceptive message.

The government claims to want to increase Canada's presence in the armed conflict and to consolidate our impact over there, yet is rushing to withdraw the one thing that has been hugely successful on the front lines, which, has, so far, made us a strong and effective ally. With foresight, retired General David Fraser rightly said that, although we would not win this war with only air strikes, we certainly would not win the war against ISIL without them.

As always, history is repeating itself. Obviously, the Liberals are trying to get out of the Middle East without getting their hands dirty and with a feeling of moral certainty that they did everything in their power to help our allies and the people who are being oppressed by an organization as abhorrent as ISIL.

However, I would like to give them some advice. How can they hope to achieve their desired goal with the contribution they have planned for Canada? In fact, the dice have already been thrown. The air mission has already been terminated, whether we debate it or not. Once again, the international approach being taken by the Liberal government shows its one-dimensional objective to create a utopian history for our country by denying our past military contribution and our combat expertise.

● (1535)

I would like to remind Canadians that, historically, Canada has participated in more combat missions than peacekeeping missions. A combat mission is not the antithesis of a peacekeeping mission. On the contrary, it is the foundation for a peacekeeping mission.

Canada has always been known for its fiercely hard-working and dedicated soldiers. That is still the case today. It is only since the Liberals decided to rewrite history that we have accepted the government's false claim that Canada has never helped countries in need by providing military support and engaging in direct combat.

What our allies are asking us to do today is not to claim that we are acting in good faith and brag about taking some sort of moral high ground in this conflict but to put our military expertise and professionalism to good use in fighting the enemy.

I took the time to mention that because, as I said at the beginning of my speech, the Liberals have never sent our country to war or waged one. What this government is doing is a blatant example: they want to send more troops on the ground without providing them with any domestic air support.

Our troops are going to wonder where Canada's planes are. With fewer resources and less support, we will be exposing our troops to elevated risk. Moreover, our Griffon helicopters are vulnerable to ground-based fire, in contrast to our fighter planes, which operate at higher altitudes out of range of lighter weaponry.

The Liberals' current strategy is utter nonsense. I will be asking the government for formal justification in the unfortunate event we experience Canadian losses because of this political mess.

Let us instead do the opposite. Let us show that Canada can make a strong contribution to the conflict. Let us send our allies a clear message. Need I remind the House that our allies considered us as equals when we showed our willingness to use necessary force in the context of a just war?

Here we are in 2016, and the Liberal government is claiming quite arrogantly that Canada is back in the international arena. However, quite unbelievably, it is doing so by positioning itself as vassal to an international coalition, not as a leader among leaders.

On another note, we have every reason to ask ourselves if this is a just war. The answer, although quite complex, is unequivocally yes. Long before our time, the philosopher Thomas Aquinas, the father of the school of Christian optimists, established a series of criteria for determining whether a war was morally justifiable. First, do we have just cause to go to war? Second, do we have a legitimate authority to wage war? Do we have a plan and formal intention? Lastly, are there any other possible, appropriate solutions to the problem we are trying to solve?

Like the world wars that Canada has had to face in the past, the answers to those questions, in the context of the conflict with the so-called Islamic State, are as follows: we have a moral obligation to fight, and in doing so, to provide any assistance that we can in this struggle in order to help those most affected by this scourge. We also cannot forget that this terrorist group is already on their doorstep and, in many cases, in their homes.

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It is also important to note that beyond the combat mission, which is proving to be the most important part of our involvement in those distant lands, the Liberals have no plan for the distribution of food or the humanitarian resources it plans to send, and yet that aspect is a key element of their specific approach.

Need I remind this House that we have seen on many occasions that the organizational aspect of humanitarian assistance is needed to ensure success? How are we going to protect convoys of food supplies or ensure that medical services are provided at the heart of an active conflict?

The Liberals have simply forgotten that before preparing the land for peace, and enjoying it even a little bit, we must first win the war.

To sum up what I am submitting this afternoon, I can only reiterate how wrong the current government's decision is, and that it will have negative consequences for our troops on the ground and for the civilians we are trying to help. We have a duty to ensure that the so-called Islamic State stops hounding people in the world who want to live in peace and security. Finally, we have a duty to ensure that the so-called Islamic State never gains official state status.

• (1540)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I have been listening to this debate in the House for a few days now. On one side, there are people telling us that they do not want any intervention and on the other side, there are those telling us that they want an intervention that is limited to air strikes.

[*English*]

Our government believes that Canada should contribute to the fight against ISIS, but we also need to make sure that our fight is smart. Our plan is committed to ensure that we have a comprehensive plan, an integrated plan, and also a sustainable plan.

Could the member opposite elaborate why he is choosing to minimize our diplomatic efforts and our training efforts that we want to put forward in this fight?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question. I grew up in New Brunswick, so I appreciate any questions from members from New Brunswick.

In no way did I minimize the government's plan to provide more humanitarian aid and training on the ground. That is what our threefold mission was over the past two years: to provide humanitarian aid, welcome refugees, and provide military support in Iraq and Syria.

What we on this side of the House disagree with is the fact that this government is continuing with the plan but taking away the third component, or possibly the first, depending on your perspective. I am talking about the military mission itself, the mission undertaken by our CF-18s.

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat one of the quotes that has been spoken about by some of the members today and also ask my colleague for his

comments on it. It is from Prime Minister David Cameron. “We shouldn't be content with outsourcing our security to our allies. If we believe that action can help protect us, then with our allies, we should be part of that action, not standing aside from it.”

I have Base Borden in my riding. Men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces know that they need the equipment to protect them on the ground. It also means that they have a seat at the table in deciding when and where they are placed and how they are protected.

My colleague who has just spoken is a veteran. He is someone who has put himself in harm's way to protect our democracy. He knows why Canadians are out making sure others can enjoy that type of democracy. Why does he believe so strongly, as he has articulated, that we need to have CF-18s and other equipment engage with our Canadian Armed Forces on the ground at this important time against ISIS?

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question. There are three reasons for that.

First, it is because it is dishonourable and shameful that has Canada has withdrawn from an ongoing mission for the first time in history. Second, it is because we committed to contributing our jets and we should keep our word. Third, it is because we need to be aware that we are no longer living in Pearson's internationalist era, when there was a power struggle and cold war going on between the United States and the former Soviet Union.

Today, Canada is more or less a world power. We deal with very significant emerging powers. It is time for Canada to muster up its courage and present itself as a leader among leaders. I think that is very important. That is why I mentioned it in my speech.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member aware that U.S. President Barack Obama publicly endorsed in early February Canada's decision? Through a State Department spokesperson, President Obama did say, “The new Canadian commitment is in line with our current needs, including tripling their training mission in Northern Iraq and increasing their intelligence efforts.”

I dare say that is a very impressive endorsement of our policy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First of all, the American president is required to be diplomatic in exchanges with other countries. However, according to other internal sources, the American government is not so happy with this government's decision. As I told the member's colleague, this is not a matter of providing more or less humanitarian assistance. This is about maintaining the CF-18 military mission, which could have been done.

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[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I will be sharing my time with the member for Calgary Nose Hill.

I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to this motion, and I want to begin by sincerely thanking the men and women who so proudly serve in our Canadian Forces. I am often reminded, in my many interactions with CFB Borden, as is the member for Simcoe—Grey, both in my capacity as a city councillor in the past in Barrie and now as a member of Parliament for Barrie—Innisfil, of the proud tradition of military contribution from my region in central Ontario to the causes Canada has contributed to with respect to military engagement throughout our country's history. I am also very proud to be an honorary member of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters regiment.

Recently the Leader of the Opposition rose in the House and suggested that the Prime Minister was disrespecting Parliament by ending air strikes against ISIS before MPs could even vote on the matter. His answer to the Leader of the Opposition's question was clearly at odds with his own stated promises while on the campaign trail. Promises to run an open and transparent government and to respect parliamentarians are a distant memory, having been replaced with disdain for the members opposite and an attitude that we are on a need-to-know basis only.

It should be abundantly clear to all in the House that the Prime Minister does not feel it necessary to consult with MPs on matters of national security or on any other issue, for that matter. While in campaign mode, the Prime Minister told Canadians that he was going to be different, and now it is obvious that the sunny ways rhetoric was just talk to gain power. Instead of openness and transparency, the government's *modus operandi* appears to be keeping Parliament in the dark, with no clear plan on the horizon.

Notwithstanding the Liberals' delusions of grandeur after capturing 39% of the vote in October, Canadians deserve answers on Canada's mission against ISIS, and they demand to be heard on the direction we are heading.

The government's motion talks of refocusing Canada's military contribution in Iraq and withdrawing our CF-18s while maintaining air force surveillance and refuelling capabilities.

Operation Impact was launched to help stop ISIS from taking more territory and to destroy whatever capabilities it had built up. As of Feb. 3, Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18 aircraft had eliminated more than 300 ISIL targets and had liberated up to 25% of territory taken by the Islamic jihadists. Bombing runs by Canadian fighter jets have provided vital cover for those battling ISIS on the ground, like the Kurdish forces, which have repeatedly requested that Canada's bombing activities continue.

Our international partners also asked us to stay in the air combat mission. In a radio interview just last month, the Minister of National Defence confirmed quite succinctly exactly how our allies feel about Canada's role when he said, "Of course they want to keep our CF-18s there".

Our pilots are among the most skilled on the planet. They are the best of the best, and our allies have specifically requested that they

continue. Instead, the government arbitrarily removes our greatest capability in this fight.

I understand that many on the other side may feel that by pulling out our CF-18s from the bombing mission we are somehow claiming higher moral ground, but they are just fooling themselves if they think fuelling up other nations' planes for bombing runs and finding targets for them on the ground is any more or less moral. What it will do, however, is make us far less effective.

Our brave pilots who carried out those vital missions safeguarded countless innocents on the ground from the advances of barbarism. That was their contribution. That is the narrative. To suggest otherwise undermines those efforts and brings dishonour to our men and women who wear our uniform so proudly.

The Conservative caucus stands steadfast with our military members, and so do Canadians. Sixty-three per cent of Canadians say they would either like to see Canada continue bombing ISIS at its current rate or go further and increase the number of bombing missions it conducts. Forty-seven per cent say withdrawing CF-18s from the mission will have a negative effect on Canada's international reputation, while fewer than one in five, just 18%, say it will have a positive one.

Public opinion was very important to the Liberal Party during the campaign season, so why now, since it has seized the brass ring, is it deaf to the voices of Canadians? Why is this ill-conceived election promise any more important than the laundry list of election promises already broken?

• (1550)

Whether it is promising to resettle 25,000 government sponsored Syrian refugees by the end of 2015, promoting revenue-neutral tax changes that were anything but, or assuring Canadians that we would not be saddled with more than \$10 billion a year in deficits, promises, clearly, are made to be broken by the government.

The government is also not being completely transparent with Canadians when it comes to our contributions in the air in the anti-ISIS mission. The motion the government put before Parliament makes no mention at all of the deployment of Griffon helicopters in this region, and many questions exist about the Liberals' plans.

Will the Griffon helicopters be outfitted for combat, or will they be sending our pilots into a combat zone unarmed? What precautions will be taken to protect our helicopter pilots from incoming RPGs or other surface-to-air missiles? If the helicopters are to be used primarily for transport, would it not make more sense to send Canada's CH-147F Chinook heavy aircraft airlift helicopters? Lastly, was the deployment of the Griffon helicopters ever discussed with our coalition allies, or are they on a need-to-know basis, just like opposition MPs in this House and the public at large?

This motion also mentions the desire to improve the living conditions of conflict-affected populations and to help build the foundations for long-term stability. While I am sure that all members of the House and Canadians right across the country would agree that these are worthy goals, how does the government plan on achieving them?

This region is a quagmire. It is the poster child of instability. Terrorist attacks carried out by ISIS in Syria just this past weekend left another 166 dead on the streets of Damascus and Homs.

How does one improve living conditions and build foundations for those living in a theatre of perpetual war and violence? Running away from our allies does not make these people safer; it makes them even more vulnerable. Until the dust settles and ISIS is destroyed, constructing housing projects in a war zone is the last thing on anyone's mind right now.

The motion before us declares a refocusing of our role, and it also puts our military in more danger. The defence minister describes this ISIS plan as an expansion with greater risk. The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Vance, is on record as saying that the lives of the men and women of the military are actually at greater risk.

Is this what the Prime Minister meant when he told the Leader of the Opposition that Canadians elected them because they knew best how to deal with the Islamic State? Did he tell Canadians that our troops would be put in greater harm's way once he became Prime Minister? I think we all know that the answer to that question is a resounding "no".

I received a letter from a relative a couple of days ago. He was a member of our armed forces and served in special ops protecting high-level targets in Afghanistan. He agrees with the opposition and the public that pulling our planes out and putting more boots on the ground to train and assist is a mistake. He feels that there could be dire consequences from training and arming civilians in the region. He reminded me how the United States trained and armed a group of civilians to fight the Russians in the late 1970s and how many in that group became the Taliban and al Qaeda. He pointed to the training of civilians in the years after 9/11 and how many joined ISIS after receiving that training and those weapons from U.S.-led training operations.

He wrote to me, "...history shows that the people we train today can be our enemy tomorrow. We can't just arm a group of people and then when the conflict stops expect them to return all the weapons we gave them, forget the training we gave them, and then lead a peaceful life. The only thing it inspires is more conflict and less resolution".

The motion before the House today is not sound public policy. It does not put us closer to defeating ISIS; it puts us further away. It does not improve Canada's standing in the world; it diminishes it.

I urge all members of the House to see this motion for what it is. It is a step backwards. It abandons our allies and the innocent people caught up in the middle of this conflict.

I sincerely hope that I am wrong, but I think passing this motion and pulling our CF-18s out of this fight will ultimately result in Canadians possibly, and I pray to God that we do not, paying the

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heaviest of prices with the blood and treasure of our sons and daughters serving in our armed forces.

● (1555)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the good members of this chamber if they believe in learning from experience.

In 2011, the previous Conservative government sent the Canadian Armed Forces to wage an air war in Libya against Gaddafi. The Conservatives had no follow-on plans, zero follow-on plans, for stability, governance, reconstruction, or rebuilding. There was nothing.

What is happening in Libya now? Libya has fallen into complete chaos. Because of the power vacuum that was created when Gaddafi was deposed, groups like ISIL have moved in and taken control. Canada bears some responsibility for that mistake.

We have seen what has happened. We are now in another war, which started in Iraq when the Americans made the mistake there, the first time in 2003, and we are back there now. We saw what happened in Libya with no follow-on phases, and we see what is happening now. We cannot afford to make another mistake.

