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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Mauril Bélanger) (via text-to-speech software): It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MEMBER FOR OTTAWA—VANIER

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bécancour—Nicolet—Saurel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honoured to call you “Mr. Speaker” in the House today. The title suits you so well.

I have seen a lot of people come and go in this place, but it has always been a pleasure to see you over the 21 years that you have served your Ottawa—Vanier constituents.

They knew they could count on you when the Montfort Hospital was in jeopardy, and you were still there a decade later when it was expanded instead of shut down. They counted on you to advocate for the rights of francophones at home and across Canada, and here you are again today spearheading the movement for an officially bilingual Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois MPs, I salute your steadfast dedication to your constituents, to francophones everywhere, and to the noble democratic values that the House must never lose sight of.

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[*English*]

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian steel industry is paramount to our ability to grow the economy. It directly employs over 20,000 Canadians, and further 100,000 Canadians have jobs indirectly because of steel.

The steel industry supplies essential materials to a variety of important sectors, including the automotive, manufacturing, mining, construction, and energy sectors, and it encourages innovation.

That said, Canada's steel industry faces a number of challenges. In my riding, Essar Steel Algoma and Tenaris Algoma Tubes are in crisis. They have seen substantial layoffs over the past few years, and if the situation does not improve, this could continue.

That is why I am working with the government, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and many others to elevate the conversation on steel. The government will not leave the Canadian steel industry behind.

Mr. Speaker, it is an extreme honour to raise this important issue before you on this day.

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OUTSTANDING BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Flamborough Chamber of Commerce announced the winners of their 2016 Outstanding Business Achievement Awards. These top businesses will be recognized on April 1 and, I can assure members that they are not fooling.

The Flamborough chamber is a very active organization in our community and is truly a model for supporting the small and medium-sized enterprises that are the backbone of the Canadian economy.

While every winner is outstanding in their own right, there will be two special awards given out this year that I want to highlight.

First, the Lifetime Achievement Award will go to Jim Wilkinson of Wilkinson Heavy Precast. Jim is a past president of the Flamborough chamber and his business has been an innovative local manufacturer for over 60 years.

Second, the Town of Flamborough Award goes to Pat McNally for 40 years of service to the Rotary Club of Waterdown. What is truly amazing is that Pat is 101 years old, an incredible lifetime community service record.

On behalf of all the members of the House, I extend my thanks and congratulations to the Flamborough chamber and the thriving businesses within the Flamborough community.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

GENDER PARITY

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the town of Lorraine made history last Sunday when it elected a female mayor for the first time. I want to take a moment to congratulate the new mayor, Lynn Dionne.

I also want to note that the four towns in my riding currently have two female and two male mayors, which is also a first for Thérèse-De Blainville. It is especially fitting that this gender parity came about in the same week that we are celebrating International Women's Day.

This equal representation demonstrates that although we still have a ways to go to achieve equality in modern societies, progress is being made quite naturally and to nobody's surprise. I am proud to share this with the House, because in 2016, it is a reality that we can only hope to see replicated across the country and around the world.

Let us lead the way, Mr. Speaker, as you are doing.

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[English]

EVERYDAY POLITICAL CITIZEN CONTESTANT

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a remarkable young woman from Hilton township on St. Joe's Island, Mackenzie Hulme, who was short-listed for Samara's Everyday Political Citizen contest.

Mackenzie is proof that age does not matter. This 16-year-old Central Algoma Secondary School student has earned every one of her accolades with a string of impressive accomplishments.

In the seventh grade at the age of 12, Mackenzie spent three weeks at Queen's Park in the Ontario legislative page program. She followed that up by participating in the inaugural year for Ontario's model parliament. She will be joining us here at Parliament next year as a participant in the forum for young Canadians program.

Mackenzie is also one of two student trustees in the Algoma District School Board.

On top of all this she still finds the time to volunteer both in her community and at political events.

As her nominator and friend Matthew Mansour says, "this young lady, of just 16-years-old, is magnificent", an assessment that I concur with wholeheartedly.

I congratulate Mackenzie.

[Translation]

I also congratulate you, Mr. Speaker.

* * *

●(1410)

[English]

AUDAIN ART MUSEUM

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday night in

beautiful Whistler, British Columbia, 750 people gathered in awe of the opening of the Audain Art Museum, an architecturally stunning building by renowned Canadian architects John and Patricia Patkau.

The Audain Art Museum is the vision, creation and gift to Canada of Michael Audain and Yoshiko Karasawa.

Their collection of Pacific Northwest First Nations art is unparalleled and offers an exceptional insight into the creative and culturally sophisticated minds of the Coast Salish, Gitksan, Haida, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nisga'a, Nuuchah-nulth, Tlingit and Tsimshian artists of the past as well as the genius of today's contemporary artists both aboriginal and non-aboriginal.

The museum was established for the purpose of bringing the art and life of British Columbia from the earliest times to today for all, yet another very good reason to visit Whistler. Canadians will be surprised and moved, and everyone is invited.

* * *

ROLLY FOX

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to celebrate the life of a remarkable British Columbian, Rolly Fox.

For 36 years, Rolly was the "behind-the-scenes believer" in the mission his son Terry Fox set out on with his Marathon of Hope to raise money for cancer research. In recent years, he took a more public role with the Terry Fox Foundation, visiting local runs across the country and personally signing over 14,000 "thank you" letters every year.

Millions of people around the world will mourn the loss of a man whose never-ceasing optimism inspired his son to set out on a journey that would bring hope to those facing the darkest chapter of their lives.

Rolly will be remembered by those who knew him best for enriching their lives with laughter and for his courage and grace as he faced his life's last challenge.

Terry, Betty and now Rolly Fox fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. Let us vow today to pick up the torch they have carried so well for so long.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, throughout Canada's history, Parliament has strategically invested in a pan-Canadian transportation system that united the country and grew our economy: in the 1870s, a railway from coast to coast; in the 1940s, a network of airports. By the 1960s, the St. Lawrence Seaway was moving global cargo abroad, thereby completing multi-modal networks throughout our nation.

Statements by Members

With the tabling of the Transportation Act review the stage is set for economically strategic, and sustainable federal infrastructure investments.

This Parliament is now in a position to establish a national transportation strategy to drive the next generation of transportation infrastructure investments that will strengthen our multi-modal networks and grow our nation's economy.

To quote David Emerson, “A recurring theme in the Report is the inseparable relationship between Canada’s international trade performance and the quality of the transportation and logistics systems.”

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●(1415)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Natural Resources spoke at the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada's convention. Mining contributes \$57 billion to our GDP, but it is struggling in a long downturn. The minister acknowledged that uncertainty is bad for the business, but the government's transitional regulatory approach creates instability, deters investment, and causes job losses.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister was minutes away, naming two pandas, and did not stop in to the largest mining meeting in the world. I guess the Prime Minister figured pandas do not ask tough questions or need real answers.

Tomorrow he will be rubbing elbows at the Center for American Progress, which calls Canadian energy “dirty business”. LNG projects are at risk. There is no deal on softwood lumber.

We know making priorities is hard and maybe the government is just not ready yet, but it is a bad pattern. Canadians will start to have some joy when the Liberals give them hope that they have a real plan for the hundreds of thousands of workers whose jobs are on the line in our world-leading natural resources sector.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a particular honour to rise to speak in the House today.

[*English*]

Tonight in Toronto a memorial will be held as the names of close to 800 people who have died on city streets are read aloud and projected onto the side of a church—a church that is just literally a heartbeat away from Toronto City Hall.

Reviewing the names on the list is painful. These names represent a tragic loss that we all have to recognize. Too many of these names are on other lists, other lists that are just as shameful: the list of missing and murdered indigenous women, the list of residential school survivors, the list of close to 97,000 households in Toronto that are waiting for affordable housing. None of these are lists that any person should be on.

Housing can no longer be seen as a problem that needs to be solved; housing is the solution to so many of the challenges we face in this country.

As the names are read aloud tonight in Toronto, let us stand here united as a Parliament and as a country to make sure that these lists stop growing. Let us do it by building safe, affordable, and, most importantly, supportive housing in Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

DAVENPORT PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the Portuguese community in my downtown riding of Davenport. They are the largest ethnic group, representing approximately 30% of my riding.

[*English*]

The Portuguese culture is alive and well in Davenport and is being celebrated. Last month I had the honour of attending anniversary celebrations of two community organizations that exist to celebrate the distinct traditions in the Portuguese provinces of Beiras and Alentejo.

On February 13, Casa das Beiras hosted its 16th anniversary as a club, and on February 20, Casa do Alentejo celebrated its 30th anniversary.

My congratulations and deep gratitude go out to the leadership of these clubs, particularly to presidents Bernardino Nascimento and Carlos de Sousa.

These two ethnic clubs, along with Casa de Madeira, Casa dos Açores, Peniche, and Arsenal do Minho, have done tremendous work in Davenport in celebrating and promoting the cultural and social activities of the Portuguese community.

[*Translation*]

Their vibrant history and vital contributions to our cultural, economic, and social life are one of Canada’s great success stories.

[*Member spoke in Portuguese as follows:*]

Parabens Casa das Beiras et Casa do Alentejo!

* * *

[*English*]

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the House for the first time. I want to thank my constituents in the new riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler for placing their trust in me. Service to my constituency will always be my first priority.

Statements by Members

I also rise today to recognize the significant contributions of Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada to my constituency and the region. This year Toyota will celebrate 30 years in my riding. Toyota employs 8,000 people in Cambridge and nearby Woodstock. Within the next couple of months, Toyota Canada will have produced seven million vehicles.

The multiplier effect in the auto parts industry and local businesses is enormous. Toyota is a responsible corporate citizen, participates in the community, and supports worthy local causes.

For my riding of Kitchener South—Hespeler, I cannot stress enough the importance of the automobile industry and of Toyota in particular.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Liberals want to make a fundamental change to our voting system, the process must not be dominated by one political party's interests. A committee composed of a select number of MPs is not, and never will be, a substitute for all Canadians having their voices heard. The Liberals have no legitimate case to claim that their House of Commons majority, delivered through a system that they claim is no longer valid, gives them a mandate to change our voting system.

As the member of Parliament for Haldimand—Norfolk, I will continue to stand up against this unilateral stance taken by the Liberal Party to deny Canadians a referendum on how they elect their MPs. The fact is that when they change the basic rules of democracy, everyone has to have a say. Otherwise, it is no longer a democracy.

* * *

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate and thank the people of Châteauguay—Lacolle, especially Jean-François Lavallée, founder of the Comité d'accueil de réfugiés du Grand Châteauguay, and Anik Sauvé, president of Entraide Mercier, who set up a sponsorship group for a Syrian family, the first in our community.

The group was established last fall and has been very effective, as the Al Daas family, which has three children and another expected soon, arrived in Canada on February 18. The refugees recently moved into their own home in Châteauguay. This is the first time refugees have been welcomed to Grand Châteauguay, but based on how well they have been received by residents, it will not be the last.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Claudette Lévesque, Catherine Hooper, and Father Clément Laffitte, and I would like to thank all those who have donated to this wonderful project.

[*English*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week on March 4, the community of Powell River and Tla'amin First Nation celebrated a deeply respected elder named Dr. Elsie Paul. Members of both Tla'amin and Powell River joined in the spirit of reconciliation to recognize the work and commitment Elsie has shown in building a stronger community, both within her nation and in the communities surrounding it.

Raised by her grandparents, Elsie had limited interaction with residential schooling. This allowed her to be raised in her culture, to be fluent in her mother tongue, and to learn from the rich environment around her. Elsie is a beacon of traditional knowledge, feeding the roots of her people and seeing them flourish with her efforts. This leadership only grew across Canada and the world when she published a book on her life called *Written as I Remember It*.

I want to thank Elsie for being who she is, for holding the culture safe to pass on to another generation, and for being the graceful woman that she is.

* * *

MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL IN DURHAM REGION

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to see you in the chair, my friend. As you know, I have always tried to be as sweet in this House of Commons as you have been.

However, today I am extra sweet because I am talking about the Purple Woods Maple Syrup Festival in the Durham region. Starting this Saturday and running through April, the most family-friendly event in our area is running. There are trail rides and horseback rides and a pioneer village, and children can watch sap transform into maple syrup. I would like to congratulate the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority for this 41st festival.

The fun continues on May 7 in historic Bowmanville with Maple Fest, where we continue to celebrate our local maple syrup industry and farms such as Trails End in Bowmanville and Ashton in Port Perry.

I invite all members of this House, and you, Mr. Speaker, and all Canadians, to the Purple Woods Maple Syrup Festival and to Maple Fest in the Durham region. If you come on March 14, I will flip you a pancake myself.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OTTAWA RACE WEEKEND

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today on behalf of my colleague from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock to issue a challenge to all of our colleagues in the House of Commons.

As members all know, we have a very busy work schedule. Being a politician and staying in shape do not necessarily go hand in hand. That is why we joined the Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend. Together, we are challenging members to participate in one of the six events that will take place on May 28 and 29.

By participating, members will call attention to the importance of health and physical activity. I would also like to point out that the race is a fundraiser for the ALS Society of Canada. I encourage as many members as possible to participate.

I also encourage them to join us twice a week to train. Together we can change things and, at the same time, support our dear colleague and friend, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1425)

[English]

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that you look great up there. I must remark that you have achieved in a very short period of time what many Speakers dream of, which is a well-behaved chamber.

In 2014, I took the ice bucket challenge, like many of my colleagues in the House. I still remember having that big ice bucket dumped on my head when I was health minister. Combined with government funding, that amazing challenge raised \$20 million for research funding and \$6 million for support programs, but we can do more.

I am asking the Prime Minister today to join me in asking Canadians from coast to coast to coast to support organizations that are fighting ALS and to find a cure for ALS.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a tremendous pleasure to see you there today.

I thank my hon. colleague for her question and for her leadership both as an individual and as a former health minister on this issue.

I salute you, as the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier and as Speaker, for the dignity and grace that you bring to the House every day as you battle this terrible disease.

Like many of us in this House, I was pleased to take part in a number of ice bucket challenges, both as dumpee and dumper. I was pleased to do my part to help raise money for research and awareness of ALS.

Canadians pride themselves on looking out for one another, and I join the Leader of the Opposition in urging everyone to give their time and financial support to organizations that are working so hard to find a cure for this terrible disease.

[Translation]

Oral Questions

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of my colleagues, I would like to say that we are all so happy to see you in the chair today.

Last week, the member for Ottawa—Vanier was congratulated for his work supporting francophone minority communities in Ottawa. The NDP shares his belief that we must protect and celebrate our official languages all across this country.

Nearly one out of seven francophones lives outside Quebec. We must do more to ensure that all Canadians have access to services in the official language of their choice, regardless of where they live.

How is the Prime Minister planning to continue and to build on the excellent work done by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier? How will he improve services and support linguistic minority communities in Canada?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question, and I must say that no one in the House has done more to support francophone communities in Ottawa and Canada than you, as the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

Since your election in 1995, you have fought tirelessly for linguistic duality in Canada, national unity, and a fair and just society for all. We will continue to support your incredible work, most notably with a new official languages plan that will support anglophone and francophone linguistic minorities across the country.