There needs to be leadership when it comes to these follow-on phases, and sometimes, yes, they are not the things that garner the most attention. However, this stability phase Canada is providing the leadership towards is what is going to contribute to the long-term success of any mission to secure and safeguard all the progress we have made to date.

We need to look around and see where we have been successful, and we need to look around and see where we have not. In Afghanistan, we had a plan for combat, stability, and reconstruction. We are doing all right there, and we need to look at those examples.

● (1600)

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, I should have shared my time with the hon. member across the floor and not the member for Calgary Nose Hill. However, I appreciate the member's comments on this.

The challenge is that this is obviously still an active combat situation. It is a combat situation that the Liberals will not even mention is a combat situation.

The fact is, we need a comprehensive effort that includes the CF-18s to protect the troops on the ground. In my statement, I mentioned the significant role the CF-18s have played. Why can we not keep them there? The only reason we are not keeping them there is because of a campaign promise.

I go back to a campaign mention that was discussed during the recent campaign. We often talk about humanitarian efforts. We have to have humanitarian efforts. However, humanitarian efforts without protecting the people we are providing humanitarian aid to means that we are dropping supplies potentially on slaughtered people. That is why we need the CF-18s to continue.

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I was not in the House, but I am reminded that the Liberal Party did support, in the past, the mission to Afghanistan and to Libya, as well.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the past few Conservative speakers defending the Canadian bombing mission, but as the other member across the floor mentioned, there is a long history in this region of bombing missions doing nothing but further destabilizing the area. In fact, most experts would point to the American bombing in Iraq as being one of the key points in the birth of ISIS.

I would like to ask the member why he feels that this bombing mission will be so effective in destroying ISIS, especially now that we hear that training is dangerous. Considering that it is only 3% of the effort of our partners, why is it so important?

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Speaker, it is a great question.

Part of the challenge, when we are relying on other coalition partners to provide air support to our troops in a combat mission, is the fact that we have communication problems. In fact, in the past, we have seen some collateral damage when coalition air strikes have affected our members and in some cases have killed members of our forces.

Would it not be better if we had some continuity? Would it not be better if we had our CF-18s fighting with our troops?

I think the resounding answer to that is yes, and Canadians believe that as well.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak specifically today, in my role as official opposition critic for immigration, to component (e) of this motion, which states, “welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada...”.

Certainly across party lines, we agree that the humanitarian crisis in the region is significant. It is devastating. I have had the privilege of visiting an area close to this region, and what struck me the most was how volatile the area is for a variety of reasons. Certainly the humanitarian crisis in Syria is one that the world should note, and the world is being impacted by it in a wide variety of ways. Certainly it is our duty in Canada to help. The question that arises then is how we do that. With regard to component (e) of this motion, there are many outstanding questions to which the government has not provided answers to Canadians.

The motion says, “welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada...”. I find it interesting that the Liberals were not more precise in their terminology in this particular line. During the campaign, they were very adamant that the number was the issue, that we were not talking about people but we were talking about a number, and that number was 25,000 by year end. The Prime Minister said that it was only a matter of political will to bring 25,000 refugees into Canada by the end of 2015. Of course, we saw that the government did not come close to meeting that particular target. Nonetheless, I am just wondering why the Liberals have gone from this very precise terminology to very vague terminology.

It is important to ask that question—how many refugees the government is actually going to bring into Canada and over what period of time—because we want to ensure that refugees coming

into this country are set up for success and have a successful experience when they come to Canada. There are many outstanding questions with regard to that particular issue, and I hope to highlight several of them.

The first question is with regard to the cost of the overall initiative. We can all decide that we want to support and provide assistance to Syrians who are in need. However, it is also incumbent upon us in this place to ask how much a program is going to cost, especially in the context of what we are hearing today: that the government is going to post a spiralling-out-of-control deficit in a few weeks' time. When the Liberals talked about this particular campaign commitment during the campaign, they noted in their “fully costed” platform document that the total cost of their Syrian refugee initiative would be approximately \$250 million. We know that, at today's date, it is going to be significantly more than that. It is going to be probably over \$1 billion with regard to direct programming, which the federal government has to provide.

There are other costs, which the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has been very adamant in telling Canadians that provinces and municipalities will be on the hook for providing, including health care services, education services, and assistance for affordable housing. I say this not out of a non-desire to help; I want to restate that. However, I also think that, if the Liberals do not have a plan, do not know what the number is going to be, have not figured out how they are going to cost that, and they are passing costs down to other levels of government, that is a problem. It is a problem not just for Canadians but a problem for refugees coming to Canada.

I am going to illustrate that with a case in point today. The minister told the immigration committee that approximately half the Syrian refugees who have come to Canada thus far are still in temporary accommodations. That begs a lot of questions. It begs the question of whether we should be bringing refugees to Canada and expecting that they stay in uncertain accommodations for a long period of time. It begs the question of what is happening to affordable-housing waiting lists and how they are being impacted.

I want to bring the House's attention back to a very glib answer that the minister gave in the middle of December. He had stated earlier that he was going to rely on private sector corporations to provide affordable housing to refugees. I asked what he was doing in terms of securing long-term contracts for this.

● (1605)

He replied on December 9:

...I think the member is unnecessarily suspicious of the private sector. My first reaction is gratitude when the private sector offers...free or subsidized housing. I think she should...be grateful to the private sector for coming forward in this way.

Any kind of contractual arrangements will be dealt with. In large measure, the refugees have not arrived yet. The companies have made a very generous offer and—

Here is the rub.

—the details will be worked out with them. However, the primary reaction, from me at least, and from the government, is to thank the private sector very much for its help.

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Well, it is two and a half months in. The minister admitted today that half the Syrian refugees are not in permanent housing. The minister is saying the private sector is going to miraculously come up with a solution for this. Affordable housing groups across Canada are saying this is having an impact on them. We have heard stories of hotels in Toronto that signalled they were going to remove long-stay residents because of contractual obligations around incoming Syrian refugees.

I think it begs the question of what tens of thousands of refugees means. It is not a number. It is about how we are going to support these people when they come to Canada and what that looks like. What is the plan? That is a fair question.

My colleagues here have all thanked the military and have talked about the need, but in and of itself, the vagueness of that particular line gives me pause for thought in supporting the motion.

My colleagues opposite, who all expressed concerns for these refugees in their campaign commitments, should be asking the minister, in their caucus meetings, their caucus advisory meetings, and perhaps in their cabinet meetings, what that means in terms of delivering affordable housing, health care, and education for refugees coming into Canada. It is vague, and they will be called on this at some point in time.

Some of the other components, outside of housing, which have been brought up as a concern for a lack of plan on the government's part, are language training services. We know that, for Syrians who are coming to Canada to have a successful experience, enter the workforce, and have every opportunity to succeed, the language barrier is a big concern. The minister has not articulated a plan or a costing for long-term language training services.

I want to applaud the numerous private sponsored refugee groups that have been working hard for decades on this particular issue. Certainly, in the last five years they have been working to bring refugees in from the region. I want to applaud their efforts.

When I was at Pearson airport, I kind of stood in the background when the Prime Minister did his photo op, which looked like a music video set. It was quite disconcerting. It struck me that the people who really deserved the thanks for the people who were coming off that plane were the people in the privately sponsored refugee services groups.

They are telling the government now that not only can they link in and do more, and it is not linking with them, but it is really not telling them what its plan is. How many more are coming in? What services are they supposed to provide? How can they provide support? Those questions are not being answered. All we are getting is one line, "...welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada...".

I also want to talk about support services for employment transition and the availability of jobs. This ties into some of the conversations the minister has had earlier. It is one thing for the Prime Minister to stand up here and talk about \$250 million help for Alberta. I want to contextualize that.

Three weeks ago, when Suncor and another company posted their last-quarter results, they noted a \$900 million downgrade in planned

capital expenditures. I do not think the Prime Minister understands the scope here. We should be talking about how we are dealing with employment services, not just for Syrian refugees but also for Canadians in western Canada.

When we are talking about tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, where are they coming from? I have not heard the minister talk about persecuted minorities, and sometimes I am concerned about groups like the Yazidis, who are basically facing all-out genocide. We shy away from talking about that in this place.

I guess I am a little shocked that this particular line was added on as what looks like a tack at the end of a list, as if someone forget to put it on, a scribble. On this particular issue, Canadians are owed a lot more detail.

● (1610)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by the lack of acknowledgement in the member opposite's speech, she must agree with every other aspect of our plan to combat ISIL.

I am disappointed to hear her speak so unfavourably about our plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of this month and then continue to welcome Syrian refugees right across the country. In the riding of Fredericton, it has not just been a government effort. It has been a whole-of-community effort, as it is in communities right across the country.

Not only has the minister made the commitment to demonstrate leadership by the federal government to bring in these vulnerable populations, but the health minister has demonstrated leadership in reintroducing the interim health program.

Communities have demonstrated leadership, with hundreds of volunteers spending countless hours in the evenings, on the weekends, and during their own work time to help make these people feel welcome. Fredericton now has more than 400 individual refugees, dozens of families. More than 1,000 individuals are throughout New Brunswick now. That province is punching way above its weight, as are many other communities right across the country.

I wonder why the member opposite speaks so unfavourably about this all-of-Canada approach to resettle these refugees as part of the larger mission to help defeat ISIL.

● (1615)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, to the first component of the speech of my colleague opposite, I fundamentally disagree with the government's approach to the combat mission for the reason that the government has never adequately thanked the Royal Canadian Air Force for its contribution of more than 200 air strikes, which successfully assisted in containing the spread of ISIL with no civilian casualties. Instead, what we heard from the Liberal leader was a flippant genitalia joke, frankly, about the CF-18s in his early days as leader. The party opposite has not explained to the House of Commons why we should remove the CF-18s from that mission. It has not talked about it. The government has an ideological aversion to taking a stand on an issue.

Government Orders

Many of the pundits in the Canadian media have written some basically satirical pieces about the Prime Minister's waffling on this issue. There is no reason why the CF-18s cannot continue their excellent work there. This is because the Liberals are trying to walk some sort of line, and I am not quite sure what it is. The end result is that they have cheesed off everyone in Canada and done nothing, rather than advance the cause of this mission, and they know it.

When members of the Royal Canadian Air Force come home, they are going to be faced with questions in their communities on why the government pulled them out after they were doing such good work. I would love the member for Fredericton to tell just one of them why the Liberals decided to end the mission, why they were taken out of the field after they did all the work. The member would have a hard time doing that.

With regard to the Syrian refugee component, my colleague rose with such enthusiasm saying that we are going to support this and that it is great. We should certainly be helping with the Syrian refugee crisis, but the bottom line is that the government does not have a long-term plan to deal with the refugees. I find my colleague's comments to be full of cotton candy and rainbows but completely lacking substance with respect to how the government is going to provide language services, or how it is going to provide affordable housing, or how it is going to do that in the context of processing, using resources for spousal sponsorship applications, let me say. The government is redirecting those applications to sponsoring these applications.

The government has not thought about a whole-of-government approach to this. It has not planned it through. I am going to be watching with great interest over the next 10 to 18 months to see how this lack of a plan materially impacts the lives of not only Syrian refugees coming to Canada but Canadians as a whole.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind hon. members that, when the Speaker rises and says, "Questions and comments", it is not necessarily just for questions. The hon. member who asks the questions or gets up to speak can also comment on what is being said.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House on this important motion and, more importantly, I am proud to speak as a New Democrat member of Parliament in opposition to both this motion put forward by the government and the amendment by the opposition, the Conservative Party.

I am proud to be a member of a party that historically has stood up for peace, diplomacy, and humanitarian assistance, which we should all be contributing as leaders on the global stage, a party that has stood up for support for refugees and people fleeing violence and conflict, and a party that has not been afraid to speak out against military missions we believe are irresponsible, ill-defined, and driven forward for all the wrong reasons.

I stand in opposition to the Liberal government's proposal to expand and enlarge Canada's military mission in Iraq. The new mission of the Prime Minister has left more questions than answers regarding our role in the fight against ISIS.

Canadian Forces personnel are now being placed deeper into a combat role, despite the Prime Minister's suggestion that this is a training mission only. With increased boots on the ground at the front lines, as the Prime Minister has indicated, the Liberals have now committed Canada to a larger military role with no end date and no parameters to define success.

We in the NDP have pointed out that this is a dangerous path that Canada should not go down and, more importantly, one that we can learn has proven to be extremely problematic in our recent past.

I will also note that I will be splitting my time with the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Unfortunately, the Liberals, just like the Conservatives before them, are calling for Canadian troops on the ground to advise and assist mission on their deployment. Previously, Liberals said that we needed a clear line between combat and non-combat roles. This mission, however, blurs these lines even more.

After promising to end the bombing mission during the election campaign, the Liberals are increasing Canada's military presence, and our forces will still be refuelling and doing targeting for bombing.

As we have heard many times in the House, Liberals have been all too eager to talk about how Canadians voted for real change. However, when we look at their commitments when it comes to defence and Canada's engagement at the military level, the only thing they are not getting is real change. Despite the commitment of sorts to move away from the bombing mission, we know that the commitment to troops on the ground in fact extends our activities and engagement at a level that was previously unimaginable.

It is with great concern that we see the Liberals moving away from their commitment during the campaign and looking at how to engage Canadians in what is proving to be a dangerous conflict, again with no set parameters for success, with no timelines and, frankly, without a clear understanding of the dangers they will be facing.

We are seeing the Liberals move away from their commitment to real change on various issues that matter to the daily lives of Canadians. Whether it is their distancing from their commitment to expand the Canada pension plan; whether it is the retraction of their commitment to reinstate postal delivery and home delivery services; whether it is their failure to act on commitments around employment insurance; or their key commitment in the campaign to invest in indigenous communities, particularly to address the outrageous gap on first nation education, we are seeing day after day the new government pull away from their commitment for real change.

When we talk about a nation's commitment to a military mission, I am proud that oftentimes the NDP has been the only party that has spoken out about the need to review our priorities. We know that military missions overseas are extremely costly. Obviously, the greatest cost of all is that of human life, and we saw in the most recent Afghan mission how many Canadians lost their lives, and we certainly think of their families and communities as we talk about this.

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•(1620)

We talk about the kind of priorities that we could be acting on if we were not spending money on dangerous and unnecessary military missions like the one the government wants to commit to doing today. We could be, for example, closing the outrageous gap in first nation education, a gap that has been estimated in one figure as \$2.6 billion, a commitment that the new federal government said that it would live up to, and we are still waiting for it.

I think of my constituents, many of whom live in situations that one could only characterize as third world living conditions, people who need support for housing, support for health care, and support for employment and training. These are the kinds of needs we ought to be addressing instead of taking part in a dangerous, ill-defined military mission as the government is proposing today.

We could instead be spending on other priorities like fixing the employment insurance system. Coming from western Canada, I am aware of how many people are hurting right now as a result of the massive job losses across our region, and I understand the fact that only 36% of people eligible for EI are actually receiving it today. That is a level of dysfunction that must be addressed by the government. It could be addressed immediately if the government saw this as a priority.

We know about the infrastructure deficit that we face in our country, and despite commitments by the federal government to partner with provinces and municipalities, details remain to be seen on what that kind of investment that might look like. Yes, the budget is coming up, but we are keen to hear about those commitments that were made in the federal election so clearly. We are keen to see them be realized as soon as possible. Again, infrastructure investment is an area that we could be supporting rather than engaging in a military mission like the one that is being proposed.

Finally, it is not unknown to any of us in that House that we also have an obligation as parliamentarians, and, obviously, as people involved in the governance of our country, to take care of those who went to war. Unfortunately, we saw under the previous government the way in which veterans and their needs were ignored time and time again. Under this new government, while commitments have been made to reinstate offices, to reinstate support for veterans, those changes have yet to materialize in any significant manner. I think of a quote of a political leader to the south of us who is making waves. Senator Bernie Sanders said, "If you can't afford to take care of your veterans, then don't go to war".

The final point in my contributions today as a New Democrat is that I implore the government to move away from the position that it has taken and recognize the importance of taking care of veterans first, the importance of investing in the kind of priorities that would make a true difference in the daily lives of Canadians, and truly to see the importance of restoring our reputation on the international stage as a country that believes in humanitarian assistance rather than in taking part in ill-defined armed conflict that can only serve to destabilize an already unstable part of the world.

Once again, I am proud to stand here as a New Democrat in opposition to the Liberals' proposed military mission, in opposition to the Conservatives' amendment to that mission, and in favour of

humanitarian aid, in favour of multilateral co-operation, and in favour of recognizing that this is a question of priorities and that we should be looking at investing here at home.

•(1625)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to hear the comments of the member. On many of the issues she raised, she will get a good sense of where the Liberal government is going when it presents its budget on March 22. I am sure many of the issues she has raised will in fact be addressed.

We are a party that did not commit to balancing the budget in this fiscal year, because we knew that the needs were so great. She needs to reflect on the position of her own party during the campaign, which said that it would balance the budget. That would have resulted in huge cutbacks. It is interesting to hear her talk about the priorities of the NDP that do not necessarily match the type of commitments New Democrats made during the election.

In listening to the comments of the member on the motion we are debating today, one would get the impression that the Canadian Forces play no role whatsoever in combatting terrorism outside of Canada's border.

Does the member envision any role for Canadian Forces where they would actually be deployed to combat terrorism outside of Canada's borders? Do the Canadian Forces in her mind have any role whatsoever to play?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to correct the notion that I was speaking to NDP priorities. I was in fact reflecting on the priorities of the Liberals in the campaign that have either been retracted or simply have yet to be acted upon, despite the pronouncements they were urgent in the case of EI or the need to invest in first nation education, for example.

Actually, I spent most of my speech talking about how that commitment the Liberals made about real change is not in fact for much change at all, certainly when it comes to action. We have heard a lot in terms of rhetoric but not in terms of action.

I think today's motion is a perfect example. We heard the Liberals really talk about restoring Canada's reputation in their position on the bombing in Syria. People really believed that it was a new day, and then, fast-forward a few months later, they see the Liberals commit to engagement in what is tantamount to a combat role, and certainly engagement on the front lines. As I pointed out, a mission that is ill-defined, with no timelines and no parameters to define success.

I can only say that I am proud to belong to a party that can say no to this kind of vision and that can point out to Canadians that what we are hearing from the Liberals today is not what we heard in the campaign. I am sure many Canadians will be disappointed as they hear more from the government as it goes forward, unless it changes course and sticks to the commitments it made in the election.

•(1630)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for pointing out in such a succinct way how we have heard a lot of promises and very little, virtually nothing, in terms of real action.

Government Orders

I wonder if she would comment on the fact that this mission has not been sanctioned or mandated by either the United Nations or NATO. That is a serious problem with respect to Canada's role. Are we humanitarians, are we concerned about what is happening to people, or are we just blindly going along with a U.S.-led mission?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who has also been a great defender of veterans and the need for action when it comes to taking care of them, which is something that is missing in the kind of vision we were discussing here today in the motion put forward by the Liberal government.

Once again, the mission we are debating here in the House, the mission put forward by the Liberal government, is a departure from a long tradition where Canada has been part of multilateral engagements and multilateral missions sanctioned by the UN.

Unfortunately, the mission being put forward, one that we have clearly said is ill-defined and would lead to greater instability rather than stability, is one that we simply cannot support. I am proud to be part of the only party in the House that is taking this stand in opposition to the military mission the Liberals are putting forward.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): 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 Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, Public Safety; the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona, The Environment; and the hon. member for Foothills, The Economy.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in opposition not just to the amendment but also the main motion. I have to start by expressing some disappointment, frankly, with the government's position.

Throughout the campaign, there was a clear and deliberate effort by the Liberals to tap into what was a very widespread feeling among Canadians that they did not support the kind of military action being taken in Syria and wanted a government that would take a different approach. A lot of the language the Liberals used in the campaign, I dare say, such as the commitment to withdraw our CF-18s, was meant to tap in to that sense of dissatisfaction with what was going on.

Then, lo and behold, when the Liberals became government, they have stuck to the letter of the commitment. It is not only the letter of the commitment to withdraw the CF-18s that I would say Canadians were voting for when they thought they were voting for change. They were also voting for what they thought that represented, what that commitment was designed to represent, which was a different approach from the government with respect to this mission.

Instead, what we hear from the government in the House is how it is just as committed as the previous government was to that mission, but it is going to do it and live it out in a different way, a way that it refuses to call a combat mission. However, from what Liberals have said in the House and the plan they have laid out, to the extent that they have, we know that it is going to involve putting Canadian personnel on the front lines more than before. It is going to increase the likelihood of engaging the enemy. I would say that really does

not at all represent the kind of commitment that the Liberals were representing to Canadians during the election campaign.

It is disappointing to see how quickly that changed. For Canadians who were paying attention, they, too, are disappointed, because they really do not feel like the government is living up to the spirit that it presented on this issue or, I would say, perhaps in general, but that is for another debate.

We have heard different things in the House. We hear the Liberals saying even now that supporting the mission is not just about the

CF-18 commitment and then they say all the ways they are going to support the mission. In the election campaign they said they were withdrawing the CF-18s. Canadians were supposed to know that was code for not supporting the mission. It is frustrating to watch the government trying to have its cake and eat it too. On issues like this, we owe it to Canadians to take a clear stance, but the Liberals, so far, are doing a fine job of practising the art of fence-sitting. I am just not sure that is the kind of approach that Canadians want to see on this.

Some in the House think that means recommitting to the CF-18s; New Democrats do not. We think it means honouring the spirit of the Liberals' election commitment to withdraw the CF-18s and to actually withdraw them from the mission and look at other things. Sometimes the hardest questions, when we talk about trying to undermine forces of global terrorism, are the ones that cause us to look in the mirror, to the extent that funds for organizations like ISIS are passing through Canadian hands, if they are, to the extent that Canadian arms producers are selling weapons directly to countries or parties, which end up being part of the global terrorist movement. Those are some of the tough questions, because they actually ask us to say no to our friends, to restrict our own behaviour that, in some cases, benefits some Canadians.

Once again, when we look at the Liberals on this issue, we see that kind of fence-sitting happening again. When New Democrats have asked questions in the House about the sale of arms and military goods to Saudi Arabia, we are met by a government that says it agrees with us that this is not good, but it is going ahead anyway, because that was done by some other government and it is too bad. I think Liberals would tell us, and certainly on other files they tell us, that they were elected to undo some of the most egregious things that the last government did and then, suddenly, on an issue like this, their hands are tied.

● (1635)

It is hard to buy and hard to accept. I think this is one of the things that Canada could be doing. It is concrete, and it would be far more effective.

We now have a long recent history of these kinds of military interventions in that region of the world, which, I think it is fair to say, have not produced the kinds of results that those who initiated them, or even those who did not initiate them, would have liked to have seen. They did not bring peace and prosperity to the region. They have not made people in North America or other parts of the world feel more safe and secure. Things have gotten worse.

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The answer, typically, from some has been to say that we just need to ramp up our efforts and do more of what has not been working, instead of looking at some of those tough questions about arms traffic that either originates in or passes through Canada and what we could be doing in those instances. That is where I would like to see the focus. On this side of the House, we have been asking to see more focus on that, because we do believe in doing something about the threat. We would like to see that threat neutralized.

We just cannot be blind to recent history, which has shown that these kinds of undertakings by the U.S. government, and not NATO and not the UN, have not been in the tradition of peacekeeping. It is this tradition that the Liberals in their new government have been trying to invoke, saying that Canada is back and we are getting back into the old traditions. The old tradition of peacekeeping would have seen us participating in UN missions. This is not a multilateral mission, and it is not sanctioned by the international alliances and groups that we have traditionally undertaken these kinds of missions with.

I am disappointed in that. I do not think that de-emphasizing a military role, or even leaving a military role altogether, means not being able to do things. Therefore, I think it is the false dichotomy that we need to reject in this debate, and which I stand here to reject. There are many things we can do in terms of cutting the legs out from under terrorist organizations that do not involve the kinds of ultimately ineffective military interventions that we have seen; ineffective in the sense of not realizing the goals that they purport to realize.

Military intervention is a particular kind of tool. Like any tool, one has to know what job it is one wants to do and what the finished product would look like. It is why, when we use the military, we need to give a clear definition of what the mission is. We need to give a clear definition of what the end goal is and what completion looks like. We need to know how it is that we are going to extract ourselves from it once the goal has been realized. If we cannot do that, then it is a real mistake.

We have seen it before where countries, and in some cases even Canada, get involved in long protracted military missions where people lose their lives. At the end of the day, it is a messy exit, because there is no clear victory, because it was never clear going in what a clear victory would be. It pains me to sit on this side of the House and see our new government, having promised change, engaging in that same behaviour.

As I said, there were many people during the election who, on this issue, saw the Liberals and the NDP as of a piece, because the Liberals wanted to stop the CF-18 campaign, as did we. Canadians took it to mean that the Liberals meant what we meant, which is that this kind of military mission was not producing the results that its advocates said they wanted and said would happen.

Therefore, we need to do other things. We need to look at ourselves, and the way that these organizations are financing themselves. We need to look at the way these organizations are getting the arms they are using in the region.

Even though those are harder conversations to have, including the conversation that the Liberal government is refusing to have right

now when we ask questions about the Saudi arms deal, they are the kinds of things that I think could be more effective. They may help us to actually realize the goals for which we have now had many years of military intervention with many lives lost. Therefore, I would urge the Liberals to take that approach rather than the one represented in the motion before us.

● (1640)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona for his speech. It was interesting and certainly one-sided.

I just want to make sure that the member fully understands the proposal that has been in front of him and his team these last few days. We will be tripling the size of our train, advise, and assist mission, so that local people who live in the country can actually defend themselves against ISIL. We will be adding \$145 million for counterterrorism in Iraq. We will be adding \$840 million for humanitarian assistance for those who are affected in the most horrendous ways, who live in the Middle East, in Iraq. We will be adding \$270 million to help rebuild local infrastructure, including water capacity and roads, so that people can try to get some semblance of normalcy in that country.

Is the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona aware of this?

● (1645)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the government is talking about train and assist. I am aware that the government has undertaken similar types of measures in the past. When I was talking about the types of missions that did not ultimately yield the outcomes we had hoped for, that was partly what I had had in mind.

That does not change the fact that when the government performs those kinds of roles, it is more likely to be engaging in combat. That is partly why we have been up in question period. We would like the plan to change. However, we are not telling the government to change the plan, just to confess to what it actually is, what parts of that train and assist really are.

Carpenters cannot be trained just in a classroom, a trainer has to go out on a job site with them to teach them to do the job. When the government is talking about train and assist, it is talking about sending Canadian men and women out into the field, and that means it will be more likely they will be engaged in combat. In fact, it is more likely than for some of our allies who are continuing with an air campaign.

What we are asking, in the most minimal sense, is for some recognition from hon. members on that side of the House. We want them to own up to the fact that this means that Canada is actually continuing in a combat role, granted in a train and assist capacity.

I do hear what the hon. member is saying. I would just like to hear him say what is being left out.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to comment on the speech from the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

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I listened carefully to what the member said. Certainly the government has indicated there are going to be sunnier days and ways, and we are going to be more open and transparent. However, I find myself actually agreeing somewhat with the member for Elmwood—Transcona, and I am actually surprised to be agreeing with him.

During the campaign when the narrative was that we were withdrawing our six CF-18s from the conflict in Syria, the impression that was left with me was that we were also withdrawing from the combat, from the conflict completely. Now there seems to be a bit of an about-face on that.

I am wondering if the member has some further thoughts on that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my further thoughts on that are that this is part of an emerging pattern. We saw a number of places where the Liberals were making certain professions during the campaign that were designed to tap into a sense of malaise with Canadians about how the previous government was behaving and policies it had undertaken. To be sure, some of those have been acted on.

We have been happy to see the reinstatement of the long-form census, for instance. I was pleased to stand and speak in favour of Bill C-4.

However, on some other things, like EI reform, making a commitment to expand the CPP, those were commitments that the Liberals made to capture a spirit of reform, a different kind of reform, a left-wing reform. I do not want members beside me to get too excited as I talk about reform.

We now see that they are all too slow to act. I hope that does not mean that they will not act at all.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Lakeland.

I begin my comments about the motion by thanking the brave men and women of our armed forces for their contribution and sacrifices in the fight against ISIS. Our Canadian fighter pilots, indeed all our men and women in uniform, should never have to question Canada's commitment to the fight against ISIS. Unfortunately, with its motion, the Liberal government is asking them to do that, to question whether we have the stomach for this fight.

I have a unique perspective. Like a number of other members of the House, my background is from humble Mennonite roots. As a Mennonite community, our focus has been peace, peacemaking, living at peace with others around us in the community and our country and our neighbourhoods. We have taken seriously the reminder in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the peacemakers".