The House, linguistic minorities, and all of Canada thank you for your passion and your service.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Mauril Bélanger) (via text-to-speech software): I would like to thank you all, dear colleagues of this House, for the great privilege you have bestowed upon me to serve as honorary Speaker of the House of Commons today.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1435)

[English]

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight, the Prime Minister is going to be in Washington with his pals at the Center for American Progress. While energy workers continue to lose their jobs across the country, they will be watching the Prime Minister sip champagne.

Let us be clear. This is the group that is responsible for the president's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline.

Will the Prime Minister use his special new relationship and publicly state in Washington that he supports Keystone, and ask the president publicly to reverse his decision on Keystone?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, few relationships matter as much to Canada as a good relationship with the United States of America, for jobs, for economic growth, for trade purposes, for building the kinds of opportunities that Canadians truly need right across the country.

For 10 years those relationships had been strained and now we are pleased to re-engage on a broad range of important files to build the kinds of opportunities for all Canadians that we know people need.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals will be celebrating with American organizations that are actually determined to kill Canadian jobs, the finance minister back at home keeps racking up the bills. The Prime Minister broke his promise to limit borrowing to a modest \$10 billion. Economists are now saying the Liberals will add \$150 billion in debt over the next four years, but it will have virtually no impact on growth.

The Prime Minister was left with a surplus. Now that we all know his borrowing will not create jobs and growth, why is the government so determined to bury Canadians in debt?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years Canada saw lower growth than it needed to because we had a government that was focused on giving tax benefits to the wealthiest and not helping the middle class succeed, not creating the kinds of investments in infrastructure, in our communities, and indeed for Canadians who needed help. That was actually necessary for our economy.

That is why we put forward a plan to invest in the future of our country, and to help middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. In two weeks, all members in the House, and indeed all Canadians, will be able to see the budget that will make that happen.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government left the country with the highest growth in the G7 and the lowest taxes in 50 years.

The Prime Minister needs to understand that Canadians did not actually sign up or vote for this mountain of debt. Not only did the Prime Minister mislead Canadians on these Liberal spending habits but he has absolutely no plan to pay it back, other than raising taxes.

When will the Prime Minister realize, like all Canadians, he has to live within his means and he has to pay this money back?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians were faced with a choice in the last election between policies that had failed to create the kind of growth and opportunities that people needed right across the country against a vision that was actually proposing to invest in our future, to put money in the pockets of the middle class and those working hard to join, and investing in the kind of infrastructure that our communities need to create jobs now, and to create growth in the medium and long-term.

That is the kind of budget we are going to put forward in two weeks. That is what Canadians have been waiting 10 years to hear.

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after years of complacency by the former Liberal government, in 2006, our Conservative government signed a softwood lumber agreement with our American partners. At the time, companies were paying up to 37% in export duties, and billions of dollars, money that belonged to Canadian companies, was being hoarded in the United States.

Can the Prime Minister promise that when he goes to Washington he will ask President Obama not to waste any time signing an agreement that will allow the forestry industry to continue to grow and provide jobs in every region of Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada-U.S. relations were so bad in recent years that this former government was unable to reach a new agreement when the old softwood lumber agreement expired.

It was up to us to take over this file, and I talked to President Obama about it at the first opportunity I had to sit down with him. We are working on this file, and we hope to have good news for Canadians in the weeks and months to come.

* * *

• (1440)

FINANCE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that the former international trade minister had made a lot of progress on this file. I hope this situation will be resolved quickly.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister talked about small deficits, slight deficits. We left a balanced budget for this fiscal year; the numbers are there. For the current year, there was an operating surplus. The Liberals cannot even tell us what their operating deficit for the current year will be, not to mention that TD Bank forecasts \$150 billion in deficits on account of the Liberal government's management.

When will the Prime Minister bring our country back to balanced budgets?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former Conservative government inherited a \$13-billion surplus, which it spent even before the global recession hit in 2008.

We inherited a deficit, and we promised Canadians that we would invest in communities and growth and help the middle class and those working hard to join the middle class. That is precisely what we are going to do. On March 22, we will present our plan for that in the budget.

Oral Questions

[English]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the Prime Minister about the recent deal that the government made with millionaire tax cheats. He responded that all Canadians should pay their taxes “in the future”. To those currently filling out their tax forms, it is a bit of a surprise to learn that this was not the case before, and that the government lets multi-millionaire tax cheats off the hook with no penalty whatsoever.

I will ask the Prime Minister again. Will he conduct an investigation and put a stop to these sweetheart deals for multi-millionaire tax cheats?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government believes in a level playing field where all Canadians pay their fair share of taxes and are treated equally under the system. Our government came to power with a pledge to strengthen efforts to combat international tax evasion and avoidance.

The CRA is pursuing this matter before the courts and it intends to pursue it to the fullest extent possible because that is what this government and, indeed, all Canadians expect.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not pursuing this matter before the courts and that is the problem. It is letting them off the hook with no fine, no penalty, and no interest to pay.

[Translation]

Canadians are sick of this flim-flammy that allows multi-millionaires to avoid paying taxes and to be coddled by the government.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister could not even tell us whether he disagreed with this deal.

I have a very specific question for the Prime Minister. Can he confirm that this is the one and only time that the government has offered this kind of sweetheart deal to millionaires? Yes or no? Are there other similar agreements?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government believes in tax fairness. We believe that all Canadians should pay their fair share of taxes and should be treated equally by the federal tax system.

Our government came to power with a pledge to strengthen efforts to combat international tax evasion and avoidance. The Canada Revenue Agency is pursuing this matter before the courts, and it intends to pursue it to the fullest extent possible. That is what Canadians expect from this government and the CRA.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is such a good reader, but he is not answering my questions. He read the same thing twice, but that is not the question. Have there been other times, yes or no?

[English]

Yesterday, I asked the Prime Minister about the government's promise for affordable, high-quality, flexible, and fully inclusive child care. It is at page 20 of his platform in case he has not been able to find it.

Instead of giving us another talking point, could the Prime Minister simply tell us what is the government's budget for that specifically defined child care plan the Liberals boasted about in their platform?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our platform we put forward an ambitious plan to invest \$20 billion over the next 10 years in social infrastructure. In order to do so, we would work with provinces and municipalities to identify their concrete needs and respond to them. We put that forward in total respect of provincial jurisdiction.

The member opposite put forward a plan that would have cut \$18 billion from the federal budget right now to reach balance at all costs. That is not how we help families. That is not how we help people with the costs of child care.

* * *

● (1445)

PENSIONS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister were really sincere about corporate tax fairness, he would start by reducing and getting rid of the cuts to corporate taxes that the Conservatives brought in with the Liberals' complicity, as they voted for the Conservative budget.

[Translation]

Our seniors should never, ever have to choose between paying for their groceries, their housing or their medication. The Liberals promised, and I quote, “to immediately [boost] the guaranteed income supplement...by 10%”.

Five months later, nothing has changed and seniors continue to suffer.

What exactly did they mean by “immediately”?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the plight of our seniors. That is why we promised to boost the guaranteed income supplement for our most vulnerable seniors by 10% in our election platform.

In addition, as part of our infrastructure investments, we promised to create housing for our seniors. These are all things that we can promise and we can do, because we told Canadians that we are going to invest in communities.

The opposition member, who unfortunately promised to balance the budget, would have slashed \$18 billion, which needs to go to our seniors and all Canadians, instead of making the investments they need.

Oral Questions

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are borrowing money they do not have, to spend on pet projects we do not need. They are throwing fiscal responsibility onto the spending bonfire. With \$150 billion expected in borrowing, a balanced budget under the Liberals is nothing but a pipe dream.

When will the Liberals realize that we have to pay this money back and that borrowed money is not free?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a fundamentally different approach. We have an approach for growing our economy. That is what Canadians voted for on the 19th of October, and that is exactly what we are going to be delivering. We are going to invest in innovation, we are going to invest in productivity, and we are going to invest in infrastructure. We are going to invest in the middle class for this country.

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous government went into deficit to fight the biggest financial crisis since the 1930s and then balanced the budget without raising taxes. The Liberals are spending money they do not have, to fight a recession we are not in. They have already slashed tax-free savings accounts, and now they are jacking up payroll taxes.

How high will taxes go to pay for risky Liberal deficits?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the OECD and the IMF said, there has never been a better time to invest in the economy. Canadians know that, when interest rates are low, that is the time to invest.

As we went from coast to coast to coast in this country, the Minister of Finance and I, we listened to Canadians, and what Canadians told us is to invest in the economy, invest in the middle class, and invest in infrastructure, and that is exactly what we are going to be doing.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is another week and another broken promise. In Paris, the Prime Minister promised he would give Canadians a climate change plan within 90 days. Last week in Vancouver, the 90 days were up. What happened? There is no plan, just a plan to have a plan. Surprise, surprise, he also threatened to hammer the provinces with a carbon tax grab.

As the Prime Minister wines and dines in Washington, as investors flee Canada, and as Canadians lose thousands of jobs, will he now admit that he is in way over his head?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians are incredibly proud of the work this government has done on climate change. If we look at the progress that has been accomplished in the last five months, we see we have a historic international deal in which Canada played a critical role, and we have an arrangement that has been agreed upon by all provinces and territories to develop a pan-Canadian framework. That is real

progress. We are going to Washington this week to actually make further progress on a continental basis.

My goodness, relative to the last 10 years of inaction under the Conservatives, this is real change.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, broken promises are not in Canada's best interests. Canadians are losing jobs, Liberal deficits are skyrocketing, balanced budgets are out the window, and now the Prime Minister has picked a fight with the provinces by threatening a harmful carbon tax. Contrary to what the Prime Minister and his parliamentary secretary just said, there is no deal, no climate change plan.

What happened to the new relationship with the provinces that was promised? Why have the Prime Minister's sunny ways turned into gloomy days for Canada?

● (1450)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that we need to reduce greenhouse gases and grow our economy in a sustainable way. They also know that reducing emissions will make our economy more competitive, not less competitive.

The carbon pricing policies that the hon. member talked about will minimize the cost of producing greenhouse gas emissions, provide a continuous incentive for technological innovation, and allow us to achieve significant emissions reductions.

I would say that the hon. member should listen to some of the folks who used to sit on that side of the House. The current Ontario Conservative leader and former MP on that side of the House stated this week, "Climate change is a fact. It is a threat. It is man-made. We have to do something about it, and—"

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte.

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MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal policies make doing business in Canada more expensive. Auto manufacturers are hurting in Ontario because our electricity rates are 30% higher than in other jurisdictions, and that is before the new Liberal carbon tax.

When will the Liberal government give manufacturers a break, rather than break manufacturers?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say today is a very special day. It is an honour and privilege to serve with the member for Ottawa—Vanier. For me, he is a role model. I am delighted to be here today with him.

Oral Questions

With respect to the question asked, we have a plan when it comes to manufacturing. We have a plan that is going to help companies in the 21st century digital economy by making sure we have ICT adoption. We are also going to put forward industrial and technological benefits that will assist companies. We have a plan for manufacturing because we know manufacturing is very important to our future progress, growth, and creating jobs.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are missing in action. The Canadian manufacturing jobs are at risk. The low dollar has put Canadians goods on sale, but the Liberals refuse to explain how they will encourage private sector investment. Yesterday, they even blocked the industry committee from asking Bombardier about a billion-dollar bailout.

What are the Liberals hiding? Is the reason the Liberals will not share their plan with Canadians that they do not have a plan to share?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are a very open and transparent government. We have been very clear with Canadians.

When it comes to committees, they have their own unique dynamic and they set their own agenda.

With respect to Bombardier, we are engaged with it. It came forward with a proposal on December 11 of up to a billion dollars. It asked for an investment. We are looking at the business case. We are doing our due diligence. We will make sure we do our homework. We will make sure we provide a thoughtful response in the public interest.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to understand something. Apparently, the mission in Iraq is not a combat mission, but our soldiers are going to be on the front lines and will have the right to shoot first. Is that not a combat mission?

Can the Minister of National Defence explain why the government is so determined to deny the evidence and why it refuses to tell Canadians and our soldiers that this is in fact a combat mission?

[English]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that our soldiers will be at greater risk, as was said by the Chief of the Defence Staff. However, I cannot do better than quote him at the committee yesterday where he said, in an engagement like this, “specifically allow Canadian Forces to defend themselves, anticipate their defence so that they can engage a hostile act, or a hostile act or an intent before it materializes.”

Therefore, our soldiers are not engaged in combat, they are allowed to defend themselves, and their rules of engagement are clear for all concerned.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Defence military foreign service

instructions define a combat mission as, “where the use or threatened use of force, including lethal force, is...[used] to accomplish a mission”.

Yesterday, Canada's Chief of the Defence Staff admitted that, in the Liberals' new expanded mission in Iraq, Canadian troops will be authorized not only to use lethal force but also to shoot first. To everyone, except the current government, that sounds exactly like the definition of combat.

Why is the Liberal government continuing to try to disguise the nature of this mission and its risks?

• (1455)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no disguise. This is in fact a non-combat mission, as I just outlined, with what the Chief of the Defence Staff just said.

The hon. member can argue with the Chief of the Defence Staff, but he has in fact outlined this as a non-combat mission. We are there to train, to assist, to advise, and to produce intelligence.

The hon. member may wish to argue with the CDS, and I welcome his opportunity to do that, but this is a non-combat mission as defined by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian air force pilot and member of the Ukrainian parliament, has been held illegally in a Russian prison for 21 long months.

Many thousands of people in Ukraine and around the world are demanding her release as she continues her hunger strike, yet all the efforts by the international community to advocate for her release have been brushed aside by Moscow.

Time is running out. How can Canada's call for the release of Ms. Savchenko be taken seriously when all the Liberals want to do is have happy talk with Putin?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that could not be more misconstrued.

As the minister explicitly said in his declaration yesterday, the Government of Canada is gravely concerned about the health of Nadiya Savchenko, who has been unlawfully detained by Russia. We have repeatedly underlined that her transfer to Russia was illegal, the charges brought against her are politically motivated, and her treatment during her detention is a matter of grave concern.

The Government of Canada calls on Russia to immediately release her and return her to her friends, colleagues, and family in Ukraine.

Oral Questions

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Nadiya Savchenko has restarted her hunger strike. Her health is deteriorating, and the Liberals have done next to nothing.

The charges against Nadiya are clearly trumped up. This illegal show trial demonstrates the Russian regime's utter contempt for international law, due process, and human rights. Rallies are scheduled across Canada this evening, demanding her release.

The Liberals are saying that they want to talk to Russia; so, will the Prime Minister pick up the phone, call the Kremlin, and demand that it free Nadiya Savchenko immediately?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I say that Canada stands steadfast with Ukraine? We always have, and we always will.

As I stated, and I am happy to state it again, we have repeatedly underlined that Ms. Savchenko's transfer to Russia was illegal. We know it was politically motivated. Her treatment during her detention is a matter of grave concern, and we call on Russia to immediately release her.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, the U.S.-led air combat coalition successfully took out the ISIS war minister.