I want to draw a distinction between peacemaking and peacekeeping. There are some on the other side who suggest that Canada has always been and is defined by who we are as peacekeepers. I will be the first to admit that Canadians have distinguished themselves as peacekeepers around the world, but that does not define who we are as Canadians.

In fact, Canada truly became a nation in World War I when we sent our brave men and women into battle to stand up against tyranny. We did the same thing in World War II, in which we stood

up against hatred, against fascism, against racism, and we were successful in doing that. Imagine what the world would be like had we not engaged and had we lost that fight. Those conflicts were not about peacekeeping. They were about forging a lasting peace in which the rights of all were respected and in which the values of democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law were promoted and established on a lasting basis.

This whole canard about Canada simply being a peacekeeping nation does not do credit in any way to Canada's history and our forward-looking commitment to continuing to stand up for the most vulnerable people around the world. Close to 117,000 Canadians have lost their lives in combat, standing up for the very principles I just raised.

What has defined us as a nation is our willingness to stand up against evil, to stand up and identify right from wrong, not simply to turn a blind eye to the scourge of violence and tyranny against the most vulnerable around the world.

That brings me to the notion of responsibility to protect. That is something we have not heard from the Liberal side much.

The United Nations has adopted this principle of responsibility to protect. There is no situation that more aptly reflects what this is all about than the situation in Rwanda, when global community was called to engage in a situation where genocide was taking place. We did not engage, and what a horrific outcome that was.

The responsibility to protect simply says that when there is such a significant risk to a people group, to a group of human beings, and that risk is being generated by those who are truly evil, the world, the global community, has an obligation to intervene. I cannot imagine a situation more appropriate to apply that principle to than in the Middle East in the fight against ISIS.

ISIS hates our Canadian values. It is an extremist religious ideology that wants to impose a global caliphate upon our world that would govern both Muslims and non-Muslims. It is a violent ideology, one that goes after the most vulnerable, religious minorities, and ethnic minorities. Its members put people in cages. They burn them. They drown them. They behead young children who are listening to pop music. They rape women. They sell young girls into slavery. It goes on and on.

• (1650)

Canada has historically always stood up against and confronted these kinds of evils in the world. We are one of those targets.

I want to remind everyone in the House that the suggestion that this is a conflict in a far-off land on a distant shore is simply a false premise. The more successful ISIS is in the Middle East, the more Canadians will become emboldened and inspired. These are typically misinformed and vulnerable Canadians who then themselves become radicalized and commit horrific acts of terrorism against Canadians.

Government Orders

We have seen that in Canada right here on Parliament Hill. One of our soldiers was killed at the national monument. Another one of our guards was shot here. The same thing happened in Quebec. The long arms of terrorism reach into Canada. If we do not confront it in the Middle East, it will become even more pernicious and prevalent in Canada.

There are some who suggest that our allies are happy with our decision and very pleased that we have withdrawn our fighter jets from this fight against ISIS. The Liberals have suggested that they have consulted with our allies and they are completely okay with it.

In today's edition of the *National Post*, there is a headline that screams, "U.S. general heading air campaign against ISIL says 'it was kind of sad to see' Canada pull CF-18s".

This three-star general, Charles Brown, goes on to say:

I realize that for your operators who fly the F-18s, your pilots, I think they are a little disappointed because I know if I was one of them at the squadron level and much younger, I would probably be feeling the same way.

He went on to say that he found out Canada's new government intended to withdraw its jets, not through consultations but by watching CNN, of all places. Is that what we do to our allies? These people and countries have been our partners in the fight against tyranny and terrorism, and this is how we treat our allies?

We have seen the evidence of terrorism all around the world. We have seen it in Paris, in the Middle East, in Africa, and now in Asia. Canadians understand the threat we face.

What have our fighter jets achieved? In summary, without going into detail, with all the sorties they have flown and the facilities they have destroyed, our efforts, and those of our allies, have essentially meant that ISIS is now on the run. Its safe havens are being eliminated one at a time. Its source of funding is drying up. Therefore, as we consider this issue, we must understand that there is a lot at stake here.

I am asking the government to reconsider its decision. There is general acknowledgement that the decision the Liberal government made to withdraw our fighter jets from the fight against ISIS was strictly a political one. It was a calculation made to allow the current government to wedge itself against a previous government. That is exactly what happened, and that is no basis for us to play our significant role within the allied effort to fight the scourge of terrorism around the world.

I do not want to in any way diminish the humanitarian efforts that have to take place in the Middle East, Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere around the world. Canada does its part. We do our part in welcoming refugees into our country. We do our part in robust diplomacy. However, when we are withdrawing our fighter jets from the Middle East in a fight against ISIS, we are also increasing the risk to our men and women in uniform who are on the ground fighting the good fight, providing training to the Kurds, doing intelligence gathering, and painting targets they can no longer attack. Rather, we will leave it to our allies to do the heavy lifting. We are leaving a shameful record behind for future generations.

I ask the government to reconsider its position and restore our fighter jets as part of the allied effort in fighting terrorism.

• (1655)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regrettably my colleague was explaining as a great military general in the region. We do have our commanders in the region and they know their job and they know exactly what they are doing.

Let me remind my colleague that in 2002, when the Americans went to Iraq, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien refused to participate in the war, while the opposition members were applauding and pushing for Canada to be involved in the war.

A few years later, all Canadian citizens applauded the decision of Jean Chrétien at that time. We know what we are doing. The government knows what it is doing. Our generals on the ground know what they are doing. What our government is doing is in the interests of Canadians and of our men and women in uniform serving in our country.

• (1700)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I do not believe there is a question. I believe the hon. member may not have actually seen his government's policy on this. He is hearkening back to Prime Minister Chrétien not sending our troops into Iraq, suggesting that is the model we should follow. Is he then suggesting that we should withdraw all of our troops from Iraq and Syria? Is he suggesting that this mission, which his Prime Minister is now proposing to triple, is wrong, that we should withdraw those troops?

The big fallacy of us pulling our fighter jets out of the region is that we already have Canadian men and women in uniform on the ground there doing valuable work in training the locals to fight effectively and to be able to confront ISIS in an effective way. They are doing intelligence gathering. They are painting targets for fighter jets to destroy key ISIS facilities to ensure that ISIS cannot spread, that it does not have a safe haven, that it cannot raise funds. Yet I hear the member now suggest that perhaps his Prime Minister and his government should pull all the troops out, as Prime Minister Chrétien suggested Iraq was a failure.

When asking questions or making comments in the House, we have to be consistent. If the Liberals want to triple the number of troops on the ground in Syria, then at least have our fighter jets protect them.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the member's speech he referenced his Mennonite heritage. I come from Manitoba where there are many Mennonites, many of whom came to exercise their right that Canada afforded them to conscientious objection. During the campaign, a number of Mennonites in my riding who had always voted Conservative told me that the previous government's policy on Syrian refugees was a turning point for them, as many of their families had come to Canada as refugees.

Does the hon. member share those feelings and if so, is there not an implicit criticism of the bombing campaign which is contributing to the massive outflow of Syrian refugees?

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, do I share the political persuasion of those who voted NDP? Of course I do not. I believe our Conservative approach is one that represents the best interests of our country. It represents the national interests.

Government Orders

I am very proud of my Mennonite heritage, but as an elected member of the House, the most sacred duty that is imposed upon us and upon me is to keep Canadians safe. We have always done our part to engage with our allies to ensure that the world is safe, that we continue to have global security. That global security is very fragile today.

I make no apologies for representing a party that stands for the vulnerable around the world, that understands the responsibility to protect. I would encourage the member to review that principle of responsibility to protect, a principle that has been adopted by the United Nations. I know the Mennonite Central Committee has had to wrestle with because it is very real. We live in a world where we have many vulnerable people and from time to time there is a good case to be made to intervene on their behalf and protect them.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Abbotsford for sharing his time with me today.

I rise today to add my voice on behalf of the people of Lakeland in the debate regarding the government's proposed mission against ISIL. This is among our most solemn and critical responsibilities.

Before I begin, I would like to thank the men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces for their determination and for their bravery. I would also like to thank the Royal Canadian Air Force pilots and crew for their critical work and progress in the fight against ISIL.

As Canadians express their strong and steadfast appreciation to the thousands of men and women who continue to put their lives on the line to fight for freedom and human rights, the Liberal government's approach is incoherent. It seems to lack not only the proper consideration and evidence required for these types of tactical military decisions, but also to be devoid of common sense.

We should be forthright about the true evil that Canada and our allies are fighting. ISIL consists of extremist, barbaric terrorists who are executing unspeakable atrocities against innocent and vulnerable people. They are carrying out a systematic extermination of ethnic and religious minorities in Syria, Iraq, and the larger region, with bigger aspirations. They do not think twice about beheading western journalists, aid workers, and students, while filming their terror to proliferate their campaign of hate and fear. They are trafficking and raping thousands of women and using young child sex slaves for their own personal and perverted pleasure. They want to conquer the world, any and all religions that support democracy, and any individual group of ideology with whom or with which they disagree. They force their views upon others by recruiting the weak and exploiting the vulnerable. They use whatever and whomever they need to, in order to further their own agenda, and at any cost.

We cannot pretend we do not know. The world has witnessed the true devastation that ISIL leaves in its wake, ravaging entire regions with mass executions, beheadings, torture, and cultural genocide.

The events that transpired in Paris last November will be forever etched in our minds. The sheer terror that rippled through the streets of the world's most romantic city, killing at least 130 people, reached all corners of the world as it precipitated series of coordinated attacks on the rest of the civilized world. Suicide bombers have attacked innocent civilians in Turkey, Lebanon, Tunisia, and other places. In

October 2015, a Russian Metrojet was bombed, killing 224 people. In December 2015, a couple opened fire on a holiday party at a centre for people with disabilities in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people.

These are just some of the unfathomable acts that ISIL perpetrates. It is only a sliver of its horrendous terrorism.

We, as Canadians, here in the most admired country in the world, have never turned our backs upon vulnerable people, victims of atrocities, blatant terrorism, and acts of war. We have always stood with our allies and punched above our weight in military campaigns against evil in defence of human rights and to ensure our own safety and security.

Take, for example, Canada's role in Afghanistan. For 13 years, brave members of our Canadian Armed Forces contributed to stabilizing one of the world's poorest countries, rife with political instability, human rights abuses, and a bleak economy. Today, Afghan girls proudly attend school, Afghan security forces are providing safety and security to its people, and the economy is moving in the right direction.

Standing with our allies to defend and to provide opportunities and hope for people in regions devastated by terrorism and for people who are under attack is the right thing to do. It is the Canadian thing to do.

As my colleague, the hon. leader of the official opposition has said, recently it seems that the Liberal government has not really understood the true nature of terrorism. Terrorists are not just thugs, as the Prime Minister has said. They are not simply organized criminals, as the Minister of National Defence has asserted. Terrorists aims to destroy everything we as Canadians believe in, our very way of life, including equality, the rule of law, democracy, freedom, human rights, acceptance, diversity, and self-determination.

I believe wholeheartedly that Canada has an obligation to protect our rights and freedoms and those of our allies. As a stable and democratic country, we must fight terror.

ISIL has also named, targeted, and threatened Canada and Canadians directly. An ISIL-motivated murderer killed one of our soldiers, in 2014.

● (1705)

In a November 2014 audio recording, ISIL's leader said that the group would fight to the last man. He specifically singled out Canada and other western countries as stumbling between fear, weakness, inability, and failure.

Government Orders

In November 2015, a magazine published by ISIL called for jihadi fighters in western countries, including Canada, to “Rise and defend your state from your place wherever you may be”. In fact, some Canadians have been recruited by ISIL and have made threats against our own country. In a video release, Farah Shiridon said he had a message to his home country of Canada. He said, “We are coming and we will destroy you...we will bring you slaughter”. Moreover, John Macguire urged ISIL sympathizers to carry out lone wolf attacks on Canadian targets, in a video released by ISIL.

While our allies are stepping up, Canada is stepping back. The Liberals' changes to Canada's mission against ISIL are at best short-sighted and at worst inconceivable. As we send hundreds more military trainers into a war zone, we pulled our skilled and very successful CF-18 fighter jets from their role of providing much-needed protection.

Once a well-respected and integral ally, Canada is now abandoning our full-fledged participation to other countries, like the United States, France, and Australia, which have committed to defeating this threat against all of us.

While no real tactical answer has been provided as to why the decision was made to pull our CF-18s from the fight against ISIL, we know for certain this was a political decision by the Liberal government to meet an arbitrary campaign promise, even before this debate today.

My Conservative colleagues and I are grateful for the contributions and progress made by the Royal Canadian Air Force pilots and crew in the critical fight against ISIL. They have made a difference.

We agree with the multi-pronged approach, including humanitarian aid, providing refuge for vulnerable people here in Canada, and training local forces. All were undertaken by the previous government. However, who is going to protect and support our men and women on the ground? If we do not participate in this combat mission, we will be dropping humanitarian aid on dead bodies.

Our international partners have asked us to stay in the air combat mission. Victims of terrorism have asked us to stay. The Conservative Party has asked the government to maintain our air combat contribution. These pleas are falling on deaf ears. While the government has already pulled our CF-18s out of this mission before the conclusion of the debate here in the House, I strongly urge the Liberals to re-evaluate, and prioritize the safety and security of the people they are putting on the ground, and of all Canadians.

As Canadians, we will always be committed to upholding human rights, religious freedoms, and the rule of law. These principles are fundamental to our Canadian identity. Standing with our allies to fight terrorism with all means necessary is the Canadian thing to do.

● (1710)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to ask a question here. If ISIL is everything the member just said it was, if it is a true evil, if it has committed unspeakable atrocities, if it has committed acts of war and trafficked in violence, hate, and fear and wants to conquer the world,

why did the previous government provide 600 soldiers and 8 airplanes? Which is it?

If it is indeed this threat to the world, if it is indeed committing this kind of evil, then the member is right that it demands a greater contribution from Canada. In 2006, we went into Afghanistan and we took 2,500 troops there. It was not a token. We knew that what was happening in Afghanistan was serious, and we stood up to the plate and did something about it.

Again, it comes back to that experience. We saw how to make a success out of Afghanistan, and we are suggesting that we move the same way forward here, that the next phase of this operation is to provide the stability that can contribute to the rebuilding and reconstruction efforts that will follow over time. We are going to lead that direction toward stability.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Wow, Mr. Speaker. The member is completely out-of-touch with the values and concerns of most Canadians. I am not sure whether she is mocking or betraying her own position or her government's position on the threat that ISIL poses. I hardly know how to reply except to say that we on this side of the House believe, as we have demonstrated, that Canada must make the most robust effort we can in support of our allies in multiple ways, in a combat mission, in providing humanitarian aid, and in assisting refugees to come to Canada.

This is a time when our allies are increasing their combat activities and their military presence in the area. Canada should continue to provide that support to the best of our abilities as our allies have asked.

I by no means think that the brave and self-sacrificing efforts of members of the Canadian Armed Forces are a token. I am just shocked that the member would even come close to implying that in this debate. It is shameful.

● (1715)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking as well from this side of the House, the opinions of our party are quite different.

What I find really shocking when I look at the amendment put forward by that member's party is that those members wish to remove any engagement by the Government of Canada in improving living conditions in conflict-affected areas, investing significantly in humanitarian aid, engaging more effectively with political leaders in the region, and welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to Canada.

Perhaps the member could explain to this place why it is that her party feels it is not appropriate for the Government of Canada to assist in those kinds of activities.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, of course we support all of those efforts. Our government took that multi-pronged approach to this challenge and threat in the region.

Government Orders

We believe in a couple of other things, the first and foremost of which is ensuring the safety and security of Canadians as we welcome refugees to our Canadian family.

The key thing in this debate is what can, and should, Canada do in co-operation with our allies in this important fight to defeat these barbaric extremist terrorists?

I am just shocked by the hypocrisy of the parties on another part of the spectrum from me, who like to go on and on about their tolerance and their beliefs and the right of people like me to hold office and to advocate on behalf of people I represent. Terrorists are doing atrocious things to vulnerable and innocent people across the world, and yet those other parties would have us withdraw from fighting to defend and protect those vulnerable innocent people and to fight the—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Chilliwack—Hope.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the member for Lakeland for her passion for women and girls around the world who are put at risk by groups like ISIL, and for her great speech here in the House today.

I will be sharing my time with the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

It was an honour to participate in this debate last March when our government at the time brought forward a motion for debate and a vote in the House of Commons. That is a hallmark of our Conservative government. That is something we started in this place.

The previous Liberal government, whether it was deploying troops to Afghanistan or redeploying them to Kandahar, under the governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, did not consult the House.

I would have congratulated the Liberals on adopting that Conservative practice, but we have now since learned that, before the Prime Minister had even finished moving the motion, they had already made the decision without consulting this House. We thank them for the consultation after the fact, after they had already made up their minds, but at least we are having a debate here in the House, which is again a new phenomenon for the Liberal Party, so we congratulate them on that.

I want to talk a bit about previous Liberals in previous governments and their views. I want to quote from the former deputy prime minister, who said:

Canada has a good reputation...but let's make no mistake about it: Canada does not have a history as a pacifist or a neutralist country. Canada has soldiers that are buried all over Europe because we fought in defence of liberty.

That is a quote from John Manley, which he made after 9/11 when there was some concern about what the Canadian response would be, and there were some who were putting forward the response that Canada was a peacekeeping nation, that in fact we did not fight, that we did not get our hands dirty.

I heard that disturbing trend again from Liberal members today in debate. The Liberal member for Surrey—Newton, earlier in the debate, said this Liberal motion was, "...a return to Canada's...type of international engagement".

That is an insult to all the brave men and women from across the generations who fought in World War I, the fight that shaped our nation; in World War II, responding to the Holocaust and to the threat that Nazi Germany posed to the world; in Korea; and in Afghanistan.

Again, there is this whitewashing of our combat mission in Afghanistan, when it is said that we just trained in Afghanistan. At the end of that engagement, yes, the focus was on training, but prior to that, there was a counter-insurgency in which armed men and women in uniform were involved, 158 of them paying the ultimate sacrifice with their lives to serve this country for the greater good and for vulnerable people who were under the thumb of the Taliban. Those brave men and women went to make life better, as the member for Lakeland said, for young girls who could not go to school, for those who were killed simply for not worshipping in the same way as the Taliban in their twisted ideology.

Let us not forget that the Canadian way has been to fight injustice and to protect the innocent, and we have done that throughout our history. We should not simply talk about the blue helmets and the blue berets. That is a proud part of our military history as well, but let us not diminish the work that our men and women in uniform have done across the generations of this country. They built this country; they fought for what was right.

When we brought this motion forward in the last Parliament, I remember respecting so much former member of Parliament Irwin Cotler, who refused to stand with the Liberal position, because he believed in the responsibility to protect, as does our government.

I cannot believe, as the member for Lakeland said in her speech, a Liberal member saying that our men and women, our hundreds of support staff, our trainers on the ground, and our six CF-18s were tokens, that this was somehow just a token effort that was not really worthy of support, and if we really meant it, we would have sent in the PPCLI or some light brigade.

● (1720)

That is what we were asked to do. We were asked to send CF-18s, and that is what we did. For the member to minimize that as tokenism is a disservice to the men and women in uniform who have been serving this country valiantly for the last 18 months. She should be ashamed of herself.

Perhaps there is a reason why that sort of rhetoric comes from that side. It starts at the top with the Prime Minister. When he was leader of the third party, he was asked about our mission with six CF-18s participating with the coalition. What did he say? I know Liberals do not like to hear it, but I am going to say it again. He said we were going to whip out our CF-18s to show everyone how big they are, and that is what the contribution of the Royal Canadian Air Force was. What an insult to the people of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Then again in the debate, when the matter was brought to the floor, perhaps having to tidy up his language a bit, he said the only thing we were contributing was a few aging war planes. Again, that is an insult to the men and women who fly those planes.

Government Orders

Let us talk about what they have done in their time acting on behalf of the people of Canada. What has the Royal Canadian Air Force done? It has flown 1,378 sorties, 783 support aircraft flights, and 251 air strikes, and 399 ISIS targets were destroyed. That is what we are here to debate. That is what we on this side of the House in the official opposition are here to say. Why do we support the continued bombing by the CF-18s? It is because it is working. Prior to the bombing campaign by the coalition, ISIS was rolling across the open country through Syria and Iraq with impunity. It was taking whatever it wanted. It was rolling like a standing army. What has happened because of the air campaign? Its supply lines have been cut off, its financing has been reduced, and its occupied territory has been reduced by 25%. It is working. The CF-18s are part of that.

Again, I heard government members today saying there are lots of bombers in the area and Canada is providing only 2.5% of the sorties. Then why is it such a big deal to keep them there as part of the multi-pronged approach? When the former prime minister, now the member for Calgary Heritage, brought forward the motion in the last Parliament, he said that we must respond with humanitarian support and we must respond militarily. We now hear the Liberal government saying it can go with training and it can bring in more refugee support, all of which the Conservatives supported when we were in government. However, the other thing we supported was the continued use of our CF-18s and the brave men and women who have done such a great job delivering for the Government of Canada and the people of Canada in this fight against ISIS.

What I find ironic or interesting in this motion is that there are some who are trying to portray this as a philosophical opposition to bombing. It is tough to be philosophically opposed to bombing when Canadians will still be painting targets, refuelling, and providing reconnaissance for selecting targets. Therefore, why would we not allow the men and women of the Royal Canadian Air Force to continue to deliver those bombs on behalf of Canadians? Why would the government not continue to degrade and destroy ISIS? We are supporting the bombing effort; we are just not supporting our men and women in the Royal Canadian Air Force to continue to do the job they do so well.

ISIS is a terrorist organization that deserves to be destroyed and degraded. Our brave men and women in the Royal Canadian Air Force have been doing a fantastic job in delivering for Canadians and for the Government of Canada. The CF-18s should stay there, and that is why I will support the amendment and oppose this motion.

• (1725)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say that I feel it is disingenuous and unfair to suggest that the Liberals do not support our men and women in the Armed Forces. I think that is a very unfair comment. It really disappoints me to hear how much the rhetoric has increased tonight. I do not think it is accurate to suggest that our troops are at greater risk because we are going to withdraw our CF-18s. It is disingenuous to suggest that. It is a coalition effort, and the fact that we are going to pull our CF-18s will not put our troops at any more risk.

The Liberal Party has simply come up with a plan that it feels is the best way forward to combat ISIS. Will the member opposite not concede that Liberals are doing what we think is best? We think it is

the best strategy. We think it is best way forward for our country and for our contribution to the effort.

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Liberal Party does believe it is best, but I think it is wrong. I think the Liberals are wrong because our CF-18s have been delivering results.

As I mentioned, there were 399 targets acquired and destroyed. ISIS continues to see its occupied lands reduced and continues to see its supply lines decimated. It is running low on funds, because its oil sales are drying up because of the coalition bombing campaign.

I would simply say that we support so much of the motion, except for the fact that the government wants to remove the CF-18s, which are delivering a valuable contribution to our coalition partners.

Not a single coalition partner asked Canada to withdraw our CF-18s. The real tragedy here is that this is simply being done, not because it is good military strategy, not because it is good for Canada's international reputation, not because it will degrade and destroy ISIS, but because it keeps a Liberal campaign promise.

• (1730)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his comments, although I regret I do not agree with much of what he said, particularly with respect to his failure to acknowledge what is an appropriate refocusing of our military resources in the region.

One of the reasons I say this is that, in the member's comments, he simply failed to acknowledge that it is only 20% of the time that our CF-18s are actually dropping their payloads. Why is that?

There is a very obvious reason. ISIS, which we all agree in this House is a threat, is co-mingling with innocent lives. ISIS members are going into the mosques, markets, and schools, and they are doing that deliberately. It is because our pilots are so well trained that they will not drop their payloads unless those preconditions are met.

Therefore, in the face of that, we have decided to focus our efforts on training local individuals, so that they can defend themselves. That is why we have strong allies like the United States saying that we cannot bomb our way out of Syria. Now, I do not know about the hon. member, but that certainly gives us a lot of assurance and comfort that we are going in the right direction.

My question to the hon. member is this. Why will he not support this motion?

Mr. Mark Strahl: Madam Speaker, I thought I was pretty clear on why I do not support the motion. It is because the CF-18s are being pulled out of the fight.

The Liberals talk about refocusing and all of that, as if the Royal Canadian Air Force could not continue at the same time that we are training, providing humanitarian aid, and bringing in refugees. We have the capability. We have shown before that we can fight at the same time as we are providing those other services. We certainly did it in Afghanistan, and we certainly can do it here.

Therefore, I will disagree with the member and his party that it is necessary to withdraw the CF-18s in order to increase training or humanitarian aid, because the facts simply do not back that up.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin my comments today, I would like to take a moment to point out that it is profoundly disappointing to be having a debate on this motion when the government has already begun implementing some of the motion's recommendations before this place has even seen a vote.

Why bother having the debate, when the government cannot be bothered to at least show this House the respect of having a vote before it begins actions such as withdrawing the CF-18s? Of course, that is the point. It is so the government can boast that it did have a democratic vote, even if it was after the fact. We all know that this is part of the so-called new tone in Ottawa.

What also troubles me in this case is that the decision to withdraw our CF-18 fighters was made by this Prime Minister before the mission even began. Let me explain.

On October 3, 2014, the former Prime Minister came before this place and put forward a motion asking the House to confirm its confidence in a government decision to join our allies and partners—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates—in launching air strikes against ISIL.

During the former Prime Minister's speech, he also provided all of the specific mission details. If members happened to be in the House that day, they would also know that the then leader of the third party responded to that motion, reading directly from a pre-written speech. The reason I point this out is that the pre-written speech opposed the mission to join our allies in the fight against ISIL. In other words, before the member from Papineau even knew the details of the mission, he had already written his speech opposing it.

As we also know, in an interview with CBC journalist Terry Milewski, when asked, "If you don't want to bomb a group as ghastly as ISIS, when would you ever support real military action?", our Prime Minister called that question nonsensical. As we all know, that is not really an answer.

To this day, we have never heard a clear or articulate answer as to why this Prime Minister does not support our CF-18s bombing ISIS. There is a reason I say our Canadian CF-18s. If we look at this motion our Prime Minister has proposed, Canada will continue to provide our Aurora aerial surveillance aircraft to, among other tasks, find ISIS strategic targets to be bombed. We will also continue to provide our Polaris refuelling tanker aircraft to help our allies' aerial bombers reach those same targets.

Finally, as General Vance has confirmed, our expanded training forces will continue to operate near the front lines, painting targets to be bombed. In other words, Canada remains actively involved in the campaign to bomb ISIS, only we are no longer willing to pull the trigger.

Last week the Prime Minister said that "on the beaches of World War II and in the trenches of World War I, Canadians have never shied away from standing up and doing what is right".

The point is that in those campaigns, Canadian soldiers did stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies, and we did share the burden of pulling the trigger against those who would do us harm. That is no

longer the case here. The question is why. Does the Prime Minister not believe that bombing can be an effective part of the campaign to defeat ISIS?

Last week the Prime Minister said, "The air strikes by our allies and by RCAF members have been effective in a measure of impact against ISIL".

It seems that the Prime Minister has finally recognized the effectiveness of our air strikes by withdrawing them. Of course, that is not a coherent explanation. When the member from Papineau, as the third-party leader, spoke on the original training mission, he had some interesting things to say.

● (1735)

I quote directly from the member for Papineau, who said:

We now know that Canadian troops have been at the front lines, calling in air strikes and engaging in several direct firefights. In a matter of months, despite assurances to the contrary, the government steadily and stealthily drew Canada into a deeper ground combat role in Iraq.

Now the Prime Minister seeks to increase the number of trainers on the ground. General Vance has confirmed that the expanded training force will continue to paint targets for air strikes and will return fire if fired upon, as we would expect them to.

If the Prime Minister considered that a "deeper combat role", then how can he now claim that this new mission, which expands the number of soldiers doing the same work, is a non-combat role? Once again, this is not a coherent explanation or position.

In this regard, I can relate to the frustration of the New Democrats, who also see this blatant hypocrisy. However, what is also interesting is that back in March 2015, our Prime Minister stated that the work of our trainers "...should take place away from the front lines". Yet we know that our trainers will continue to work near the front lines painting targets. Once again, the Prime Minister says one thing when opposing the original mission against ISIS and then does another when announcing his own mission. These are not coherent positions.

Let me also ask the House who said this: "The government owes it to Canadians to be more honest about how long this mission will truly last". Once again, that was our Prime Minister, then, not now.

Of course, I could continue, but the more I study the Prime Minister's various positions on the mission against ISIS, ironically I am forced to use the term nonsensical.

Before I close, I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank our Royal Canadian Air Force pilots and their support team for the important work they have completed in this mission. I would also like to thank our Canadian Forces soldiers who are bravely serving as trainers. I give sincere thanks to the many support personnel who are also serving in this mission.