The Pentagon said this is a victory on the battlefield and will hurt ISIS' ability to recruit foreign fighters. Clearly, these air strikes are working, but the Liberals have taken us out of the fight.

Just once, can the Minister of National Defence coherently explain why the Canadian Armed Forces cannot do both air strikes and training?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to explain what he does not get about democracy.

We have had an election over the past year, the longest election campaign in Canadian history. The decision of the Canadian people was definitive on October 19.

We then had a debate here for four or five days, with 98 speakers. The vote this week was definitive.

What part of democracy does the hon. member not get? We have debated this and debated this. The people have spoken. It is unfortunate for the hon. member.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask in French and give my colleague opposite a chance.

CNN reported that American air strikes in Syria likely killed the person thought to be ISIS's minister of war, a Chechen fighter who joined rebel groups in Syria and then swore allegiance to ISIS in 2012. He participated in ISIS propaganda and recruitment videos, and the U.S. State Department offered a \$5-million reward to have him removed.

I thank those U.S. pilots for what they did. How can the government continue to doubt the effectiveness of air strikes against ISIS?

• (1500)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are engaged in a coalition. The coalition has quite a number of partners. We do some things very well. Advise, assist, and train, we do very well. Intelligence missions, we do very well.

We are engaged, as I say, in a coalition. We are working together to delete this scourge from that particular part of the world. The idea of this coalition is to end this combat. We are contributing in a significant and major way.

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[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the residential schools tragedy is still a burden for so many people.

For example, a survivor of St. Anne's residential school in northern Ontario is seeking justice, but he is being thwarted by Justice Department lawyers who knowingly, yes, knowingly, withheld documents that would have helped his case. That is not only unacceptable, it is appalling.

Will the Minister of Justice order her officials to stop denying this survivor's legitimate requests and to stop obstructing justice?

[*English*]

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is committed to the successful implementation of the Indian residential school settlement agreement and to fulfilling all of its obligations under the agreement. The abuse of children is tragic and unacceptable.

While I cannot comment about specific cases, under the independent assessment process, I can say that Canada has complied with Justice Perell's June 2015 order and provided all the documents as soon as they were complete.

In addition, Canada has revised and made available an updated school narrative and person-of-interest reports for St. Anne's Residential School, in compliance with court direction—

Oral Questions

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the independent assessment process was supposed to bring justice to survivors. Instead, government lawyers in the Department of Justice had over 1,000 cases thrown out under the administrative split. We now find that justice department lawyers suppressed evidence about a serial pedophile at St. Anne's Residential School, and then told the hearings that the victims were simply lacking credibility.

This really puts Canada in the spotlight if the Minister of Justice cannot explain why this is happening. I am asking her: Will she do the right thing? Will she stand up in the House and say that she will meet the survivors and fix this?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I, too, feel that this is a terrible tragedy

Mr. Charlie Angus: It is not a tragedy, it is a criminal crime.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the clarification. Pedophilia is a terrible crime, and we need to deal with the ongoing effects of those abuses.

I can tell the hon. member that I am the client and the Minister of Justice is my adviser, and we will get to the bottom of this and seek justice.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I encourage members in the front row at the far end to try to calm down and listen to the answer. We all want to hear each side, even if we disagree.

The hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I was a municipal councillor, I was approached by Merna Forster and was pleased to lead Oakville council calling on the Bank of Canada to include a prominent Canadian woman on one of our banknotes, which is something we have not seen in almost 150 years.

Thousands of people from across the country signed a petition calling upon the government to highlight Canadian women on our money, recognizing the significant role that women have played in shaping our nation.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance outline the government's plan for action on this important issue?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day yesterday, events across the country celebrated the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of Canadian women.

I am proud to tell the House that the Minister of Finance, in collaboration with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, Stephen Poloz, has launched consultations on the Bank of Canada website inviting Canadians to nominate iconic women whom they want to see on the new banknote to be issued in 2018.

Do not forget to use the hashtag #bankNOTEable to share your ideas.

* * *

• (1505)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that much work needs to be done to resolve long-standing indigenous land claims. However, every government in the past has been unequivocal that private property is not on the table. The recent lawsuit by SSN is looking to declare aboriginal title over private property. As the premier of B.C. said, this has huge implications across Canada.

Will the Minister of Justice step up to protect Canadian private property rights?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member across knows, this is a matter that is before the courts, and so I will not speak to the particular circumstances with respect to that.

However, I will say that with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, we will work collaboratively in terms of the mandates and approaches that are being put forward in negotiating and settling the land question in British Columbia. The member can rest assured that this settlement will be based on a nation-to-nation relationship that is based on recognition.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the courts are waiting, and have been waiting after the minister has asked for extension after extension, to hear what the position of the Government of Canada will be. The people of Kamloops are worried and she has been delaying the response.

Please, will she stand up and tell Canadians that she will defend private property rights in Canada?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that the way we are going forward is not to discuss the cases before the courts at this time. But I do want the member to understand, and all members of the House need to understand, what it means to move forward in a nation-to-nation approach based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership. That is something that every single member of the House needs to understand and to understand that sticking up for the rights of the first peoples of this country is the job of all of us.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the B. C. government has stated that it will vigorously oppose any declaration that creates any uncertainty for private property owners. On January 15, the Minister of Justice asked for an extension before making a decision. Well, it has been close to eight weeks and there has still been no response.

While the Premier of B.C. has boldly reassured Canadians, the justice minister has left land owners in the dark. Will she stand with the premier of B.C. to defend property rights, yes or no?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, this matter is before the courts. What I instructed my officials to do was to seek an adjournment. Per my mandate letter from the Prime Minister, we are looking at our litigation strategy and doing a comprehensive review.

In terms of specific cases, that will potentially change our approach. But with respect to particular mandates, I will be working and supporting my colleague, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in this regard.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for years, judges were routinely granting two-for-one and even three-for-one credits for time served before trial. This is why we brought in the Truth in Sentencing Act to ensure that convicted offenders serve the sentences they were given.

Now it appears that there are judges in Ontario who are disregarding that law. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice says a law is a law is a law. Are they going to do what it takes to enforce the present law or will criminals continue to get a break?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in terms of our approach, we are undertaking a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system. That includes sentencing reform to determine efficiencies and effectiveness in the process and I will ensure that I work with my colleagues, including the Minister of Public Safety, to look at bail reform and other matters with respect to how we can proceed and ensure fairness, equality, compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that the accused's rights are respected.

* * *

● (1510)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised that no relationship was more important to him than that with indigenous peoples. That relationship has not been respected in the case of B.C.'s Site C dam, where there are three ongoing court cases with first nations. This is a litmus test of the Prime Minister's solemn commitment. Repeated letters from first nations have been ignored by the Liberals.

Will the government please cease and desist on approval for Site C until proper consultations can occur?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2014, as members know, the former government approved a project and set out a series of legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply. B.C. Hydro must meet the requirements set out in these conditions and we are verifying that it is in fact the case.

The minister has been involved and engaged in discussions with first nations people and other indigenous organizations to try to ensure that we are clearly understanding those concerns, and we will continue to engage on that basis going forward.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you have to wonder which first nations they are engaging with, because the first nations actually impacted by this mega-dam cannot even get their letters returned from the government. It seems to me that there are two Liberal Parties: one that is in campaign and makes sacred promises to first nations people, and one that governs to break them.

The question comes for the Liberal government here and now. Right now they are in the position of authorizing this mega-dam in northeastern British Columbia. First nations have pleaded with the government not to do so, to pause the process and allow the consultation the government promised to actually take place.

Which Liberal Party are we actually going to see?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous response, this government continues to engage with first nations and other indigenous organizations and peoples to ensure that we are developing a nation-to-nation approach. With respect to the specific matter of Site C that is before the court, I cannot comment on the specifics of it. However, there certainly are ongoing discussions that are relevant to the broader first nations and nation-to-nation relationship.

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[*Translation*]**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Veterans Affairs indicated that he was working with the Department of Canadian Heritage to identify opportunities for advancing the construction of a memorial monument. However, we still do not know whether there will be a national monument specifically for the Afghanistan mission.

My question is for the minister. Will the budget include an envelope for the national monument announced by our Conservative government, yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important for us to honour the men and women who have served this country valiantly in Afghanistan. This government is aware of the motion put forward in 2014 supported by all members of the House. We are working very hard with the Minister of Canadian Heritage to see that is put through.

However, I think it is also important for us to show care, compassion, and respect for those members through our veterans services, which we are doing right now. The member will also see that through our reopening of the nine offices that his party closed, as well our rehiring of staff that the Conservatives also let go.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the minister has insinuated several times over the past four months, the previous Conservative government did more for veterans than any other Canadian government since the Pension Act of 1919 was passed.

The Liberal government cancelled the community war memorial program. This clearly shows that this government is not interested in honouring our veterans. Properly honouring our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces is not militarism, it is quite simply a moral imperative.

Now that the Liberals are cancelling this program, how do they intend to honour the achievements of members of the Royal Canadian Air Force who fought against ISIS?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a saying in my neighbourhood, “You lie to your friends, I’ll lie to my friends; let’s not lie to each other.”

Here is the true record of what the Conservative government has done over the last 10 years. The Conservatives closed Veterans Affairs offices and cut staff by 800 people. For the last 10 years, it has really been a shame.

We are working hard to ensure that we treat our men and women with care, compassion, and respect. I have an aggressive mandate letter from the Prime Minister that will result in more employment opportunities for veterans and support for their families. We plan on following through exactly with that.

The Speaker: I know that the hon. minister did not accuse another member of lying. He came a little too close for my liking. I would encourage members not to use that kind of language.

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

• (1515)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned this week that the Liberals are cancelling the community war memorial program. This program that was implemented by the Conservatives in 2010 has enabled communities and organizations across Canada to build new or to upgrade old cenotaphs and war memorials honouring the achievements and sacrifices of those who have served Canada in times of war and peace and military conflict.

The Department of Veterans Affairs acknowledges that there is a continued need for this essential program. Since they are listening, why do the Liberals think that cutting this project is a good idea?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the Department of Veterans Affairs, we understand that it is very important for us to commemorate those men and women who have served in our armed forces. We have done that as a country through Vimy Ridge, through World War II, through our Korean peacekeepers, through our role in Bosnia, and we will do so for Afghanistan. That is an important part of what we do in this department and what we do on this side of the House. We will

Oral Questions

continue to show in a meaningful way the respect that our men and women deserve who have served this great country.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that Canada attract and retain top international students in order to remain competitive in the global economy.

In Fredericton, the University of New Brunswick, or UNB, and St. Thomas University are working hard to accomplish just that.

Can the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tell the House about the initiatives the government is taking to encourage top students to remain in Canada?

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

International students are some of the best candidates for Canadian citizenship. They speak English or French, they received a good education here in Canada, and they know the country. It was therefore not very smart of the former government to do away with the 50% credit that these students received upon becoming Canadian citizens. I am very happy to say that we are going to restore that credit.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Iran today test fired two ballistic missiles that the regime said proved its ability to strike Israel. The missiles carried the words, “Israel must be wiped out”.

Former Liberal MP Irwin Cotler is on record saying, “I don’t know if [the Prime Minister] has an appreciation of evil”. The Prime Minister said this week that he thought Canada was sending exactly the right signals on Iran.

Is this not just another example of the Prime Minister’s inability to appreciate evil?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our engagement with Iran does not mean we agree with its government. Also, to boycott Iran will not help Israel.

While we reduced some sanctions on Iran, together with our allies, related to progress in shutting down its nuclear program, we also added sanctions that targeted its ballistic missile program. Again, we did this in complete coordination with our allies.

We will continue to apply pressure on Iran to end its unacceptable missile development program, and we will continue to be strong friends with Israel.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the aerospace industry is vital for Quebec. In the Montreal region alone, one out of every 100 jobs is associated with this industry. However, the Liberals do not seem to understand that.

During the election campaign, they did not present any plan or strategy for this sector. Nothing. What is more, we are still waiting for news on the Bombardier file. The industry is fragile right now and job losses are mounting.

When will the Liberal government wake up, support the Quebec economy and its workers, and present a real action plan for the aerospace industry?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands and supports the aerospace sector. It is a sector that employs 180,000 people, not only in Montreal or Quebec but across Canada. It is a sector that contributes \$29 billion to our GDP. That is why we take very seriously the engagement with Bombardier.

On December 11, it approached the federal government officially in writing to ask for up to \$1 billion. We are doing our due diligence. We are looking at the business case. We understand the importance of not only Bombardier but this sector and we will ensure that any decision that we make will be in the best interests of Canadians and Quebecers.

* * *

● (1520)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the port of Sydney has long been an essential asset to the economy of Cape Breton. Studies have shown that construction of a second marine berth in the harbour will greatly enhance port traffic, especially in the cruise ship sector.

My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Does the minister see this project of a second berth for the port of Sydney as the type of project worthy of consideration for infrastructure?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Sydney—Victoria for his continued hard work regarding this project.

We know there are significant benefits to infrastructure investment. That is why our government has committed to add \$60 billion of new money into infrastructure over the next 10 years. We understand that well-planned infrastructure investments in regions like Cape Breton generate economic growth, create jobs, and leave a lasting legacy for Canadians.

I have met with my counterparts in Nova Scotia, and we will continue to work together on our shared infrastructure priorities.

[Translation]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, the Liberals promised to raise the bar on transparency, but yesterday there was a dramatic turn of events.

The Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology voted unanimously against a motion that we moved to invite Bombardier to testify before the committee. Committee members wanted to know why Bombardier needed \$1.2 billion in support.

My question today is for the chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. Why is he determined to prevent Bombardier from testifying before parliamentarians?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, committees are independent. The point that he has raised is an important one—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We have been doing so well. It has been a good day. We cannot hear the answer. Let us settle down and listen to the answer from the hon. Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, the point that the member has raised is an important one. He understands and appreciates that our government is open and transparent. I am glad to hear that the member understands this. The member also understands that he has an opportunity in committee to talk about these issues.

One thing I can assure the member is that we will continue to engage with that company because we understand the importance of this sector. We understand the importance of creating jobs. We have a plan not only for the company and the sector, but we have a plan for all Canadians when it comes to growing the economy, and that will be demonstrated in our budget on March 22.

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RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport and it pertains to a critical threat to the survival of VIA Rail and our coast to coast service.

The previous minister of transportation convened a panel, chaired by former cabinet minister David Emerson, and it has now reported. Shockingly, it recommends that the Liberal government kill passenger rail service between Toronto and Vancouver. This transcontinental train, the Canadian, is an essential part of Sir John A. Macdonald's national dream.

Could the minister confirm that the government will protect VIA Rail, and restore and invest in our trans-Canada rail service?

Business of Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important that other levels of government and stakeholders have an opportunity to read the CTA review report and share their perspectives on its findings before we address specific recommendations.

I have been mandated by the Prime Minister to respond to the review. I can assure Canadians that this government is committed to developing the best approach to delivering a safe, efficient, and reliable passenger rail service in Canada from coast to coast.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Donald Arseneault, Minister of Energy and Mines, Minister responsible for Efficiency NB, and Minister responsible for Official Languages for the province of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, there have been widespread consultations, indeed, the widest consultations that have taken place in this Parliament. I think on a day like today, when we are all communicating together, we can all agree upon the importance of accepting a document produced by the Department of Finance Canada, the “Fiscal Monitor”, showing that we had a surplus of \$2.2 billion at the end of 2015.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier, I asked the chair of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology a question. In the House, when the person to whom a question is addressed is present, it is customary for that person to answer. I would like that person to answer my question today.