Government Orders

While we have much to debate in this place on the scope of the mission and how it has changed, let us not forget that while our CF-18s may be coming home, many of our Canadian Armed Forces personnel will remain. To them and their families, let us give thanks for their ongoing sacrifice. God bless them. May they all return home safely when this mission is complete.

I have one parting word. I was quite happy today to rise in this place during question period to ask the Minister of National Defence whether those people who are currently deployed in Iraq will be eligible for the post-combat reintegration allowance. This is an important benefit that allows members to stay and support their families, and it recognizes their great sacrifices while they serve abroad, not only in taking risks but also in the time it takes away from their families, something we generally all can understand. I was happy to see the Minister of National Defence say in this place that those men and women would be eligible for that particular allowance.

It is important that we as Conservatives, and taking away party labels, all members in this place, should support those who risk so much to protect those who need it. I am proud to be a Canadian. I am proud of the efforts put forward by all of our Canadian Armed Forces members. Again, I wish them safety and security and wish them to be home with their families safe as well.

• (1740)

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first I would like to comment on what my colleague said earlier, which was that Canada had a very good reputation. Regrettably, under the previous government, that reputation went to its lowest level. However, I assure all my colleagues that with this government, we are working hard to re-establish the reputation of Canada to the highest level.

My question for my colleague regarding this motion is this. Does the member know the difference between a weak army and a very strong army? The mission of our government, and the vision, is to make from the Iraqi army a very strong army by providing training, logistics, and help.

If we have 1,000 airplanes dropping bombs, and after that we leave a weak army, the next day five ISILs will arise. Restructuring an army and keeping it strong will eliminate the existence of a terrible organization like ISIL.

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that we all feel comfortable that we can bring our concerns and comments to this place.

I am not sure I can address all of the range of commentary that this member has presented but what I would first start with is that the Reputation Institute did a study and has found several times that Canada has the greatest reputation in the world. That is something I think we should be proud of. I hope that all members of Parliament would put their ideology aside and say they are proud to be Canadian. We should be talking Canada up in this place not down, although I always affirm the right of members to say what they feel in this place.

That being said, I would simply point out that the CF-18s are a tool in the tool box. Some trainers outside Mosul on December 16

were attacked by several hundred ISIS fighters and were greatly relieved when our CF-18s that were on a mission struck down and allowed them to re-establish those front lines. I feel that mission had extreme value. I hope this member would agree.

• (1745)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have been asking government members if they are willing to use the word “genocide” to describe the actions of the Daesh in Syria and Iraq. This is the word that has been used by Hillary Clinton. It is the word that has been used by the European Parliament in a resolution that it passed. It is important that when we have genocide going on we are willing to call it a genocide because that affects how we need to respond.

I wonder if the hon. member can comment on that. Does he consider what is happening in Syria and Iraq a genocide, and does that oblige us to understand that we have a responsibility to protect those who are victims?

Mr. Dan Albas: Madam Speaker, I know there is international language around the use of the word “genocide”. I would simply point out that many of the populations, the Yazidis, the Ismailis, the Christians, all have said that the death cult ISIS has targeted them in a way that is brutal and has purposely sought to kill as many as possible. While there may be some reluctance to call that a genocide by some quarters, I say that we call it what it is.

This is a genocidally intended organization that is intent on establishing an Islamic caliphate. It needs to be challenged before it can gather more ground and more illegal oil revenues or get access to unconventional weapons and fund terrorist activities throughout the world. We must confront it or eventually it will come to our shores.

I hope that other members would consider that. This is a grave situation. It deserves to be dealt with in the same serious manner.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Langley—Aldergrove.

[Translation]

I am proud to participate in today's debate on Canada's strategy to combat ISIL. I think this is a historic decision. Why? Because one day, this period will be studied, and we will be judged on our actions, especially with regard to the fight against the international jihadist terrorism that is threatening the regional and international balance of powers.

[English]

My theme today is to look at this issue with five basic questions. What are we fighting, when should we fight, why do we fight, how do we fight, and where do we fight?

Government Orders

What are we fighting? There is an atrocious, bloodthirsty organization that refers to itself as “ISIL”. This is a murderous terror regime that enslaves and tortures women and children, beheads entire villages based on ethnicity and religion, and even kills other followers of Islam simply for not being of the same orthodoxy.

[*Translation*]

This threat has killed Canadians here in Canada, including Patrice Vincent and Corporal Cirillo, and abroad. Seven Quebecers were killed in Burkina Faso, and another was killed in Indonesia. Terrorists killed Canadians who were fighting in the Middle East and providing humanitarian assistance there.

Those are our adversaries. These are extremist terrorists who are against the values of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, which are guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and against the value of gender equality, which Canada espouses.

[*English*]

The second question is, when should we fight? Let us look at the combat situations Canada has gone into since its inception at Confederation.

World War I saw Canada align with a group of allies, including France, the U.K., and the United States, to fight a battle that was not on our soil. Why did we get involved? To help our allies.

World War II was the next time Canadians went into combat. Again, although the war was happening outside our borders, we stood with our allies to eliminate a deadly threat.

The Korean War, where again we stood with our allies to help fight a fight that was not directly threatening Canadians, is just another example.

The Gulf War, again, had us joining alongside our allies with both air strike and ground force fighters for a fight that was arguably not a threat in any way to Canadians.

The next fight was in Kosovo, this time standing up for humanitarian reasons.

Then there was Afghanistan, which was a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks that killed 26 Canadians.

As it stands, Canada has been part of a large and broad coalition consisting of both our traditional allies as well as regional bloc players from the Middle and Near East region. Our actions up until the recent election of our new government were in step with our allies.

When we look back over all of these and ask why we fought, we come with three main answers: one, to stand with our allies; two, to fight for humanitarian causes; and, three, to fight terrorists who have killed Canadians.

Therefore, when we come to the fight against ISIL, we have another terrorist organization that has killed Canadians. Why would we do anything other than join our allies, fight for humanitarian causes, and combat the terrorists who are killing Canadians?

It being clear that we need to engage in this combat, now the discussion turns to, how should we fight?

Our CF-18 jets, our special operations forces, and military trainers were working constantly with their focus aimed at degrading ISIL's offensive capabilities, to blockade ISIL's murderous rampage across the Levant region, and to begin to turn the tide against it after it began consolidating its power bases across the area it had slowly building up since 2012. The air strikes have been effective in weakening the ISIL position and now, as in Afghanistan, the ground troops are being stepped up along with the air strikes.

This is where the Liberal government has made its misstep. Before even having the debate in Parliament, the Liberal government unequivocally failed our allies by pulling our jets, a vital component to the allied air campaign, despite how much the defence minister has attempted to minimize the incredible work of the Canadian Forces pilots and crews there.

We are tripling the number of boots on the ground, which is something the current Prime Minister did not dare mention during the recent election campaign. He knows this means putting more Canadian men and women, some of our best special forces operators, in direct harm's way, an exact opposite of the air campaign we were a part of, in which laser-guided munitions allowed our military to hit targets with pinpoint precision from the safety of 40,000 feet up.

We now learn that Griffon helicopters will be sent into the battle theatre, with little to no regard for the massive influx of shoulder-launched rockets in the hands of ISIL terrorists that can easily take out our helicopters and potentially put downed airmen and women into the hands of our bloodthirsty enemies. This is how not to fight.

We should be maintaining our fighter jets in the region so we are at the table, understanding the strike plans so our ground troops do not get killed again by friendly fire, as happened in Afghanistan.

We should not be counting on our allies to provide the air protection for our people when we are fully capable of providing it for ourselves. It is not like our CF-18s have somewhere urgent to rush off to. We could get them back into the game so we can regain our position at the table with our allies.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

That is what Canadians want. According to polls, nearly 80% of Canadians would support sending the CF-18s back into the theatre. The soldiers are unhappy with the government's plan, and the CF-18 fighter pilots must certainly feel as though the government does not value their contribution.

[*English*]

My final comment has to do with the question of where we should fight.

Obviously, as the battles ensue the situation is a dynamic one, and if we are not at the table with our allies, we may not get the best information about the changing nature of the fight, which as I understand has factions switching sides frequently.

Government Orders

We also need to be prepared on our home soil. Terrorists have already attacked here, and we need to be ready for the backlash to come. The government needs to have ready its emergency terrorist response plan for all regions of Canada.

I do believe Canada has been placed at serious risk of potential attacks due to the failure to acknowledge the clear and present danger of terrorism here at home. We have a Prime Minister who refuses to acknowledge the extreme nature of ISIL and the basis of its entire jihad being waged across the Levant as it seeks to form an Islamic caliphate. Indeed, any time we try to discuss these issues, we hear accusations of racism and Islamophobia, when in fact ISIL is indeed a clear and present danger to the western way of life, the likes of which we have not seen since the end of World War II.

There is another important element in the discussion. Canada has and always will open its doors to those in dire humanitarian need. This will never change, and everyone on this side, and indeed the entire House today, would agree that it is important for our great nation to do this.

However, we now see a crisis situation about to unfold, with little or no discussion as to the true scope of what is going to take place. For several weeks now Aleppo, Syria has been heavily bombarded by both U.S. and Russian fighter jets. Aleppo has become the hotbed of ISIL fighters. Now that they are under heavy fire, these ISIL fighters, who are the worst of worst type of human scum truly known to man, are streaming toward the western border of Turkey. Here they are purposely blending in with innocent refugees displaced by the ongoing war. The issue becomes, how can the government possibly believe we can perform any sort of credible security review of those individuals from that region coming to Canada as refugees, when the fog of war has completely enveloped Syria and the surrounding area? We cannot process these individuals, but we know for a fact that many western governments are opening their doors a little hastily under humanitarian pretense, possibly allowing in tens, hundreds, or even more ISIL supporters.

I must point out again that unless we cut off the head of the snake, we will have an endless sea of refugees beyond our capacity.

In summary, we must absolutely ensure that no ISIL fighters can pose as innocent refugees. We need to ensure that preparedness is in place, and we need to fight this evil terrorism wherever this battle takes us until the threat is removed.

• (1755)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would say to the hon. member that failing our allies would be to leave the theatre of war completely, not to increase our presence there. Failing our allies would be to not contribute to alleviating the refugee crisis.

Canada has a proud military heritage, but it also has a proud humanitarian heritage. We have not been static across time in our approach to these things. Sometimes we get involved directly in conflict. Sometimes we help in other ways. Sometimes we do peacekeeping. Sometimes we do peacemaking. We have not been static, but the opposition seems fixated on having Canada always pull the trigger.

In any combat situation there is going to be refocusing. Countries refocus so they can realign their efforts to make them more internally consistent and effective.

The previous government used to tell us that we could do everything well. We could drop bombs and help Syrian refugees, but it was not able too help Syrian refugees. It was a failure on that file. We at least have made progress, and we are realigning our efforts more in the humanitarian direction.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, the point is this. We can do everything. In other combats we have used ground troops and air and the whole thing. We should do everything that we can because this is the most serious threat that we have seen since World War II.

The previous Conservative government did bring in a huge number of Iraqi and Syrian refugees, and that has been continued. I appreciate the co-operation of the government in trying to bring refugees from camps but I was astounded today in the House to hear in question period that did not happen, that the refugees did not come from camps. I was astounded, because that is what we told the Canadian people and the Liberal government is supposed to be about being open and transparent.

We definitely need to be there with our allies. We have lots to bring. That is what we should do.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I feel obligated to raise the same question to the hon. member as I did to her colleague earlier.

The member just said, “We did do everything. We want to do everything”. Why then has the Conservative Party moved in this place to remove what the government is proposing, which is improving the living conditions of conflict-affected populations in the area, welcoming tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, engaging more effectively with political leaders, and investing significantly in humanitarian assistance? Why are they removing part of that everything?

• (1800)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, with respect to refugees, I am happy that Canada showed humanitarian aid but, as I talked about in my speech, we are now getting to the point where ISIL fighters are coming in with the refugees. It is going to be tricky to sort that out. That is a significant threat to us here in Canada.

When it comes to everything that the government put forward, there is no reason to withdraw our CF-18s. The government did it before a vote was even held in the House, which shows total disrespect for the democratic process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I can respond to the question about whether our pilots were disappointed or sad.

Government Orders

Lieutenant General Charles Brown, the U.S. commander of the coalition air force, was interviewed by the *Calgary Herald*. He mentioned that he himself was sad to see our pilots leave and that our pilots were truly sad. He said that he understood that it was a political decision by the new government, but that he did not understand why the pilots were being withdrawn because they were effective and they could go into airspace where other countries could not go. He said that he would be pleased if Canada changed its mind and again deployed its pilots. He wants to keep our pilots, and our pilots are sad.

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu: Madam Speaker, how could our pilots not be disappointed? They were effective, they were doing a great job, and the rest of our allies are putting more planes in the fight. Of course they were disappointed.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton for her hard work and the speech she just gave, in which she addressed a lot of important issues. I also want to recognize the good work of the critic on this file.

I think if Canadians listen carefully to this debate, they will hear the root of the problem, which is the political games that are being played by the government and its not being straight and transparent. A lot of photo-ops and half information is being shared.

The motion that we are debating today is the Liberal motion on fighting ISIS. The Liberals said they were going to expand the advise and assist mission of the Canadian Forces, by enhancing capacity-building efforts with our defence partners and Jordan and Lebanon, and by withdrawing our CF-18s.

How do we expand by withdrawing? It is a Liberal concept that we would expand by withdrawing, and it does not make sense.

Will the Griffon helicopters the Liberals say they are going to send in be armed? Will they be able to defend themselves against attack? The Liberals will not answer that. Why will they not answer those important questions? It is sort of smoke and mirrors that we are getting. Why would they not be honest and transparent and inform Canadians truly what their plan is about?

When the Liberals do not answer straightforward questions, we ask why? What are they hiding? Why are they not being honest with Canadians?

I come from a family where my father was a Canadian veteran. He was in the army. When I was first elected in 2004, I was given the great honour of joining the Canadian military for a short period of time to experience what it was like to be in the Canadian military. As my father spent time in tanks in the Second World War while he was in the army, that was where I went first. I loved my time there and the experience in the army. The second experience was in the navy. I have had the great honour of working with a number of veterans, active reserves, and full-time military people.

I am so proud and so thankful for the Canadians who make the sacrifice of serving Canada. Their hearts are so big. They are there to represent Canada with great pride, and they are also there to help those in the world who are being attacked.

This is a very serious issue that we are dealing with. The member for Sarnia—Lambton highlighted the First World War and the Second World War, and how Canada had a reputation carrying far beyond its weight.

We look back not that long ago when there was a Liberal government, which was described by the military as the decade of darkness. It was a sad time. When I was elected in 2004, we found the Canadian military in Afghanistan with the wrong colour of uniform, and poorly equipped. They were put in the hottest part of Afghanistan, and they were at the greatest of risk and poorly equipped.

That changed in 2006 when we became government. There was the pride of our Canadian military and thankfulness, and every Friday people would wear red, at least in our party, as a show of thanks to our Canadian military. There were a number of people coming out at Remembrance Day, and it continued to grow and grow. There was just a pride and a thankfulness that we shared with our Canadian military.

Then we saw a pure evil from ISIS as it exposed its ugly head. I think back to why we are in this with our allies. No one wants to be in war, but there was a radical Islamic terrorist, murderous group called ISIS that started doing horrific things. We have to think back to what it was that caused our allies and the world to say that this had to stop.

● (1805)

ISIS forces cut off and surrounded thousands of civilians on Mount Sinjar in northern Iraq. At least 500 men were slaughtered execution style, with an unknown number of women being captured and sold into slavery. At least 70 children were reported to have died from thirst and at least 50 elderly perished. Then we were horrified when hostages in green jumpsuits were paraded helplessly in front of a camera and beheaded slowly. Many of the victims were humanitarian aid workers.

Then we saw children being brutally crucified. Some were buried alive. Many were sold into sexual slavery. We saw Coptic Christians being beheaded because of their faith. We saw ISIS round up 45 civilians in a town, some thought to be Iraqi security forces, and their families, and they were burned alive. ISIS released a horrific video showing a captured Jordanian pilot standing in a cage, doused with gasoline, eventually set on fire, and then crushed by giant rocks.

We saw that ISIS took some 400 male prisoners out into the desert, where there was a mass execution. We saw that four Iraqi children under the age of 15 were beheaded because they refused to convert from Christianity to Islam. In northern Iraq, 3,500 captured women were sold into sexual slavery, tortured, and repeatedly raped. On and on it goes.

Government Orders

The world said this is wrong, and we need to stand against this true, pure evil. The world came together, and Canada carried well above its weight. What did we do? We were involved with almost 250 bombings while doing our part: 249 ISIS fighting positions were destroyed by Canadian jets, 83 items of ISIS equipment and vehicles were destroyed by Canadian jets, 24 ISIS improvised explosive device factories and storage facilities were destroyed by Canadian jets. We know that recently Canadian troops were there training and there was an attack by ISIS forces. Canadian jets were called for backup, and ISIS was attacked and pushed back. It is a strong legacy, a strong history of Canada doing its part.

What is the plan? The plan is to withdraw the Canadian jets. I think there would be support from the Conservative side if Canada continued to do its part. Some of what the government wants to do has merit, but the decisions are cloaked in clouds of secrecy, there is confusion and mixed messages, and Liberals are not sharing what their plan is, while removing one of the biggest impacts that Canada has had with its allies, the jets. Why are the Liberals doing that? They are doing it because during the rhetoric of the election not that long ago, they promised they would remove them.

Following that, there were the attacks in Paris. That is when there was a shift and the Canadian people were saying they did not want to hold the new Prime Minister to that promise because it was said in haste, not thought out. Canadians said it was okay and the jets should stay there. Then why are we bringing the jets back when they are so effective? The allies are asking us to continue to participate.

It was not that long ago that a conference of our allies here in Canada was asking how they could continue to fight against ISIS effectively. Canada was not even invited to that conference. Why? It is because we are backing away and we have a plan that is cloaked in secrecy.

Conservatives ask the government to do the right thing and reconsider keeping our Canadian CF-18s involved in this fight. It should do the right thing, and we should do our part as Canadians so that we can stand proud and free as Canadians.

• (1810)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have heard a number of times from both opposition parties today about some kind of lack of transparency with respect to our party's position during the election as to what we were planning on doing. There was some discussion, particularly from the NDP, about not being clear as to what we were doing.

I would direct the attention of members opposite to the Liberal Party's website. It is very easy to find, liberal.ca. It is still on there and the wording is very clear. It says:

We will refocus Canada's military contribution in the region on the training of local forces, while providing more humanitarian support and immediately welcoming 25,000 more refugees from Syria.

We are doing exactly what we committed to. In the opinion of the member opposite, is removing the jets the only constructive way we can contribute? Are we not also contributing with these forces that we will be using for humanitarian purposes? Does he not see any value in what they are contributing?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, regardless of what is happening in the world, the Liberals are going to stay focused on

what they said during the election, but the world has changed since then.

For the government to say that it will remove our planes because that is what the Liberals said during the rhetoric of an election, that it will put more Canadians at risk, that it will rely on somebody else to protect Canadian soldiers, it makes no sense. Why would the Liberals do that when it is the wrong thing to do?

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for drawing attention again to the fact that on this side of the House we certainly value the work that our men and women in uniform do for us each and every day. We want them to have all the resources at their disposal to help them to do their job and, more important, to return back to their families healthy.

However, there is one issue we are losing sight of, and that is the concept of the refugees we are welcoming. We want to welcome refugees to our country and help them get settled in permanent housing situations. However, many times when we speak to the refugees, they would far rather have us redouble our efforts at creating a secure and safe environment for them so they are able to maintain their homes in the places where they are comfortable, and that is in their homeland, rather than being taken to a country that is maybe difficult to live in in terms of climate and the many cultural adjustments they need to make.

Would my colleague comment on the importance of us doing all we can, including maintaining our CF-18s in the fight, so we can create a more stable environment for our colleagues who are from this troubled part of the world?

• (1815)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Speaker, my grandparents came from Ukraine and I would love to go back and visit. However, Ukraine is still a very unstable area in the world. They would not have left Ukraine if it would not have been for the issues in the late 1800s.

People who are Syrian and Iraqi love their country. Their memories are dear and sweet, but then there are also horrific memories. They would like to stay in their country if they could. If we can push back the evil, join our allies and carry above our weight as we always have, then I am sure the people whose homes are in Syria, where their memories are, would want to stay. That will only happen if we continue to carry above our weight. If we start backing off and playing politics with this issue, they will not be able to go back.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be dividing my time in the debate with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I am happy to rise in the House this afternoon to speak against both the motion and the amendment to that motion.

I was encouraged to hear the speeches earlier this afternoon given by my NDP colleagues that I think really put the proper frame on this debate. Instead of how should we be throwing our military might into the Middle East, or should we bomb or should we not bomb, the question should really be, how can Canada be a truly positive force in the Middle East and the world?

Government Orders

I have heard many comments on this issue from many people in my riding, both recently and throughout the long election campaign. I would have to agree with the member for Elmwood—Transcona, who pointed out in his speech the clear change in the Liberal stance in this conflict.

When I travelled throughout my riding during the campaign, I went to 20 or so all-candidates forums. The Liberal candidate and I ended up at all those forums. Unfortunately, we did not really hear much from the Conservative side. I have to say that I continually heard from the Liberal candidate that Canada should be playing a more positive role in the Middle East, we should be pulling out the bombers and increasing humanitarian aid. The audiences in all 20 locations all agreed with us. Many constituents commented then that this is not our war. I still hear those comments from my constituents. I have had a couple of messages just in the last week alone from constituents about this, and they were not even aware of this debate going on. They just wanted me to hear that message.

I would like to also re-emphasize the comments made earlier by the member for Churchill—Keewatinook Aski that we seem to be so anxious to put our men and women of the armed forces in harm's way, and yet we continue to ignore the challenges they face when we bring them home. I have talked to many veterans in my riding who despair at the cuts to the services here in Canada. Some have even moved to the quieter parts of my riding since it is the only relief they can get from their PTSD.

Here we are again, putting more of our servicemen and women, tripling the number, into harm's way without a real clear plan of what they are there to do and when we will bring them home.

Let us look at the Liberal plan. The Liberals want to expand and enlarge our military role in Iraq with our personnel placed deeper and deeper into the combat. There is no apparent end date to the mission and no clear measures of success.

I remember commenting in the previous debate in the House that we had on an opposition day motion on this issue that I was reminded of George W. Bush's "mission accomplished" celebration regarding Iraq. In reality, he was celebrating the birth of ISIS and the destruction of any semblance of a stable Middle East.

The Liberal plan blurs the lines between training and combat roles. While they have recalled the bombers, we will still be refuelling bombers and we will be painting targets for them. The irony of this is simply painful, and I must say I am confused at the lack of clarity in this policy.

The human cost is difficult to assess. We are told that this mission will cost \$264 million. It is interesting that the figure is so precise, considering, as I mentioned before, that the mission has no end date. Both my colleagues from Manitoba have already outlined the clear choices evident in these costs. There are so many positive ways we could be spending those funds here in Canada.

● (1820)

Canada does have constructive roles to play in fighting ISIS. We should be stopping the arms trade in the region, instead of increasing it. We should, first, sign the Arms Trade Treaty. It is absolutely unacceptable that Canada has not done this. We should be cutting off the funding sources for ISIS.

We constantly forget the other Canadian fighters in this region, in this conflict. Those are the Canadian fighters who have gone to the Middle East to fight for ISIS. There is nothing in the Liberal plan to increase and expand any deradicalization program here in Canada. This is something that we desperately need. There are models around the world that we can follow. We really need to tackle this end of things, because when we talk about the Canadian role in this conflict, we must remember that we can have a more positive effect by battling deradicalization as well.

We should continue our efforts to resettle refugees from this conflict in our country. I was disappointed to hear reference to refugees being confused with ISIS fighters and terrorists. This is just simply not the case. There is no evidence of the refugees coming to Canada being involved with this at all.

One of the most positive experiences for me as a new member of Parliament is the work I have been doing with refugee committees across my riding. There are committees in Penticton. We already have families that have come into Oliver and Osoyoos. There are committees working in Castlegar and New Denver, in the Nakusp. There is one in Naramata that wants to bring government-assisted refugees into a church conference centre for temporary housing.

These people have been working hard. There are hundreds of people in my riding doing this. There are thousands of people across Canada who are doing this. This is something that Canadians feel great pride in doing, sharing our great country with these people who have suffered so much.

Military involvement in this region is fraught with complexities and danger. It is perhaps not surprising that the United Nations and NATO have not sanctioned these actions. It is time that Canada played a positive role in the Middle East, concentrating on humanitarian aid and diplomacy. Many of our allies, including New Zealand, Norway, and South Korea have all taken this approach. It is something that we should really follow their lead on.

The Conservative debate stresses the effect of the bombing missions. Today I have heard many numbers thrown out there, the number of missions, the number of targets that have been hit, the number of ISIS targets hit. However, too often these bombing missions strike unintended civilian targets. We have all heard stories of bombs that have struck hospitals. It seems that we hear about this on a very regular basis. This is not only tragic in itself, but also serves as a recruiting tool for ISIS.

This is what will ultimately win this conflict. We must win the hearts and minds of the people who are suffering in the conflict. We must convince them that ISIS is not the answer to their problems. Bombing missions, no matter how well intentioned, just will not do that.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that I think both this motion and the amendment offer a misguided path forward for Canada, and a misguided path for the brave members of our armed forces and for the Middle East as a whole.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1825)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I did not get a chance to say this before, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove on his service to Canada.

I also want to congratulate everyone in the Canadian Armed Forces for their excellent and important fight against ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh—whatever we are going to call it. I want no one to believe that the members on this side of the House are not very grateful to the people in the Canadian Armed Forces.

I want to thank the hon. member for his comments. I take great exception to his saying that this war is not our war, because, obviously, this is a murderous, horrible group of people who are seeking the end of western civilization and are committing atrocities against Yazidis and Christians in the areas they occupy.

Is it the position of the NDP not only that Canada should withdraw from fighting in the region, but so should every western country, so that we simply leave the atrocities to perpetuate themselves with no one intervening at all?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would give one answer to that, which I can say right away and briefly. This is not our war.

If they want to point fingers, they could say it was the Americans and their ill-advised actions in Iraq who have created this instability. If the Americans feel obliged to try to fix it through military means, then good luck to them, because I do not think these sorts of military means are helping very much. Yes, they can go in, but I was very proud of the fact that Canada stayed out of that war. We should do all we can to create a positive role for Canada in that region.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have three minutes left for questions and answers the next time this is brought before the House. The time for debate is now over for today.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1830)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to raise this matter again with the government. I first raised the matter on January 29. It was in response to a *Globe and Mail* article revealing an Environment Canada report from which we learned that it is not just the National Energy Board that has been failing to enforce environmental laws. As revealed by the head of Environment Canada's enforcement branch, there has been poor morale and fear of reprisal among the officers responsible for enforcing the law.

They had expressed concerns that they were forced to turn a blind eye to even serious environmental violations.

This matter concerns me, not just as an elected member of this place, but as the former chief of enforcement for Environment Canada. I continue to work very closely with enforcement officers, not just in this country, but in Bangladesh and Indonesia. I remain convinced that Canada has a place in this world to show how effective enforcement can be delivered.

Clearly, the evidence that is provided by this memo that was released to the media shows that we have a serious problem in this country. I think it is important that the new government address this.

The kinds of concerns that have been identified include, in some instances, the abject failure to actually uphold the law, as enforcement officers felt their actions were blocked if they were not a government priority; disconnect between the regions and headquarters; grievances not addressed in a timely way; lack of respect for the job of investigators; lack of recognition that enforcement officers should have science knowledge; lack of resources to even go to the field to deliver their enforcement role.

If I could share with this place a quote in the report from a regional enforcement officer, "Many people are breaking the law, but because of priorities, we can't do anything."

That is a stunning and disturbing revelation.

A second quote is, "We cannot only do our job from 9-5.... if we leave we simply send the message that they only need to comply with the law between 9 and 5, after that it is free range."

Obviously, there are deep concerns within our Department of Environment. That is an agency that has been mandated to enforce environmental protection laws, for protection of threatened species, protection of our waterways, protection of clean air, and the delivery of international commitments and obligations are enforced. It is important for us to keep in mind that one of those international obligations is pursuant to NAFTA. A sidebar agreement to that trade agreement is the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation. I also had the honour of working with the secretariat that operates under that agreement.

Pursuant to that agreement, Canada has committed to the effective enforcement of its environmental laws. Not only do we have an obligation to ensure that we are inspecting, monitoring, and enforcing our environmental laws, we have international obligations and commitments to maintain.

This is not the first time such a review was undertaken. Back in the late 1980s, a similar review was held and enforcement officers, for the first time in history, were brought in to tell what was going on in the field. I am very sad to say that we seem to have returned to that state.