The Speaker: The hon. member has plenty of experience here. He knows that the government can decide who will answer questions. We must also determine whether the question itself was in order. It may not have been.

The House resumed from March 8 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:27 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, March 8 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1530)

The Speaker: The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of motion to House*]

• (1535)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 21*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Harper	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O’Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Raitt
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China for the Promotion and Protection of Investments”, done at Toronto on February 10, 2016.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICE LABOUR RELATIONS ACT

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, An Act to amend the Public Service Labour Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board Act and other Acts and to provide for certain other measures.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (C), for the fiscal year 2015-16.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to its study of supplementary estimates (C), 2015-16.

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs on supplementary estimates (C), 2015-16, votes 1c and 5c under Veterans Affairs.

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act (transparency).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for seconding the motion for this bill.

I am proud to introduce this legislation. It would amend the Parliament of Canada Act to require the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons to open its meetings, with certain exceptions, to the public. It would allow accountability.

It would also amend the Access to Information Act by clarifying the purpose of the act to give the Information Commissioner the power to make compliance orders on request. That is very important. As well, there would be greater accountability to Canadians from all spectra of the country.

Last, I would also remind members that this was previously introduced as Bill C-613 from the member for Papineau. I am hoping it gets support from this House.

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

* * *

● (1545)

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act to amend the Public Health Agency of Canada Act (National Alzheimer Office).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is seconded by the member for Vancouver Kingsway, and I thank him for this work.

This bill is to create a national Alzheimer office. It is very important for the Public Health Agency of Canada to have this office to produce information and develop a national plan with regard to Alzheimer’s.

We need these changes because the abilities and behaviour of individuals are affected by this terrible disease and we do not have much of a response right now in a federal context. The disease ultimately erodes independence. What is more important is that we have an aging population, with roughly 70,000 persons now living with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia. It is very significant for our country.

The bill, if enacted, would be a positive first step in ensuring the Government of Canada is prepared to take immediate action and recognize the importance of developing an Alzheimer’s and dementia strategy before this situation becomes a national crisis.

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

* * *

SUPPORTING SMALL BREWERS ACT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-250, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (small brewery tax credit).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley. He is actually the original author of this bill and worked on it very diligently, and I have inherited it. It is complementary to some of the industry issues that we are working on.

The small brewery tax rate would be reduced for those producing less than 15,000 hectolitres of beer. These are very important businesses that are actually rehabilitating properties and communities. They contribute to the local economy by using local products and agriculture. As well, local individuals come from our universities and colleges to become brewmasters.

These microbreweries are microbusinesses that have a significant impact by making sure there is a holistic approach in the community to produce a product that is well received, but also, most importantly, is local, fresh, and Canadian.

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

• (1550)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent for a motion on the order paper, Motion No. 48, that would condemn the atrocities that are currently being committed in Yemen. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, “Yemen is also in flames. Coalition air strikes in particular continue to strike hospitals, schools, mosques, and civilian infrastructures”. This includes the use of cluster munitions by the Saudi coalition and the use of land mines by the Houthi forces.

This motion asks Canada to consider imposing an arms embargo on such—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There is a point of order by the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I understand the hon. member is seeking unanimous consent for a motion. I do not know that it is customary to have debate at this point. If the House hears the motion, we can determine whether there is unanimous consent, but it is not usually the practice to engage in debate when the member is seeking unanimous consent for a motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions today.

The first petition is from hundreds of concerned Canadians who are raising the issue of rail tankers and crude oil. They call on the House to pass regulations that would enhance tank car standards for the transportation of hazardous goods, reverse cuts, strengthen rail safety rules and regulations, and require rail companies to carry sufficient insurance to cover the damage that may be caused by accidents, spills, or derailments.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the government to work in partnership with the provinces and municipalities to create better cycling infrastructure in this country, something that not only helps the environment but would also help keep Canadians healthier and fight the epidemic of obesity in this country.

HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my final petition is signed by many people in the riding of Vancouver Kingsway who are presenting a very real concern in British Columbia around affordable housing. They are calling on the government to develop a national housing strategy to maintain existing federal support for co-operatives, non-profits, low-cost and rental housing, and lastly, to make the investments necessary to address what can only be called a housing crisis in this country.

[*Translation*]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions in the House of Commons today.

The first petition is from residents of my riding who are concerned about electoral reform.

• (1555)

[*English*]

This petition calls on the House of Commons to undertake public consultations to move toward a system of proportional representation in which every vote will count.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from hundreds of people across Canada, largely in the Toronto area, calling on the government to make it clear to the People's Republic of China that we wish to see respect for human rights and particularly, to respect the practitioners of Falun Gong and Falun Dafa and end the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 29, 30, 32, 33 and 37.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 29—**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:**

With regard to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities' mandate letter and the government's announcement on November 18, 2015, that municipal and provincial governments will no longer have to apply for P3 screening for infrastructure projects worth greater than \$100 million: (a) how many projects were in line for P3 funding on the day the announcement was made; (b) as a result of this announcement, how many of the projects in (a) will be on hold and delayed for funding; (c) with respect to the projects in (b), what dollar amount that would have been spent by the private sector will now have to be paid for by the government, broken down by province; and (d) before this decision was made and the announcement took place, (i) which consultations were held, (ii) what data was used?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), as of January 21, 2016, the P3 screen, which is mandatory under the new Building Canada Fund, was still in place for infrastructure projects of \$100 million or more in total eligible costs. As of January 21, 2016, 40 projects submitted under the new Building Canada Fund have had total eligible costs of \$100 million or more, the trigger for the P3 screen. Of these, two projects were determined by PPP Canada as a result of the P3 screen to show potential for delivery as a P3.

With regard to (b), the Government of Canada has not held or delayed any of the projects mentioned in part (a).

With regard to (c), the Government of Canada has not held or delayed any of the projects mentioned in (b); therefore, no funding was displaced.

With regard to (d), the Government of Canada is committed to removing the P3 screen, as is outlined in the mandate letter for the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. In the process of making this decision, we consulted with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who asked us in their 2016 pre-budget submission to "retire the cumbersome [P3 Screening] process, permitting municipalities to determine the best procurement model for local realities."

The criteria used to make this decision were as follows: the service standard for PPP Canada to complete the initial P3 screen—that is, to review the proponent's completed P3 questionnaire and provide a written opinion to INFC with respect to P3 potential—is two weeks. Projects that are screened in at this stage, meaning those projects that show potential for P3, are then required to undertake a procurement options analysis, which can take up to 18 months to complete.

Question No. 30—**Ms. Dianne L. Watts:**

With regard to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities' mandate letter and its explicit focus on new spending in green infrastructure and social infrastructure: (a) how much funding has been allocated to green infrastructure; (b) how much funding has been allocated to social infrastructure; (c) which projects will receive funding under each respective infrastructure pillar, broken down by province; and (d) what data was used to determine which projects will receive funding and in what priority?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Government of Canada has committed to invest an additional \$20 billion in green infrastructure over the next 10 years.

With regard to (b), the Government of Canada has committed to invest an additional \$20 billion in social infrastructure over the next 10 years.

With regard to (c), the Government of Canada is currently developing the program parameters for the new infrastructure programs that will support social and green infrastructure. The Minister of Infrastructure and Communities is working with parliamentarians as well as provinces, territories, and municipalities to ensure that these investments will improve the quality of life for Canadians.

With regard to (d), as we make decisions regarding any new investments, the Government of Canada will be working with our partners to ensure that our policies reflect their needs and priorities. The Government of Canada is committed to making more information available once it is ready.

Question No. 32—**Mr. James Bezan:**

With regard to the government's plan to withdraw Canada's CF-18 jets from the United States led international coalition's air combat mission against the terrorist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and to expand Canada's training mission in the region: (a) what consultations were conducted with members of the coalition and local authorities; (b) what is the government's proposed timeline to withdraw the fighter jets; (c) when does the government expect to send additional trainers; (d) how many additional trainers will be deployed and where will they be stationed; (e) what types of training will Canadian troops carry out; (f) what type of force protection will be in place for the Canadian trainers; (g) has any analysis been done to ensure that there is no capability gap in Canada's contribution to the fight against ISIS; and (h) what affect will this have on the amount of funds allocated for Operation IMPACT?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Government of Canada's decision to end the conduct of airstrikes has been communicated to Canada's coalition partners and the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait. Moreover, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, DND/CAF, advised United States Central Command, CENTCOM, officials of the possible plan to withdraw the CF-18 jets and to expand the training mission.

With regard to (b), the CAF ceased airstrike operations as part of Operation Impact on February 15, 2016. As a result, the six CF-18 Hornets, along with associated aircrew and support personnel, will be redeployed in a phased approach consistent with regular processes and required diplomatic engagement.

With regard to (c), the deployment of additional personnel will commence in the near future, pending host nation and coalition discussions.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (d), the total number of personnel deployed under Operation Impact will be increased up to 830. In general terms, Canada will triple the size of its train, advise, assist, and equip mission in northern Iraq. Canada will also offer to provide the Government of Iraq with a team of strategic advisers to the Ministries of Defence and the Interior. Finally, Canada is prepared to provide CAF personnel to enhance capacity-building efforts with security forces in Jordan and Lebanon.

With regard to (e), the Canadian Armed Forces members deployed will conduct general military training to improve Iraqi security forces skills and proficiency. This includes the deployment of CAF medical personnel to provide training to Iraqi security forces in the conduct of casualty management in a battlefield context, as well as to provide medical support to CAF personnel and partners; the provision of equipment, such as small arms, ammunition, and optics, to assist in the training of the Iraqi security forces; and the examination of ways to enhance in-theatre tactical transport.

In addition to this, the CAF will seek opportunities to augment the current capacity-building program for the Jordanian Armed Forces and create a new capacity-building program for the Lebanese Armed Forces.

With regard to (f), commanders at all levels are responsible and accountable for the protection of their personnel and assets. Canadian trainers will be provided force protection commensurate with the assessed level of risk at the training sites.

With regard to (g), detailed staff planning analysis has been carried out through several layers of headquarters, in consultation with coalition allies and in reference to the coalition statement of requirements, to ensure that no military capability gap exists.

With regard to (h), as part of the overall \$1.6-billion strategy over the next three years, the government will allocate approximately \$305 million towards Operation Impact in its expanded role.

Question No. 33—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the cases of Sergei Magnitsky and Borys Nemtsov, what government action has been taken to: (a) identify a list of foreign nationals as defined by the motion introduced by the then Member for Mount Royal and unanimously passed by the House of Commons on March 25, 2015; (b) explore appropriate sanctions as defined in the aforementioned motion; (c) establish a list of each person the government determines (i) to be responsible for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, (ii) to have participated in efforts to conceal the legal liability for the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, (iii) to have financially benefited from the detention, abuse, or death of Sergei Magnitsky, (iv) was involved in the criminal conspiracy uncovered by Sergei Magnitsky; and (d) identify any individual that is responsible for extra-judicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against individuals who (i) sought to expose illegal activity carried out by officials of the Russian Federation, (ii) sought to obtain, exercise, defend or promote internationally recognized human rights and freedoms, such as the freedoms of religion, expression, association, and assembly, and the rights to a fair trial and democratic elections in Russia, (iii) acted as an agent of or on behalf of a person in a matter relating to an activity described in (ii) or (iii)?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), (b), and (c), Global Affairs Canada has reviewed the Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act, the Magnitsky Act, passed by the United States Senate on December 14, 2012. Canada examined the criteria used to develop rationales for Magnitsky-related designations. Canada closely follows develop-

ments related to the Magnitsky Act, including tracking the list of individuals subject to U.S. Magnitsky-related designations. Canada also monitors Magnitsky-related actions taken by other like-minded partners, such as the European Parliament, the British House of Commons, the Dutch Parliament, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, and others. Canada closely follows the human rights situation in Russia and will continue to defend and promote human rights issues, including through multi-lateral channels such as the United Nations Human Rights Council and the OSCE.

With regard to (d), at this time the Special Economic Measures Act does not allow Canada to place sanctions on Russian individuals or entities unless it is for the purpose of implementing a decision, resolution, or recommendation of an international organization of states or association of states of which Canada is a member that calls on its members to take economic measures against a foreign state, or where the Governor in Council is of the opinion that a grave breach of international peace and security has occurred that has resulted in, or is likely to result in, a serious international crisis.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 37—Mr. Murray Rankin:**

With regard to Correctional Services Canada's (CSC) Integrated Police and Parole Initiative (IPPI): (a) what is the complete and detailed list of all evaluations and analyses of efficacy of IPPI which were proposed, conducted, and concluded between December 2009 and December 2015 that were (i) conducted by CSC itself, (ii) conducted by any other party; (b) for each item listed in (a), (i) when was it carried out, (ii) who carried it out, (iii) what was the rationale for carrying it out; (c) for each item listed in (a), what were the conclusions of the evaluation or analysis, and the justification for these conclusions, including (i) whether or not IPPI remained consistent with CSC, police service and government-wide priorities and objectives, (ii) whether or not the design of IPPI, as an enhanced supervision partnership, including objectives of information sharing and apprehension of offenders who were unlawfully at large (UAL), was consistent with practices in other jurisdictions, (iii) whether or not the changing offender profile and number of UAL offenders under CSC jurisdiction demonstrated a need for IPPI, (iv) what staffing challenges (including but not limited to staffing shortages and awareness and understanding of IPPI) affected the implementation of IPPI and what the effects were, (v) whether or not the organizational structure and reporting relationships for IPPI were designed and implemented in a way that supported the continued activities of the initiative, as well as what regional variations in reporting relationships existed and how that affected IPPI, (vi) whether or not the roles and responsibilities of IPPI stakeholders were well-defined and appropriate and what changes should be made to clarify and improve these roles and responsibilities if necessary, (vii) which police officers were most appropriate for community correctional liaison officer (CCLO) positions, (viii) whether or not CCLOs had completed IPPI training and whether or not that training was viewed as relevant, (ix) whether or not IPPI data was being correctly entered into CSC databases, including but not limited to CCLO contacts, (x) whether or not criteria for higher risk offenders for inclusion in IPPI were clearly defined or communicated, and if not, why not, and what were the consequences of this, (xi) whether or not CCLOs were situated in appropriate locations, (xii) whether or not IPPI faced implementation delays and what the consequences of these delays were, including but not limited to re-profiling of offenders, internal re-allocations, and/or lapses of funding, (xiii) whether or not communication and partnerships between CSC, police services and community stakeholders were effective and in what ways they could be improved, (xiv) whether or not stakeholders were consulted to see if their perceptions of CSC's mandate and strategies had improved since the implementation of IPPI, (xv) whether or not available data suggested that IPPI had an effect on recidivism rates, (xvi) whether or not UAL apprehensions increased following the implementation of IPPI and by how much, (xvii) whether or not IPPI was cost-effective, and if this determination was not possible, why not; (d) for each item identified in (a), (i) how do each of the findings identified in (c) differ from the findings of Evaluation Report: Integrated Police and Parole Initiative published in November 2008, (ii) for what reasons do each of these findings differ; and (e) with regard to the decision to discontinue IPPI, (i) by what process was this decision reached, (ii) what was the rationale for this decision, (iii) in what way did this decision incorporate the items listed in (a) and the findings outlined in (c), (iv) what was the cost-savings of the discontinuation, (v) has CSC or any other government body considered reintroducing IPPI, (vi) what criteria are being used in this consideration?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) through(d), between December 2009 and December 2015, neither CSC nor any other party of which CSC is aware proposed, conducted, or concluded any evaluation specifically on the efficacy of the Integrated Police and Parole Initiative, or IPPI.

With regard to (e)(i), the decision to conclude the IPPI was based on the results of a national consultation that took place in 2013 with the stakeholders of the intelligence program. Fiscal constraints within CSC generated the impetus for this consultation, including pressure associated with the deficit reduction action plan and the need to contribute to the government's efforts to balance the budget. A decision to conclude the IPPI by April 1, 2015, was announced in October 2014.

With regard to (e)(ii), the decision was made in order to contribute to the government's efforts to balance the budget and the need for CSC to assess its intelligence functions within the context of fiscal

restraint. CSC made determinations about which intelligence functions were the most critical in ensuring that CSC was able to deliver on its public safety mandate. This review guided the decision to conclude the program.

With regard to (e)(iii), between December 2009 and December 2015, neither CSC nor any other party of which CSC is aware conducted any evaluation specifically on the efficacy of the IPPI.

With regard to (e)(iv), the total net cost savings from the conclusion of the IPPI was \$600,000 annually.

With regard to (e)(v) and (e)(vi), while there are no plans to reintroduce the IPPI at this point, CSC will continue to work closely with police agencies to maintain partnerships and ensure public safety. More specifically, in 2008-2009, with the provision of integrity funding, CSC established community security intelligence officer, CSIO, positions across the country to enhance community intelligence capacity. Given that the CSIOs are responsible for the planning, coordination, and administration of CSC's community security intelligence program, CSIOs continue to act as the primary point of contact for police agencies and other partners concerning intelligence-related issues. Furthermore, the preventive security and intelligence program continues to provide decision-makers with reliable and timely intelligence and information on potential threats within the offender population. Since the conclusion of the IPPI, CSC has continued to productively engage with law enforcement on community intelligence issues, the recapture of offenders who have gone unlawfully at large, and offender release planning through effective information sharing and consultation in order to deliver the best possible public safety results for Canadians.

* * *

[English]

STARRED QUESTIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you would be so kind as to call Starred Question No. 46. I ask that the question and answer to Question No. 46 be printed in *Hansard* as if read.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

***Question No. 46—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:**

With regard to the government's policy to establish a Chief Science Officer: (a) will this new officer operate independently of the government; (b) will this new officer advise and report to all of Parliament; (c) will this new officer be an Agent of Parliament; (d) will this new officer be established by way of legislation; (e) will this new officer have their independence, powers, mandate, and annual budget protected by law; (f) will this new officer be appointed following consultation with every recognized party and approval of the appointment by resolution in Parliament; (g) will this new officer be required, in order to qualify for appointment, to have experience conducting original scientific research in his or her field of specialization; (h) will this new officer have access to all government data and records he or she deems necessary to carry out their mandate, except in cases of individual privacy or cabinet confidence; and (i) will all scientific advice and reports prepared by this new office be automatically made available to the public?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Minister of Science is developing an approach and will make recommendations to the Prime Minister on the creation of a chief science officer, a CSO, whose mandate will include ensuring that government science is freely available to the public, that scientists are able to speak freely about their work, and that scientific analyses are appropriately considered when the government makes decisions.

Decisions on how the government intends to proceed on the establishment of a CSO have not yet been made. The Minister of Science is currently consulting with key representatives of the research community in Canada, as well as with her counterparts, chief science advisers and officers in other countries, and parliamentarians to gather information to inform the creation of this new position and identify an approach that is appropriate for Canada.

With regard to (b) through (i), as noted in the response to (a), details with regard to the operation of the CSO have not yet been determined.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 18 to 28, 31, and 34 to 36, could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 18—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to Operation PROVISION and the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) support to the government's initiative to resettle 25 000 Syrian Refugees in Canada by the end of February 2016, including the use of CAF bases to do so: (a) which bases will be used; (b) what is the expected number of refugees that will utilize each base for lodging; (c) how many CAF and Department of National Defence personnel had to leave their living quarters from each base to accommodate the incoming refugees; (d) at each base, what type of construction, renovation, or winterization projects had to be completed in order to accommodate the incoming refugees; (e) what are the individual costs of the projects identified in (b); (f) were all Treasury Board guidelines followed for the tendering and awarding of these contracts; (g) from where are the funds necessary to accommodate refugees on CAF bases being allocated; (h) how many troops and personnel will be deployed as a part of Operation

PROVISION and to where will they be deployed; (i) in what type of work will they be engaged while overseas; (j) will they be deployed as civilian or military personnel; (k) will the CAF be providing force protection for the troops deployed as a part of Operation PROVISION; (l) if the answer to (k) is negative, who will be providing the force protection and what price; (m) will the government table a copy in the House of any force protection contracts that it has signed as part of Operation PROVISION?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 19—Hon. Michelle Rempel:

With regard to the government's Syrian refugee resettlement initiative, including, but not limited to the measures announced by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship on November 24, 2015: (a) what is the total number of existing CIC visa officers and other CIC employees, in whole or in part (i.e. FTEs), who have been re-assigned since November 4, 2015, from processing applications under other streams or "lines of business" to enhance the processing capacity of Syrian refugee applications, broken down by employees re-assigned from processing (i) spousal sponsorship applications, (ii) economic immigration permanent resident visas, (iii) work permit applications, (iv) student visa applications, (v) all other streams, identifying the stream in question; (b) what was the total number of CIC employees, in whole or in part (i.e. FTEs), including visa officers, responsible for processing Syrian refugee applications on November 4, 2015; (c) what is the total number of CIC employees, whole or in part (i.e. FTEs), including visa officers, who were responsible for processing Syrian refugee applications on December 10, 2015; (d) what is the anticipated operational impact, expressed in additional application processing time, for each CIC "line of business," caused by the re-allocation of CIC employee resources to enhance the processing of Syrian refugee applications; (e) what is the total number of cases that were finalized for each week in the 2015 calendar year, up to and including December 10, 2015, for each permanent and temporary resident visa category, broken down by (i) outcome (i.e. "approved," "refused," or "withdrawn"), (ii) CIC Visa Office or CIC Processing Office; (f) what is the total number of Syrian refugee applications, broken down by sponsorship category (e.g. Government Sponsored Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees, Group of Five, etc.), finalized on or after November 5, 2015; (g) of the total number Syrian refugee applications that were finalized on or after November 5, 2015, how many applications were referred to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, or the Canada Border Services Agency, prior to the visa officer's decision to either grant or refuse a permanent resident visa, for a (i) record check, (ii) comprehensive security vetting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 20—Mr. Mark Strahl:

With regards to the mandate letter to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to "Act on recommendations of the Cohen Commission on restoring sockeye salmon stocks in the Fraser River": (a) what scientific analyses were completed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on each of the 75 recommendations contained in the Commission of Inquiry into the Decline of Sockeye Salmon in the Fraser River; (b) what recommendations identified in (a) have been implemented in whole or in part; (c) of the recommendations identified in (b) what was the cost of implementation, both on a one-time and ongoing basis; and (d) when will the remaining recommendations of the Cohen Commission, in whole or in part, be implemented?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 21—Mr. Andrew Scheer:

With regard to the province of Saskatchewan, since November 4, 2015: what is the list of grants, loans, contributions and contracts awarded by the government, broken down by (i) recipient, (ii) constituency, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 22—Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:**

With regard to funding for women's shelters for the fiscal years from 2010 to 2015: (a) how much funding has the government spent on construction of new women's shelters and new spaces in women's shelters annually, in total, and broken down by (i) program, (ii) province; (b) how much money has the government spent on funding for renovation of existing women's shelters annually, in total, and broken down by (i) program, (ii) province; (c) how much money has the government spent on non-capital supports for women's shelters annually, in total, and broken down by (i) program, (ii) province; (d) when did the government stop accepting applications for the off-reserve portion of the Shelter Enhancement Program; and (e) when did the government cancel funding for the off-reserve portion of the Shelter Enhancement Program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 23—Mr. Romeo Saganash:

With regard to the total expenditures of the government incurred by all departments defending against Aboriginal-rights claims made against the government and appealing against case decisions upholding Aboriginal rights in court: (a) what was the amount spent on these activities, broken down by fiscal year from 2002-2003 to 2014-2015; (b) what was the amount spent on these activities to date in the current fiscal year; (c) what was the actual amount budgeted to be spent on these activities, broken down by fiscal year from 2002-2003 to 2014-2015; and (d) what was the actual amount budgeted to be spent on these activities for the current fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 24—Mr. Daniel Blaikie:

With regard to changes to the machinery of government made on November 4, 2015: (a) for each department that was changed, what is the cost of making those changes (i) in total, (ii) broken down by category of expense; and (b) for each agency, Crown corporation, board, commission, or foundation that has been placed under the authority of a different ministry than was the case in the previous administration, what is the cost of making that change (i) in total, (ii) broken down by category?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 25—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to Employment Insurance (EI) for 2015: (a) what was the volume of EI applications in total and broken down by (i) region and province where the claim originated, (ii) the number of claims accepted and the number of claims rejected, (iii) month; (b) what was the average EI application processing time in total and broken down by (i) region and province where claim originated, (ii) month; (c) how many applications waited more than 28 days for a decision and, for these applications, what was the average wait time for a decision, in total and broken down by (i) region and province where claim originated, (ii) month; (d) what was the volume of calls to EI call centres in total and broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province; (e) what was the number of calls to EI call centres that received a high volume message in total and broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province; (f) what were the national service level standards for calls answered by an agent at EI call centres, broken down by month; (g) what were the actual service level standards achieved by EI call centres for calls answered by an agent, broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province; (h) what were the service standards for call-backs from EI processing staff, broken down by month; (i) what were the service standards achieved by EI processing staff for call-backs, broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province; (j) what was the average number of days for a call-back by EI processing staff, broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province; (k) what was the number and percentage of term employees and the number and percentage of indeterminate employees, working at EI call centres and processing centres; (l) what was the rate of sick-leave use among EI call centre and processing centre employees; (m) what was the number of EI call centre and processing centre employees on long-term disability; (n) what was the number of overtime hours worked by call centre employees; (o) who authored the report on EI processing for which the former parliamentary secretary for Employment and Social Development was credited; (p) what is the table of contents for the report; (q) will the government make the report public; (r) how many complaints did the Office of Client Satisfaction receive, broken down by (i) month, (ii) region and province where the complaint originated; (s) how long on average did a complaint take to be investigated and resolved, broken down by month; and (t) what were the major themes of the complaints received?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 26—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to Employment Insurance (EI): (a) how many applications for sickness benefits made while the applicant was on parental leave were granted by the EI Commission in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012, (iv) 2013, (v) 2014; (b) how many applications for sickness benefits made while the applicant was on parental leave were granted by the EI Boards of Referees in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012, (iv) 2013; (c) how many applications for sickness benefits made while the applicant was on parental leave were granted by EI Umpires in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012, (iv) 2013; (d) how many applications for sickness benefits made while the applicant was on parental leave were granted by the Social Security Tribunal in (i) 2013, (ii) 2014; (e) how much money has the government spent on the class-action court case regarding women who were denied sickness benefits while on parental leave; (f) how many Justice Department lawyers have been working on the class-action court case; and (g) what was the average cost for an appeal to be considered by the EI Commission, a Board of Referees, and an EI Umpire?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 27—Ms. Niki Ashton:

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program: (a) how many applications were received for Labour Market Impact Assessments in 2015, in total and broken down by (i) month, (ii) province; (b) how many applications for Labour Market Impact Assessments were approved in 2015, in total and broken down by (i) month, (ii) province; (c) what was the average processing time for Labour Market Impact Assessments in 2015, in total and broken down by (i) month, (ii) province, (iii) National Occupational Classification (NOC) code; (d) how many applications for Labour Market Impact Assessments were received for high-wage temporary foreign workers in 2015; (e) how many applications for Labour Market Impact Assessments were received for low-wage temporary foreign workers in 2015; (f) how many applications for Labour Market Impact Assessments were approved for high-wage temporary foreign workers in 2015; (g) how many applications for Labour Market Impact Assessments were approved for low-wage temporary foreign workers in 2015; (h) since June 2014, how many employers with fewer than ten employees have been granted positive Labour Market Impact Assessments, broken down by year; (i) since June 2014, how many employers with more than ten employees have been granted positive Labour Market Impact Assessments, broken down by year; (j) how many work permits have been issued in 2015, in total and broken down by month; (k) how many tips have been received on the confidential tip phone line since its creation, broken down by month; (l) how many tips have been received through the online tip portal since its creation, broken down by month; (m) how many investigations have been conducted as a result of tips received; (n) how many investigations have been the result of multiple tips; (o) how many investigations have resulted in employers being found non-compliant; (p) how many investigations have resulted in penalties being imposed on the employer; (q) how many employers have been required to take corrective action in order to be found compliant as a result of an investigation; (r) how many employers using the Temporary Foreign Worker Program have been subject to an inspection from 2013 to 2015 inclusively, broken down by (i) month, (ii) province; (s) how many inspections were conducted because an employer requested a new Labour Market Opinion or Labour Market Impact Assessment between 2013 and 2015, broken down by month; (t) how many inspections occurred at a time when the employer was not requesting a new Labour Market Opinion or Labour Market Impact Assessment between 2013 and 2015, broken down by month; (u) how many inspections have revealed non-compliance by employers between 2013 and 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) issues identified, (iii) industry of the employer; (v) how many employers have had to take steps to be considered compliant between 2013 and 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of actions required, (iii) industry of the employer; (w) how many employers have received penalties for non-compliance as a result of an inspection between 2013 and 2015, broken down by (i) month, (ii) type of penalty, (iii) industry of the employer; (x) how many inspections conducted between 2013 and 2015 have involved an on-site visit, broken down by month; (y) how many foreign nationals have been removed from Canada because their four-year period of eligibility had expired; and (z) when will Employment and Social Development Canada begin publicly reporting data on the number of temporary foreign workers approved and the names of employers receiving positive Labour Market Impact Assessments?