My question for the government would be, what action is being taken to address these concerns? I am deeply concerned about the response given by their former director. I look forward to being assured that, in fact, the new government actually takes the responsibility seriously to ensure the effective enforcement of Canadian environmental laws.

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Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her work in this area and her obvious deep knowledge with respect to the issues that she raises.

Let me say, to start, that our government takes environmental enforcement very seriously and, in a broader context, it intends to address the negative impacts that were caused by the Conservative government's devaluation of environmental responsibilities over the last 10 years.

Behind closed doors, the previous government cut \$255 million over four years from Environment Canada and Climate Change in a deliberate attempt to undermine the capacity of our officials to protect the environment, to enforce the law, and to provide industry with the tools that it needs to grow the economy in a sustainable manner.

Rather than being up front about the depth and the impact of the cuts, the previous government decided to hide this information, which is something it did in many other areas of government as well.

[*Translation*]

If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts them.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Unlike the previous government, we are committed to supporting enforcement personnel, whom we rely upon to tackle non-compliance with environmental laws, and will hold offenders to account.

Unlike the previous government, we will not engage in the reckless budget cuts to government programs that destroyed many of the services Canadians need.

This brings me to the heart of the matter that is raised by the hon. member, the essential services provided by environmental enforcement officers.

Environment and Climate Change Canada's enforcement officers have a broad range of powers that they use to identify violations of environmental laws. The head of Environment Canada's enforcement branch has revealed in no uncertain terms the previous government's negligence in the context of the enforcement of environmental law.

Since 1999, federal public servants in 93 departments and agencies, including those in Environment and Climate Change Canada, have participated in a survey that is conducted every three years to gather employees' perspectives on their workplace.

What the hon. member references in her question is a report prepared by Environment and Climate Change Canada's chief enforcement officer, in which he acknowledged concerns raised by some of his personnel in the 2014 survey. These concerns reflect the oppressive culture produced by the previous government and serve as a reminder of its neglect of Environment and Climate Change Canada's enforcement branch.

After consulting enforcement staff, the chief enforcement officer has laid out an action plan to demonstrate a commitment on the part of senior management to foster dialogue with employees.

Our government values the tremendous contributions of our enforcement officers. Addressing their concerns through open and transparent dialogue will benefit the department, all Canadians, and the environment.

Our government has always emphasized that a positive and productive relationship with public servants is a priority. Our commitment to transparency will ensure that the concerns of public servants are heard so that any issues can be tackled.

Our government is committed to enforcing environmental laws and will continue to seek input from enforcement officers and senior management on how best to ensure that they have what they need to successfully execute their mandate. We are currently in the process of assessing current resources and capabilities in order to do just that.

Going forward, we will work to ensure that Environment and Climate Change Canada has the capacity and the will to hold offenders of environmental law to account.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I am reassured that the government recognizes there is a problem. What I am not reassured about is the response.

I also looked at the response given by the former senior officer. The offer of holding recreational activities does not exactly show a firm understanding of the deep problems from what has happened at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

I am wondering if the government would commit to an open and public review of the current enforcement and compliance policies and protocols and the staffing. The serious problem in that department is the fact that over time, it completely eroded the understanding of what enforcement is all about. Most of it is delivered on a regional basis.

Will the government commit to an open public review so that we can understand whether or not it will return to and continue the commitment of delivering its responsibilities under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, one of the things that the hon. member and I share is a deep commitment to ensuring that we re-establish the capabilities and capacity of the department of the environment, and a number of other departments that are focused on ensuring that science and data are informing good public policy and that we are driving to ensure that decisions that are made on the basis of science and data are implemented and enforced.

One of the other commitments that this government has made is that we will be highly transparent in the context of resource allocation and the choices we make. When the budget is presented, the member will see a number of elements that relate to funding associated with a range of departments, including Environment and Climate Change Canada.

I look forward to having a conversation with the member about how that will work going forward.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in follow-up to a question that I asked in this House, along with one of my colleagues, the MP for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, with respect to the recently approved takeover of MTS Allstream, a Canadian company with a fibre optic network in Manitoba, which was taken over by a U.S. company.

MTS Allstream was a Canadian carrier that offered fibre optic services, which carry the confidential data of thousands of Canadians, including government departments, the RCMP, and others. Its sale went through to an American firm following the federal election.

As we expressed in this House, our concern is that this sale was made without proper review. It certainly was not made known to Canadians. As a result, sensitive information will now be subject to American surveillance, including the U.S. patriot act.

We know that the previous government blocked an earlier attempt to purchase MTS Allstream, based on national security concerns. Therefore, we are concerned to hear that the current Liberal government refused to do a comprehensive review to protect Canadians.

The Investment Canada Act is a piece of legislation that is set up to ultimately protect Canadians, and to ensure that foreign takeovers protect Canadian jobs and investments in communities, and of course maintain our public safety.

Based on the various battles involving foreign takeovers, we in this House know that the Investment Canada Act has unfortunately not protected us. In the past, we certainly called for a review of the act, for a strengthening of the act, and for the need for increased transparency when it comes to foreign takeovers.

I know this to be the case in terms of takeovers in the mining sector, as I come from a community where we once had Inco, a successful Canadian company that was bought out by the Brazilian multinational Vale, which waited until the expiry of its two-year agreement to come out with some potentially devastating announcements with respect to the loss of Canadian jobs. Fortunately, we were able to get Vale back to the table to mitigate that kind of devastating announcement, although we know that other communities, including Sudbury, were in a difficult situation. That is an example of where the Investment Canada Act did not protect us.

However, going back to the example of MTS Allstream, these are the questions. Was there a proper review conducted; why do Canadians not know about it; and how is our public safety being protected in this case?

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments made by my colleague, the hon. member for the riding of Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, concerning the review of foreign investments that could be injurious to national security.

First of all, I would like to point out that direct foreign investment plays a positive and significant role in the Canadian economy. It contributes to research development, productivity, and globalization.

Trade and direct foreign investment go hand in hand. They link Canada to international value chains. Canada is open to investments that create jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for Canadians. However, that cannot happen at the expense of national security.

The Investment Canada Act has an important role to play. On the one hand, it provides for the review of significant foreign investments for their likely net benefit to the economy. On the other hand, it provides for the review of investments that could be injurious to national security.

All foreign investment in Canada is subject to a national security review under the Investment Canada Act. The process is thorough and involves consultation with government organizations responsible for national security. The Allstream-Zayo transaction was no exception.

I can assure the House of full compliance with the Investment Canada Act. The act restricts the amount of detail that can be shared about specific transactions, and those restrictions are important because they prevent trade injury and protect national security.

It would be useful to look at how those in charge of reviewing transactions in accordance with the act operate. The act was amended in February 2009 to enable reviews of investments that could be injurious to national security.

Review processes and timelines are clearly established, and the act also gives the Governor in Council the authority to take any necessary measures to address problems that arise concerning national security.

The national security provisions apply to a broader range of foreign investments than the net benefit provisions.

● (1845)

[*English*]

The act also provides separately for the review of foreign investments for their likely net benefit to the Canadian economy. Net benefit reviews are limited to significant investments for acquisitions of control of Canadian businesses valued above the threshold set out in the act. For private sector WTO investors, the relevant threshold is \$600 million in enterprise value. For foreign state-owned enterprises, that threshold is at a lower \$375 million in asset value.

The net benefit review process is rigorous and involves thorough consultation with affected provinces and territories, as well as government departments or agencies that have policy responsibility for the sector involved in the transaction. Other bodies are also consulted. In addition, any person or group may submit its views in writing to the minister during the review process.

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Ms. Niki Ashton: Madam Speaker, obviously our concern in this particular case is the sharing of sensitive information. While I am encouraged to hear that measures have been taken to ensure that there are controls in place, this is something that is not widely known. Unfortunately, it took media pressure to get to that kind of information, when in fact Manitobans, whose information is exposed as a result of this purchase, should have the right to know immediately once these kinds of changes take place.

Finally, we are essentially talking about the need to render the Investment Canada Act, and the agreements that come as a result of it, more transparent and strengthened so that Canadians know that their best interests are served and the concept of net benefit is a realistic one in terms of Canadians' daily reality.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite again for her questions and concerns.

I cannot comment on the specific case of this particular transaction, but let me reassure the member, as well as all Canadians, that the provisions in the law set out a host of evaluations to make sure that there is a national security component that is taken into account and there is an examination.

I can assure the hon. member that the government did that and followed the law thoroughly on the evaluation of this particular transaction, as it does for all transactions that fall under the purview of the law.

I can assure hon. members that the conclusion of that committee was that national security concerns were taken into account and that there was a net benefit for Canadians.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today on a question I asked the Minister of Natural Resources.

What we are looking for here is some clarity on the framework of our energy and resource sector to hopefully reinvigorate confidence in our resource sector. We are really looking for our Minister of Natural Resources to step up.

Reports are predicting 185,000 job losses in the energy sector in 2016, with 125,000 in Alberta alone. We are well on our way to that statistic, with 22,000 full-time jobs lost in Alberta in January alone.

Alberta's unemployment rate has reached 7.4%. It is the first time since 1988 that it has been higher than the Canadian average. Predictions show that Alberta's unemployment rate will exceed 8% by the end of 2016. Certainly this is something that is very troubling to Albertans.

The Liberal government seems to have trivialized the importance of the natural resource sector, even though it makes up 20% of Canada's GDP and adds more than \$160 billion to our economy on an annual basis. This is certainly not something to trivialize when we look at the job losses in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and across Atlantic Canada.

We heard today from the Prime Minister, as well as from the Minister of Finance, about an influx of \$250 million for Alberta. I find that trivial. Albertans do not want a handout. They want to go

work, as I am sure most Canadians do. It is quite clear that this is simply a way of appeasing Albertans with their own tax dollars, which is not something we want.

What Albertans are asking from the current Liberal government and the Minister of Natural Resources is a commitment to projects like energy east, commitments that will instill confidence and new enthusiasm in the resource sector, which will help not only Albertans but Canadians across the country.

We have spoken a great deal about what energy east will mean to Alberta, but what I was trying to highlight for the minister is how important this is not only to Alberta but to Canadians. For example, let us look at the hundreds in New Brunswick who have been laid off in Sussex due to the closure of the potash mine. If we were to proceed with energy east, a lot of those unemployed people in New Brunswick would be able to find jobs in the energy sector. That is just one opportunity we would have with energy east.

Instead, the Liberal government has told investors that it would rather support foreign oil imports than support Canadian workers and employers. It believes that the environmental record of Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and Russia are better options than Canada's regulatory regime.

Energy east can replace the need to import foreign crude into Quebec and Atlantic Canada with a secure source of Canadian oil. Currently, 630,000 barrels of oil are imported into Quebec and Atlantic Canada each and every day from places like the Middle East and west Africa, places not exactly world renowned for their environmental stewardship.

The minister recently announced interim regulations and indicated that more may be coming, which simply increases uncertainty, instability, and ambiguity in the sector. We are looking for more clarity from the Minister of Natural Resources on the approval process for critical infrastructure, like pipelines, and on whether the current Liberal government will be introducing a carbon tax.

What steps is the minister going to take to create stability and predictability and to encourage investment in Canada's energy sector and show that this is a good place to do business?

Also, if energy east passes the muster of the National Energy Board, if it passes the regulatory regime of the National Energy Board, will the government and the Minister of Natural Resources support energy east?

• (1850)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government understands that these are difficult days for the people of Alberta. For thousands of our fellow citizens, the precipitous drop in the price of oil has made these very trying times. Businesses are struggling, jobs are lost, and families are hurting. We have seen this boom and bust cycle before, but it does not make it any easier for those who are struggling. While there is no magic wand, there are things we can do both now and in the long term to weather this storm.

In terms of short-term actions, we are working with the province of Alberta. A few weeks ago, the Prime Minister moved quickly to fast-track infrastructure funding of \$700 million. This will ease the immediate hardships and job losses in the energy sector.

In addition, when a region's unemployment rate rises, the entrance requirement for employment insurance is reduced and the duration of benefits increases. In fact, the duration of these benefits has increased in all four economic regions in Alberta.

The number of weeks available in hard-hit regions in Alberta has increased by 5 to the maximum entitlement nationally of 45 weeks. We have also put in place an interim approach for major resource projects already under regulatory review. We have committed to modernizing the National Energy Board.

We know that the sooner we restore public confidence in the regulatory process, the sooner we will see broad-based support for large-scale, sustainable energy products that will get our resources to market. Indeed, our government believes there is every reason for Canadians to be optimistic about the long-term future of our energy sector.

Also, there is every reason to believe we can achieve a brighter future based on a clean environment and a strong economy going hand in hand: a future built on innovation and adapting to changing times; a future utilizing greener ways to extract and develop our fossil fuels; a future with more sustainable ways to get our energy to markets at home and abroad; a future that makes greater use of renewable sources of energy; a future where energy efficiency plays a more prominent role; a future where we invest in clean technologies and green infrastructure; and, in short, a future where we engage Canadians on how to generate the energy we need while preserving the planet we cherish.

Our government is committed to doing both. Through the federation, we can engage in nation building by creating a visionary energy strategy that enables Canada to lead in the fight against climate change and truly position us as a global leader in a low-carbon economy.

• (1855)

Mr. John Barlow: Madam Speaker, my concern is the \$700 million that were announced before. There are no strings attached to

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that \$700 million. To say that will help those unemployed in the energy industry is disingenuous. Liberals say that they believe there will be renewed optimism in the energy sector, but the fact is that there is no optimism in the energy sector. That is our concern right now.

She talked about climate change and a low-carbon economy. As part of the minister's mandate letter, he is also supposed to have a continental energy agreement. However, right now the United States and Mexico are not talking about a federal carbon tax. The United States has lifted its export ban on oil.

Canada is at a significant disadvantage when it comes to our competitive edge in the energy sector. If Liberals continue to have this uncertainty and do not have clarity, the competitive disadvantage will continue to be there.

Will there be a continental energy agreement and will there be a federal carbon tax that will further debilitate Canada's energy sector?

Ms. Kim Rudd: Madam Speaker, the livelihoods of thousands of families are dependent on the energy sector. I know every member of the House wants an end to the suffering in communities across the country that have been hit hard by low oil prices.

With the measures our government has announced, I am optimistic that we can rebuild the energy sector on a more sustainable footing, that we can restore the public confidence in the environmental reviews, while providing greater certainty for industry, and that together we can emerge from these challenging times to a future that is better and brighter than we could imagine.

I will disagree with my hon. colleague. Some oil producers and shippers have come to my office to talk to me. They are optimistic and they are some of the best innovators in our country.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:59 p.m.)

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