(Return tabled)

Government Orders

Question No. 28—Hon. Ed Fast:

With regard to Canada's delegation at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21): (a) what is the total cost incurred by the government for this delegation; (b) what are the details of the expenses incurred by each delegate; and (c) what are the costs of the delegation broken down by (i) travel, (ii) hospitality, (iii) meals and incidentals, (iv) lodging, (v) salaries, (vi) per diems, (vii) operations?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 31—Mr. James Bezan:

With regard to the military equipment currently owned by the Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF): (a) which items have been identified as surplus; (b) how many of each surplus item are in the CAF's stock; (c) what is the value of each item deemed to be surplus; (d) where is the current surplus equipment being stored; (e) what is the process for liquidating surplus items in the case of (i) DND, (ii) CAF; (f) what regulations are in place that prevent or restrict DND and CAF's ability to liquidate surplus military equipment; and (g) what is the government's policy as to the manner in which the revenue generated from the liquidation of surplus assets will be redistributed by the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 34—Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:

With regard to the Canada (Ontario Boundary) Act, 1889: (a) does the middle of the main channel of the Ottawa River, from the head of Lake Temiscamingue to the intersection by the prolongation of the western limits of the Seigneurie of Rigaud, such mid-channel being as indicated on a map of the Ottawa Ship Canal Survey by Walter Shanly, C.E., still delineate the boundary between Ontario and Quebec; (b) are copies of the Order of the Governor-General in Council, dated July 21, 1886, that approved the mid-channel boundary described in (a), available to members of the public, and if not, why not; (c) are certified copies of the map referred to in the Canada (Ontario Boundary) Act, 1889, showing the mid-channel described in (a), available to members of the public, and if not, why not; and (d) has either the Province of Quebec or the Province of Ontario challenged the location of the boundary since the Canada (Ontario Boundary) Act, 1889, received Royal Assent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 35—Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:

With respect to the September 2015 announcement of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) that it would effectuate a transfer of information to the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS): (a) how many records has the CRA transferred to the IRS to date; (b) on what dates did information transfer occur and how many records were transferred on each date; (c) how many records of individuals have been transferred in total; (d) by what means were the records transferred; (e) how much did it cost the CRA to compile the records for transfer; (f) how much did it cost the CRA to complete the transfer; (g) how were the costs in (e) and (f) calculated and what is the breakdown of those costs; (h) who made the decision to transfer the records; (i) when was the decision made to transfer records; (j) when did the CRA become aware that the U.S. Treasury had extended the deadline for such transfer; (k) how was the CRA made aware that the U.S. Treasury had extended the deadline; (l) what steps were taken to assess and respond to the notice of deadline extension in (j); (m) what was the policy reason for transferring records despite the deadline extension; (n) when is the next transfer of records scheduled to take place; (o) what analysis was conducted to assess whether the transfer of records during the writ period for the 42nd General Election complied with the "Guidelines on the Conduct of Ministers, Ministers of State, Exempt Staff and Public Servants During an Election"; (p) what records exist with respect to any analysis conducted in relation to (o); (q) was information concerning the transfer of records from the CRA to the IRS included in any transition materials prepared for a potential change in government or the Ministers responsible for CRA and Foreign Affairs; (r) what documents exist in relation to (q) and what are their file numbers; (s) has the new Minister responsible for CRA been informed of information transfers to the IRS and, if so, (i) when, (ii) how, (iii) by whom, (iv) with what documents produced or prepared for this purpose; (t) has the new Minister of Justice been informed of the information transfer and been provided with any analysis of its legal implications and, if so, (i) when, (ii) how, (iii) by whom, (iv) with what documents produced or prepared for this purpose; (u) have Canadians who will be affected by the transfer been informed of the transfer of their records; (v) what plans exist with regard to informing Canadians about the transfer of their records; (w) has any proposal to inform Canadians of the transfer of their information to the IRS been evaluated by the government and, if so, with what

conclusions; (x) what documents exist in relation to (w) and what are their file numbers; (y) what legal challenges does the government anticipate with respect to information transfer, and how is it preparing to respond; (z) what measures are in place to ensure the security of record transfers to the IRS; and (aa) has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted or involved in any way in the preparation or planning of record transfer to ensure conformity with applicable laws regarding the exchange of Canadians' personal information and, if so, to what extent?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 36—Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:

With regard to the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP) administered by the National Research Council of Canada (NRC), between April 1, 2010, and April 1, 2015: (a) what amounts were awarded in the form of contributions to firms and contributions to organizations, broken down by year and by the following regional offices: (i) NRC-IRAP Sherbrooke, (ii) NRC-IRAP Granby, (iii) NRC-IRAP Victoriaville, (iv) NRC-IRAP Longueuil, (v) NRC-IRAP Gatineau, (vi) NRC-IRAP Sept-Îles, (vii) NRC-IRAP Trois-Rivières, (viii) NRC-IRAP Drummondville, (ix) NRC-IRAP Lévis, (x) NRC-IRAP Québec City; (b) how many interactive visits were requested and approved, broken down by year and by regional office provided in (a); (c) how many projects were submitted and approved broken down by year and by regional office provided in (a); (d) how many projects were submitted and approved under the Business Innovation Access Program (BIAP) administered by IRAP, broken down by year and by regional office provided in (a); and (e) in what other activities did NRC-IRAP participate, broken down by year and by regional office provided in (a)?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

• (1600)

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded division government orders will be extended by nine minutes.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.) moved that Bill C-6, an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Government Orders

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure for me to rise to speak to Bill C-6, which is an act to make major amendments to the previous government's Citizenship Act, better known in some circles as the noxious Bill C-24.

We are making these major changes for two general reasons: one, we promised to do that in our election platform and in my mandate letter; and two, the acts that we are carrying out in this new law are consistent with what we promised to do.

From the government's point of view and my point of view, we are doing what we said we would do. What is more important is why we want to do this. On this side, I would say there are two basic principles at stake.

[*Translation*]

That is unacceptable to us. There should be only one class of Canadians, not two. That is the first principle.

As far as the second principle is concerned, we want to welcome new citizens to Canada. The Conservative legislation put up a number of roadblocks that we believe made it unreasonably harder for permanent residents to become Canadian.

[*English*]

Therefore, there are two points of principle. First, there must be one class of Canadian, not two. Second, we want to welcome new citizens. We believe the Conservatives erected a number of barriers that were unreasonable to the welcoming of new people to become citizens of our country.

Let me go through each of these general areas one at a time.

In the previous Conservative bill, the minister of citizenship and immigration had the authority to revoke an individual citizenship if that person was convicted of a terrorist crime or some other crime. However, and this is a crucial point, the minister only had the power to revoke citizenship if the person involved was a dual citizen, not if the person was a citizen only of Canada. Similarly, the Federal Court had the right to revoke citizenship in other cases, but again only for dual citizens.

This is the nub of the point because once we say we can revoke one type of Canadian citizenship but cannot revoke another, then we have two classes of Canadians. We believe very strongly, and we fought long and hard during the election on this issue, that there is only one class of Canadian, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian. All Canadians are equal and there cannot be two classes of Canadians, which is why we found this law unacceptable and why the new law would revoke that right to revoke citizenship.

We have said it for many months with the conviction of our beliefs, and once the law passes, we can also say it in the spirit of the law. It will say there is only one class of Canadian, not two.

In fact, we believe this so strongly that we are going to reinstate the citizenship of the one individual who had his citizenship revoked for reasons of terrorism. That individual, according to the new law, will have his citizenship reinstated.

It is a point of principle. When we say a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, that includes good and bad Canadians.

● (1605)

The bad Canadians who are convicted for terrorism should go to prison. If there are bad terrorists, they should go to prison for a long time, although it is the judges, not the politicians, who determine the sentences. The place for a terrorist is in prison, not at the airport. It is our strong belief that if a person is sent to prison for terrorism, there should not be two classes of terrorists: those who go to prison and have their citizenship revoked and those who only go to prison. A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, for a terrorist and for others, and therefore in our view we will not have any citizenship revoked for this reason.

I would also make the supplementary argument that to revoke citizenship in this way is to launch oneself on a slippery slope, because the rules might be clear today about for what crime we have citizenship revoked and for what crime do we not, but those laws can change over time. I remember the former prime minister in the election campaign speculating about additional crimes that might be added. Who knows? It might be terrorism one year, and something else—whatever catches the attention of the government of the day—could be added the next year. It is a slippery slope, and one does not know where on that slope one will end up.

The definition of what constitutes dual citizenship is also a slippery slope. I am not a lawyer, but I know legal minds have debated the issue of who is a dual citizen and who is not. Some individuals might be born in Canada, have never been to some second country, but are nevertheless dual citizens of that country because of the laws of that country. Some people have claimed that Jews are dual citizens in a sense, because they have the right to live in Israel. Does that make them dual citizens of Canada and Israel? Under the previous law, that might have been a question that went before the courts.

Our view is that we should just terminate this slippery slope. We should abolish 100% the practice of revoking citizenship for any kind of terrorism or other crime. The debate would therefore be moot. It would not matter who is a dual citizen and who is not, or which crimes are included, because under no circumstances would a person have his or her citizenship revoked for these reasons. These other secondary, slippery-slope arguments would simply not arise.

The last point I would make on this issue is that there is one reason that is still the case for individuals to have their citizenship revoked, and that has always been on the books, and that is if individuals misrepresent who they are when they become citizens. In that situation that would imply that the individuals do not deserve to be citizens because they gave false information in order to become citizens. If that is the case, then their citizenship can be revoked. That has been the case in Canada since 1947, and that will remain the case.

Government Orders

There is one thing I might mention that the parliamentary committee may wish to consider. After we came out with our law, certain legal individuals said that, when a person has his or her citizenship revoked for this one remaining reason that is allowed, that person may or may not have sufficient right to appeal. If after listening to witnesses, the committee agrees that there is insufficient right to appeal such a decision, then the government and I would certainly be prepared to contemplate such an amendment to our bill.

This makes a more general point, unlike the previous government; but allow me to just talk for this government. We are certainly open to amendments, if there are amendments from either the Liberal side or the opposition side that would improve the bill. We do not claim perfection. If some members on the committee, of any party, have ideas for how to improve it, we would be open to such suggestions.

I just mentioned this one as a case in point: I heard in the debate following the introduction of the bill that there may not be an adequate right to appeal in the case of citizenship revocation flowing from providing false information.

•(1610)

That covers my first general point about citizenship revocation. The second area concerns barriers that we think in some cases are unnecessary or inappropriate barriers to citizenship, and there are four areas where we will change the previous bill, in some cases, substantially.

[*Translation*]

I can read the four items that we are going to change.

First, the 2015 measures required anyone applying to become a Canadian citizen to declare their intent to live in Canada once citizenship was obtained. We are going to get rid of that.

The measures also prolonged the residency requirement for applicants, requiring them to stay in Canada for a much longer period before being able to apply for citizenship. We are also going to change that, as I will explain.

They also eliminated the possibility of applying half of the time applicants spent in Canada before becoming permanent residents in the calculation of the duration of their physical presence here. This affects international students.

Finally, as for the fourth item, the measures required applicants 14 to 64 to meet language and knowledge criteria. Previously, only applicants 18 to 54 had to meet those criteria. We are going to reinstate the previous age requirement, 18 to 54.

[*English*]

Let me quickly go through each of these in turn. The first point concerns the intention to reside, that people have to declare before they become a citizen that they intend to reside in Canada. Some people in the legal profession were concerned that it could then become a reason to revoke citizenship. Let us say people stated an intent to reside in Canada, and let us say they were telling the truth, then their company shifted them to New York or whatever and the circumstances changed. It was feared that, having invoked this intent to reside, they could subsequently be challenged if their plans changed. The simplest way to deal with that is to get rid of that

provision, which is what we are doing. We are repealing it. We think that was a legitimate concern, and we do not think there is merit to retaining that element of the bill.

The second part is the physical presence requirement. We believe that people should be required to be physically present in Canada for a certain length of time. We believe there is significant citizenship fraud or citizens of convenience, so we do want to continue to attack that. We do not dispute the principle of having a certain length of time in which people have to be physically present in Canada, but we are bringing it back to where it was, or at least changing it from what the Conservatives had, that they have to be physically present in Canada for four out of the past six years. We are moving to three out of the past five years, which is somewhat more flexible and also allows citizenship applicants to become citizens one year earlier than was the case under the previous bill.

The third item is one where I feel there is a particular lack of intelligence in the previous bill. If we look at international students, we see they are one of the most fertile grounds for new Canadians. We have an aging population. We really need more immigrants, and who better than international students, in the sense that by definition they are educated, by definition they know something about Canada, and almost by definition they can speak English or French? What better group to solicit to become Canadians than international students?

•(1615)

Why then do we sort of punch them in the nose, instead of courting them, by taking away the entitlement they previously had that 50% of the time they had spent in Canada as international students would count toward becoming citizens? I think they have clearly earned that entitlement by being here, learning about Canada, and so on. Therefore, I do not see why that entitlement should be removed, and indeed, in this bill, we are restoring it.

Someone asked me why not 100%, and we can have that debate. I think 50% might be a good number, but certainly not zero. I think we should go back to where it was, 50%.

Finally, this is a simple point on language. Again, we agree in principle that knowing English or French is really important, and we are not abolishing that requirement at all. Research has shown that knowledge of one or more of the official languages helps to predict an individual's success in this country, economically and job-wise. Therefore, we are not eliminating that, but we are restoring the age range to where it was, which is the age of 18 to 54, rather than 14 to 64.

[*Translation*]

In sum, we disagree with the Conservative government's legislation based on two general principles. First, a Canadian is a Canadian. All Canadians are equal. We must not have two classes of citizens. Second, we want to welcome newcomers as Canadians, and we do not want the conditions for becoming Canadian to be too rigid or too difficult.

Government Orders

[English]

In summary, it is for those reasons that I am pleased to present to the House our proposals in Bill C-6.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly some of the proposals in the bill may lead to changes, or increases in the workload for visa officers and immigration officers who are processing other lines of business outside of the refugee stream.

I noticed in question 19, which was tabled by the parliamentary secretary earlier today, that 220 employees, if I read this correctly, have been temporarily assigned to processing Syrian refugee applications from the central processing region. If I am correct, the types of business lines that are impacted there include the processing of spousal sponsorship applications. I wonder if my colleague could tell the House how the transferring of 220 employees affected other business lines during the processing of the Syrian refugee initiative. This was up until December 15 of last year.

I note that in the response to the question, it also says that other employees were transferred around. If they are transferring employees from other business lines, given they might not be trained on certain activities or whatnot, might that impact the processing times for things like spousal sponsorship? Could the minister explain how the department has been impacted in that regard?

• (1620)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I can say that I certainly make no apology for some employees being transferred around to expedite the Syrian refugee operation. It was a big commitment that we made and a big priority, and I think Canadians have come to support this initiative. Indeed, even the official opposition has supported our Syrian refugee initiative. It was a high priority.

The way in which we will address processing times for families, as we said during the election, is to, one, commit more resources and hire more individuals to interview people, and two, learn from the experience of Syrian refugees.

One definition of real change is to do something one has never done before. The public servants in my department have never processed refugees as quickly and efficiently as they did. Therefore, we will learn from the lessons they learned in expediting refugee processing. We will also learn from that how to move much faster on the processing of spouses and other family members.

We will achieve our objectives on processing times, first by providing more resources, but at least as important, by learning from our experience on the Syrian refugees and importing that experience to make processes for families way more efficient and rapid than they have been in the past.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about the language issue. There is no question in my mind that speaking some English and French is an important component to this process. With that being said, when many immigrants come here, the question becomes the level of proficiency in the language that would need to be examined.

Under the current system, the people send in results of an accepted third party test at the equivalent of a Canadian language benchmark level 4 or higher in speaking or listening, or provide proof of

completion of a secondary or post-secondary program conducted in French or English. If they do not send those documents to prove they have met this requirement, their application for citizenship will not be accepted.

I know of many people who are not at that level, but they contribute greatly economically. They pay their taxes, they raise their families, and they participate in their community. If we do not remove these barriers, I am afraid it will prevent them from becoming citizens and, ultimately, engaging fully in a democratic society, which is having the right to vote.

Further, the other piece related to barriers to citizenship is the application fees and the high costs of those.

Under the Conservative government, the fees went up, from \$100 to \$530, for an adult, with an additional \$100 for a child. Therefore, that also poses financial barriers for people to access the pathway to citizenship.

Would the minister agree with me that both of those items need to be addressed and will he take action in that regard?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I do agree that both of those are very legitimate questions.

On the point about the fees, we made no commitment to reduce the fees. It is something we will examine going forward, but this is not in this legislation.

On the question of the language, there are two issues. There is the age at which the test is applied and the level of the test.

What we have amended in the bill is the age. While I think the hon. member and I both agree that language is important, traditionally in Canada some older people would arrive without the best English in the world and it would improve over time. However, their children, and for sure their grandchildren, would have perfect, or virtually perfect, English or French. In our view, to put the age back to 54 rather than 64 was in deference in part to older people, although I am now 65, so I never thought 64 years old was that old, but older compared with many others. We thought that was an appropriate move.

On the question of level, that point has been raised by my provincial counterparts from British Columbia and Ontario. We will meet next week and we will talk about that. I do not think the level would be in the legislation because it would be a matter for regulation, but at what level those tests should be is a legitimate item for discussion.

• (1625)

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been noted that this legislation will reduce the age where applicants for citizenship need to demonstrate knowledge and language proficiency to ages 18 to 54. This seems to be a fair range.

Would the hon. minister perhaps discuss with the House why asking a 64-year-old grandmother, who is reuniting with her family, to pass an English test is somewhat unfair?

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Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, there always has to be a balance here. I would not deny that it is always a good thing for newcomers to Canada to have a good knowledge of English or a good knowledge of French, or even both. However, the balance has to be made between the situation of the newcomers and the situation they are coming to.

If people are 60 years old and they are coming with perhaps children and a spouse, it is normal to think that their English language skills would not necessarily be so great as if they were younger. If they are older people, their children will probably be fluent, or near fluent, and certainly their grandchildren will be.

The way we have always done it in our country is that often people on the initial entry had far from perfect English, but then they improved, and their children and grandchildren were perfectly fluent. We are trying to seek that balance between needing the language and being reasonable in the face of people of varying ages and varying backgrounds. I hope that what we have come up with in the bill might strike the right balance.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, according to the IRCC's website, most applications for citizenship will be processed within 12 months if a person has applied after April 1, 2015, or will be processed by the end of this month if the application is received before that date. However, some cases are taking up to three years to be processed for the simple reason that a residence questionnaire was issued.

Could the minister explain how it can possibly be fair to delay an application for three years simply because of a residence questionnaire?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have found is that we have inherited a lot of situations that are not at all fair. There are many egregious issues we inherited that I find myself having to address, so I would be the last person to say that everything that has happened in the last 10 years or even the last 6 months is necessarily 100% correct.

However, I believe it is true that for the applications for citizenship, there has been progress made and that people applying today or applying recently will have their application processed within one year. I believe by the end of this year, the backlog will have been reduced very substantially so that overall processing times will be down.

Processing times in general are extremely high, and we have to address them on all fronts.

[*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 Salaberry—Suroît, Justice; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Health.

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so much of Canada's history and our history through immigration is a collection of stories. I would like to start with a very brief one.

On August 29, 1900, in the village of Zavar in Slovakia, a woman named Maria Krajcovic was born. The town was a very small

farming town, primarily agricultural. She grew up there. She married a man named Frank Oravec. They had two young daughters, named Helen and Stefania.

In the early 1930s, when both of their girls were still quite young, I believe under the age of seven, Frank decided to travel to Canada to work with the CPR. That was a very difficult decision at the time. One can imagine leaving a wife and two young daughters at a time when Europe was becoming increasingly more uncertain. It was a quite difficult decision.

Maria had to sell some of her property and move in with her mom in order to take care of her daughters while Frank was overseas working to save enough money to send back to the family. Thankfully Maria was quite a talented seamstress. She did needlework and made beautiful lace, and was able to support and provide a living for her daughters.

However, in the late 1930s, things became very unstable in Slovakia. I believe it was in March 1939 when things got really serious. I should have my dates correct when I tell a story, but I believe it was November 1940 when Hitler's Nazis took over the country. It was a very bleak time indeed for the citizens of Zavar.

In July 1938, Maria did all of the paperwork, and it was very difficult at this time, to get her two daughters to a point where they could travel overseas and join her husband in Canada. That took place in July 1938, right before all of this happened. They travelled to Winnipeg to start a home.

At this time, Helen was 15 years old. They came to Canada with nothing. Helen had to work, cleaning homes. While she worked close to 15-hour days, she put herself through school in the evenings to learn English. She worked really hard. She ended up marrying a man who was 25 years her senior. She had five girls and they farmed in Starbuck.

She has been known to say that people are lucky if they get one good year out of five. When her daughters were all very young, she was widowed, and she had to make the decision to move into Winnipeg with her five young girls. She worked two jobs to put food on the table.

One of her five girls, Kim recounts not seeing her mom very often. Kim put herself through school as well. She got married very young. She had two daughters named Cherie and Michelle. Kim went back to school when she was in her 30s. Helen decided that she would spend her retirement years raising Sherry and Michelle. She imparted many values of Slovak heritage, hard work, and ethic into those girls.

I have my family's original voyage of passage here today. I remember when I found this document in my grandmother's house as we were packing up to put her into an assisted living facility. I remember asking her why she would make the decision to do this, and why great-gramma would bring the family overseas. She said that they did it to be safe, to be free, to build their future and mine, and to build a better country. With that in my heart, I find myself here today in Canada's Parliament speaking to the bill before us.

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●(1630)

Canada is a country of immigrants who stand on the traditional lands of, and shoulder-to-shoulder with, first nations and aboriginal peoples who bring their wealth of experience, their thoughts, their hopes, their desires, and their dreams together under a banner of pluralism, freedom, and language.

This makes us unique. Our diversity is our competitive advantage. It keeps our economy growing. It keeps our public policy discourse vibrant. It enriches our civil society and keeps us hopeful and optimistic. Because of this, in my view, immigration policy in Canada should never be about why but about how. In this I believe that my Liberal colleagues and I are united. The bill contains a lot of how. It contains fundamental changes to how and under what circumstances we grant citizenship in our country, and for that it should be scrutinized carefully and objectively, which I will try to do now.

First of all, the bill has several components. The first component the minister has already spoken to, and removes the grounds of the revocation of Canadian citizenship that relate to national security. The minister spoke at length on this.

I am really enjoying this critic portfolio because I believe that immigration will be at the core of many of the public policy challenges we will be facing in the next 10 to 20 years in Canada, especially since we have an aging workforce.

I believe that new Canadians enrich and strengthen our country. Their experiences and perspectives, as much as my experience is grounded in the experience of immigrants, make us stronger. As I said, it leads to more vibrant public policy.

My concern with this element of the bill is that it is the government's first priority. It does revoke the citizenship of a convicted terrorist and I do not think we can be glib or flippant about that. I will be the first one to admit that issues pertaining to this were highly contentious during the election campaign, but because they are contentious, it does not absolve us in this place of the ability and the duty to speak to these issues.

I find it shocking that this is the government's first priority in the bill, and I do not accept the argument that the former government's act somehow created two classes of citizens. It did not, and there are other grounds by which citizenship can be revoked, which the minister did not really speak to.

I read an article about two Nazi war criminals in 2007 who had their citizenship revoked. Citizenship can still be revoked on the grounds of fraudulent methods, so there are other provisions in Canadian law that the bill does not change. It allows for citizenship revocation.

The discussion around this provision really boils down to what we value about Canadian citizenship. The Liberal government has put forward the following argument. If someone is a convicted terrorist and has dual national citizenship, the government believes that the person can serve his or her term out in jail and that this would be an appropriate penalty for that. The alternative to that is that if someone is a dual national citizen and has committed a terrorist act against

Canada, which does affect all Canadians, as we saw here in October 2014, their citizenship should be revoked.

I am trying to be very respectful here and would ask the Liberals that as we go forward in the debate here, we do not debase this conversation to a fallacy, that the existing act created two classes of Canadian citizenship. This is a choice on punishment for a very serious act against our nation. The bill makes a choice in that regard. For that reason, I oppose this particular section of the bill.

The second section of the bill removes the requirement that an applicant intends, if granted citizenship, to continue to reside in Canada.

●(1635)

As I was cleaning out a trunk in my grandmother's basement, it was incredible to find newspaper clippings from the 1940s from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, which talked about the role of the Slovak community during wartime and its nascent roots in Winnipeg. When people moved to Winnipeg—my family, my ancestors—it was not all about tough times but joy. My great-grandma wrote a play. She was an actor. I guess there was something inherited there. She contributed to the community. I also found records of my great-grandfather who fundraised for the Slovak Catholic parish in Winnipeg.

When we celebrate immigration and diversity, we should be celebrating the fact that we want people to stay here and enjoy the experience of being a Canadian and contributing back to our country. It is what has made us amazing. It is what we should be celebrating as we work towards Canada's 150th anniversary.

It is quite reasonable, given that this is the spirit that binds our pluralism, to say that when people want to become Canadian citizens, they intend to stay here and make this nation stronger, as we commit to do the same for them. Taking this requirement out of the existing act removes the spirit and intent of that legislation.

The third component of this bill seeks to reduce the number of days during which a person must have been physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship. The same argument applies there. I was reading the committee testimony for the bill that was previously before Parliament and made some of these changes. Some of the quotes from the testimony can be distilled to the following, that the longer an individual lives, works, or studies in Canada, the greater connection that person will have to our beautiful and special country. I do not see this as a punitive measure.

I say that if people become citizens of this country, which I hope they do, and want to run for office, vote, or have any of the privileges that are accorded with Canadian citizenship, the time they have spent here gives them a greater understanding of Canadian pluralism and what unites us, such as gender equality, freedom of speech, freedom of sexual orientation, all the things that allow us to function and coexist as a nation of many nations under the same common banner. They need to experience that to be Canadian citizens, and that is the spirit of what this change was. That is my concern with reducing it.

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I also do not think it provides an unnecessary barrier. I am looking forward to hearing witnesses at committee who can argue otherwise, but going into that debate, my sense is that it imparts the value of Canadian citizenship and imparts to people going through the citizenship process the point that Canada wants to invest in them during that process. We want to welcome them into our cultural institutions, we want them to learn what it means to be Canadian citizens, we want them to understand the public policy dialogue.

The fourth section limits the requirement to demonstrate knowledge of Canada in one of its official languages to applicants between the ages of 18 and 54. Previously, that restriction was set at 64 years of age. We often talk about one of the public policy challenges that we will be dealing with in the next 10 years, which is how to continue to knit together Canada's pluralism, which I just spoke about, as we increase and embrace more Canadians.

I will add that the Conservative government welcomed over 1.6 million new Canadians during its time in office, which was a significant number. Moreover, year over year on an annualized basis, that number was significantly higher than under the previous government to ours. I applaud its efforts to look at the citizenship numbers and situations, but I also think, to give credit where credit is due, that Conservatives increased that number significantly.

As we continue to do that and look at pluralism, there are many things that unite us, and language is one of them. Language is a unifier. Language binds us together. It allows us to have shared common experiences that we can communicate. I strongly believe that rather than talking about reducing the age limit, we should be talking about whether it is a barrier for someone over that age. I would argue that 55 is not that old. Fifty-five is probably the new 18. It is not that old. I would argue that someone who is 55 years old, or 54, still has a significant amount of life experience to contribute. If it is a barrier to learning the language, then how do we overcome the barrier?

• (1640)

One of the things that concerns me about the Syrian refugee initiative is the reports that new people coming to Canada through that initiative are waiting months for access to language training services. I am not sure why the government's first reaction in the bill has been to lower the language requirements rather than asking how we can help them learn the language. That is important. It allows them to participate in so many different facets of Canadian society in a way that opens doors to them. It allows them to experience so many different things. That is why language proficiency is so important.

I am really curious why the government would reduce this. It is something I look forward to hearing about at committee as well. My gut reaction to this after I found some of my grandmother's notes is that we should be asking how we can help someone learn English rather than reducing the requirement. She was 15 years old and worked so hard to learn English. She put herself through that program by herself.

There are other components of the bill, which I believe are more technical amendments, which I do support. Overall, especially in the context of the government's tabling of its immigration levels report yesterday, I feel that it is a separate policy argument for a separate

time. The government is proposing a significant change to the ratio of people who come to Canada under economic immigration classes, like the federal skilled worker programs, versus those who come in through streams such as the refugee initiative. However, in the context of the provisions of the bill, those numbers are very important. If we are talking of a 250% increase in refugees coming into Canada and our first response has been to lower the language requirement, I hope we can have more language training services. However, the age that someone can become a Canadian citizen without language proficiency is an issue.

When we talk about changing the intent to reside in Canada, when we are increasing overall numbers of immigrants to Canada, that is an issue. How are we providing services?

I asked a question of the minister earlier, which is serious. There are so many people who want to come to our country that processing times are an issue. I hear about that every day. How can we fix spousal sponsorship processing times?

If we are changing the system and changing the formula of how many people come to our country, and we do not have a plan to resource that, either through faster processing times or providing long-term housing to refugees, that is of concern. My colleague from the NDP, the member for Vancouver East, talks about 70% of refugees still being in temporary accommodation. Regardless of political stripe, that is something we need to be concerned about.

My concern with the bill is that it puts the cart before the horse in a lot of ways. It looks at issues that perhaps are not of the utmost concern with regard to immigration policy in Canada. I hope we can come to some sort of consensus because this is something that is going to affect our country over the next 10 years. We need people from other countries to ensure that lack of skilled labour is not detrimental to economic growth, that we are meeting our humanitarian obligations overseas, and we are looking at family reunification, but we are doing it in a way that is resourced. It should be done in the context of a budget that is manageable and with an overall plan for the economy that allows that Canadian advantage, that thing that brought my great-grandmother over to this country with two young girls and nothing else.

I hope I have conveyed my thoughts in a very non-partisan manner. I am happy to take any questions.

• (1645)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, whether I refer to the personal example of myself or to my parents.

I came to Canada in January 1984 and received my citizenship on July 17, 1987. From day one in Canada, I felt like a proud Canadian, even though I was not a Canadian citizen at that time.

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I went to the University of Calgary. I did not speak any English when I came to this country. I was able to secure a degree in engineering, a post-graduate diploma in R and D management and utilization. Now I hold two professional designations, one as a professional engineer and one as a B.C. land surveyor. Most importantly, the people of Surrey—Newton gave me the privilege of sitting in this House in 2006, 2008, and now.

I do not feel I am any less Canadian because I had only three years of residency in Canada when I applied for citizenship. I do not feel that I would be a better citizen if I had had to wait another year.

In the case of my personal example, does the member feel that I am any less Canadian because I was here only three years and not four?

•(1650)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, it is experiences like my colleague's that enrich our country. When we talk about adding to the intellectual capital of this country, it is experiences like his that we are referring to. When we talk about building the economy in this country, it means experiences like his.

The member asked about being Canadian. We are having a conversation about the value of Canadian citizenship, and we both agree that the value is very high.

The comment that I made in my speech with regard to the residency requirement stands. My colleague and I both value very dearly what our country can give to us and what we can give to it. The spirit of adding the extra year was to ensure that those who came to Canada had a full experience so that Canada could invest in them, and vice versa.

My colleague and I are not offside on this issue at all. When I listened to the member's story, it made me proud to have Canadian citizenship too, because our country is a place where that story can happen. Our country is a place that allows individuals to have the opportunity to stand in the House of Commons and have a policy debate.

I congratulate my colleague. I hope that we can continue this debate going forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague for her very moving and beautiful speech. I would like to thank her for having the confidence to share with the House such a personal story as that of her family. Her speech was very emotional and I am convinced that her whole family is very proud. She is right when she says that we can be proud of what led her to become a member here and do the good work that she does.

That being said, she is asking us to reach a consensus, but I would like an acknowledgement that there were some abuses when the other government was in power, in the last Parliament. The expertise of members here definitely includes dealing with citizenship applications.

Many people go to their MPs with citizenship issues. I have heard many stories from people, people who have a name and whom I see crying, people who cannot pay the fees that only keep rising, as do

the wait times. At one point, the wait times were so long that they could no longer pay the fees, even though they had the money at the beginning of the year.

Is it not true that there were excesses that could be corrected, and can we reach a consensus on that as well?

[*English*]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and I think it is one that is worthy of study and debate by all parties in the House.

As I mentioned at the start of my speech, Canada's immigration policy will inform many different areas of public policy in the next 10 to 20 years, including the growth of the economy, the provision of skilled labour, enrichment of our culture, and our participation on the global stage.

How we manage and resource our immigration processing system is worthy of study. The cost is worthy of study as well. I would encourage my colleague or one of his colleagues to bring this matter up for study at the immigration committee for the House to consider.

•(1655)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech and her excellent work in general on this very important file.

I believe, and I think our caucus believes deeply, that citizenship needs to have value. In fact, it is many new Canadians who particularly appreciate the value of that citizenship, perhaps in some cases because they have had experience in other countries with more challenging environments.

What this bill would do, in my view, is reduce the value of citizenship by allowing someone to be involved in terrorism, which completely goes against Canadian values, and also to not have the intention of living in Canada at all. This potentially toxic combination would reduce the value of our citizenship. The changes we brought in helped to increase the value of citizenship, and that is why so many new Canadians supported those changes.

I wonder if the member could comment specifically on the value of citizenship and why our approach emphasizes that key concept more.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am going to try to have another shockingly non-partisan moment here. We will see if I succeed.

My Liberal colleague shared a story of his journey to Canada and how he has contributed to his country. His question was whether we thought of him as any less of a Canadian. My response was no. We need more of that, we need all of that, and we need that from around the world.

We have to be very careful when we talk about the value of citizenship. We have to talk more about intent. When we are looking at citizenship as a means to bolster Canada in the long term in a wide variety of areas, we should be looking at this: if somebody wants to come to Canada and reside here and contribute, how do we help them succeed? How do we resource that? If that person's intent is not to do that, how do we treat that situation?

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This is where we can tie in the components of it being a choice in what we do with dual nationals who have been convicted of a terrorist act. What is the punishment for that? We need to divorce that conversation from the fact that there are so many people who do not even think about the value of Canadian citizenship. They think about how to participate in the Canadian economy, how to participate in our culture on a day-to-day basis.

I am hoping that, as we go forward and as we have this debate on this bill, we really focus on how rather than why we deal with immigration, as I said at the start of my speech.

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the member opposite on the beginning of her speech. I thought it was quite elegant, and I agreed up to a certain point, although I have some fundamental disagreement with the philosophy she espoused since. I would also like to suggest that the comments from the member for Surrey—Newton and his experience essentially, in my view, validate what we are trying to espouse through this new bill and what the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship is leading here.

One of the points that the member opposite did not get to in her speech was the return of partial credits to international students who come to study in our world-class universities. I am proud to boast of two such universities in Fredericton—the University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University—that attract smart, intelligent, highly skilled, and capable international students every year. They could contribute so much to the community I live in and to the province of New Brunswick, which need these young, industrious, entrepreneurial social leaders to stay and be part of our communities.

I would like the member opposite to comment on her support of the initiative to return some of the credit to international students who come to our communities and who can contribute so much to Canada.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, in the government's immigration levels report yesterday, the government significantly changed the formula for how many people can come to Canada. That raises a lot of questions, including this particular stream.

I am not arguing for or against, but it is a question to ask and then resource appropriately. How does the entry of international students affect placement for Canadians who are attending post-secondary institutions? I spent most of my career in PSE and I know international students definitely add to that. That is a wonderful thing.

However, given the significant change yesterday in the immigration levels report, there are more questions that the government has to answer with regard to its plan to resource and support people in any immigration stream coming into Canada.

• (1700)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-6 is an act that would amend the Conservatives' Bill C-24, the so-called strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act. To put Bill C-6 in context, we must first examine the content of Bill C-24.

During the 41st Parliament, the Conservatives made significant changes to the Citizenship Act under Bill C-24. Effectively, the Conservatives' Bill C-24 created two classes of citizens in which

Canadians with dual citizenship were treated as second-class citizens. Many experts repeatedly pointed out that the bill was likely unconstitutional and did not respect international law.

The NDP opposed Bill C-24 from the beginning and at second reading, the NDP called on the Conservatives to withdraw the bill. The Conservatives refused and, despite our opposition, rammed Bill C-24 through without amendment. Then, in June 2014, Bill C-24 received royal assent. Since then, the NDP has been asking for the bill to be repealed.

As it happens, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister made the promise, particularly in the Chinese media, that he would repeal Bill C-24 if he formed government. Well, as members may have guessed, Bill C-6 does not repeal Bill C-24 in its entirety.

The NDP is disappointed that the Prime Minister is failing to deliver on his promise to repeal Bill C-24, but we welcome the provisions of Bill C-6.

Worth mentioning are the following amendments: removing the ability to revoke citizenship on national interest grounds; removing the obligation for a new citizen to declare intent to reside in Canada; restoring the length of time a permanent resident must actually be present in Canada to qualify for citizenship to three years, which is 1,095 days over the last five years; restoring the right to count two years of temporary residence toward the required presence in Canada; eliminating the requirement that an applicant must have been present in Canada for 183 days in four out of the six years; and removing the requirement for the language and knowledge examinations to permanent residents aged 14 to 17 and 55 to 64.

The NDP supports these provisions. First and foremost, we fundamentally believe that all Canadians should be treated equally under the law.

The Conservatives' Bill C-24 created two classes of citizens, some with more rights than others. Disproportionately, immigrants to Canada, their children and grandchildren, and those with dual or multiple citizenships are deemed to have less rights than those who were born in Canada.

If a Canadian is charged with a criminal offence, let him or her be brought in front of the Canadian judicial system and be tried fairly, independently, and equally under the Canadian judicial system. If found guilty, let him or her be sentenced under the same principles of fairness, independence, and equality.

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The Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, and many respected academics all said that the former Bill C-24 was likely unconstitutional and did not respect international law. In fact, there was already a court challenge on Bill C-24. Josh Paterson, the executive director of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association, said:

All Canadian citizens used to have the same citizenship rights, no matter what their origins. We were all equal under the law. Now this new law has divided us into classes of citizens—those who can lose their citizenship, and those who can't. Bill C-24 is anti-immigrant, anti-Canadian, and anti-democratic. It undermines – quite literally – what it means to be Canadian.

I am glad that Bill C-6 addresses this concern and this concern will be no more after the passage of Bill C-6.

Building from that basic fundamental principle, repealing the intent to reside provision of Bill C-24 is also a step in the right direction. The freedom of mobility, including the ability to leave the country, is very clearly enshrined in section 6 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The intent to reside provision in Bill C-24 was vague, difficult to prove, confusing for citizenship applicants, and ignored the changing realities of people. Someone can intend to reside, but life circumstances, such as a relative in another country becoming severely ill, could interrupt that intention.

• (1705)

Work obligations could also alter that intention. In fact, during the campaign, I came across someone who has dual citizenship in the United States. As it happens, she is in the film industry. She travels a lot with her work. Sometimes she is away for a week. Other times, she may be away for a year or more. There is no telling. It is all subject to her work.

With Bill C-24, she was concerned that her intent to reside in Canada could be challenged and that she might lose her citizenship. This is just plain wrong. I am glad that Bill C-6 addresses this concern.

The Conservative Bill C-24 also made the pathway to citizenship for immigrants harder, longer, and frankly with other measures, more expensive to obtain. Accessibility to citizenship is the ultimate pathway to a person's right to fully participate in a democratic society. The cornerstone of a democracy is imbedded in having the right to vote. Creating additional barriers to access this citizenship only serves to undermine our democratic institution.

To that end, the NDP also supports the measure in Bill C-6 that returns physical presence requirements to what they were prior to Bill C-24, allowing time in Canada prior to obtaining permanent residence to partially count toward the physical presence requirement.

As I previously mentioned, there is a countless number of legitimate situations that would require a permanent resident or citizen to leave the country for an extended period of time. Restoring the old physical presence requirements is a step in the right direction, as is giving at least partial credit for the time spent in this country before obtaining permanent residence.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, officials take their work seriously and work judiciously to ensure that every permanent resident meets the requirements to become a new Canadian.

The Conservative former Bill C-24 was brought in under the pretext that the provisions within the bill strengthened the meaning of being a Canadian, when in fact I would argue it served to undermine many of our strongly held Canadian values and principles.

As stated by Mitch Goldberg, president of the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, “Instead of welcoming new Canadians, the new Citizenship Act discriminates against them”.

Bill C-6 would rectify this, and the NDP welcomes the amendments proposed under Bill C-6.

With that being said, I would be remiss if I did not turn my attention to what is missing in Bill C-6 as well. First, on the right to judicial review before losing citizenship, I was glad to hear the minister reference this, and his willingness to entertain amendments.

Prior to Bill C-24, individuals who were accused of fraud and risked having their citizenship revoked could request a hearing before a Federal Court judge who would review the minister's evidence. A final decision would then be made by the Governor in Council.

Bill C-24 allowed the minister to make a decision based on a review of paperwork with no right to a judicial hearing. The NDP believes that a citizen facing revocation should always have the right to a hearing before an independent and impartial decision-maker.

Under Bill C-6, which was tabled, we believe that the Liberals agree with that as well. In fact, the Liberals tabled an amendment to Bill C-24, which would provide the right to a full appeal to the Federal Court in the case of citizenship revocation proceedings. In support of the amendment, a Liberal member stated quite clearly that Canadians deserve the right to appeal with regard to citizenship.

However, today the Liberal Bill C-6 does not deliver on that sentiment. The Liberals' failure to address this feature of Bill C-24 means, I am afraid, that there may still be a constitutional challenge of the Citizenship Act, which would be viable.

Second, on the issue regarding people charged with a criminal offence abroad, Bill C-6 does not amend the provision that prohibits granting citizenship to anyone charged with or serving a sentence for a criminal offence abroad. This broad measure fails to account for countries dealing with corruption within government and the judicial system, as well as governments engaging in political prosecution.

The Canadian Bar Association and others have further argued that this prohibition was far too broad and created significant inequalities between applicants, depending on their country of origin.

Government Orders

•(1710)

Additionally, the Canadian Bar Association has suggested that these cases are best dealt with by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act and the Immigration and Refugee Board, where cases can be determined upon their individual merits, and the NDP agrees with the recommendation of the Canadian Bar Association.

Third is discretionary citizenships granted by the minister. Bill C-6 would not require the minister to disclose cases where citizenship is granted for discretionary reasons, the frequency of citizenships granted, or the reasons for granting citizenship at all.

We want to ensure that privacy rights are respected, and we should work within those boundaries. However, it is problematic to not make information available, because it speaks to the lack of transparency. Given the recent example we have seen of, I think, the hyperpartisan former minister of citizenship and immigration, under the Conservatives, I think we need more transparency and accountability.

Fourth is the issue of language. While Bill C-6 would revoke the changes made by Bill C-24 by bringing back the language knowledge requirements for applicants aged 18 to 54 instead of 14 to 64, the threshold for language proficiency under Bill C-24 remains.

Under the current system, they must send in results of an accepted third party test at the equivalent of Canadian language benchmark level 4 or higher in speaking or listening, or provide proof of completion of a secondary or post-secondary program conducted in French or English. If they do not send in documents to prove that they have met this requirement, their application for citizenship will not be accepted.

The higher language requirement does not demonstrate that they are somehow more Canadian.

As well, Bill C-6 would maintain the requirement for citizenship applicants to pass a knowledge test about Canada in one of the two official languages.

Effectively, this would amount to double testing and would not really represent an individual's ability to function and succeed in Canada.

Many immigrants have come to Canada who have not been able to read and write in French or English at the proficiency level that is currently required, but they have worked hard, paid taxes, raised their families, contributed to our society, and become an integral part of our communities.

I can share with members the story of my own family. We all came, and none of us spoke English. To this day, I would say that, if my mother were put to a test such as the one that exists right now, she would likely fail that test. Yet, all of her life since she immigrated here, she worked, first as a farm worker, making \$10 a day to support a family of eight. Then she got a minimum-wage job at a restaurant, which she retired from at 65, and she supported her family every single day with those efforts. She spoke minimum English—enough to get by, enough to support her family, enough to vote and understand what voting means and what democracy means.

With that being said, I would argue that the proficiency test is way too high for far too many immigrants, and that must change.

Fifth is the issue of financial barriers. Bill C-6 does not address how much permanent residents should pay for their citizenship applications to be processed by the ministry.

Citizenship processing fees have increased from \$100 to \$530 since February 2014, under the Conservatives. This is on top of the additional \$100 right of citizenship fee. A family of four would have to pay \$1,460. That is more than a month's rent for many. A family's bank account should not be the deciding factor on whether or not they can become Canadian citizens.

I really hope that the Liberal government will change this. Access to the pathway to citizenship is critical for all immigrants. Let us make it easier, not harder, to attain.

Bill C-6 would not make access to citizenship financially accessible for many permanent residents and their families. I do hope that the Liberal government acts to reduce the financial barriers along the path to citizenship.

Sixth is ensuring fair processing delays. Under the Conservatives, the processing delays for citizenship applications exploded to 24 months for regular cases and 36 months for non-routine cases.

The Liberals have committed to processing all applications received before April 1, 2015, by March 31, 2016, and to processing new applications within a 12-month period.

•(1715)

However, this one-year delay does not apply to non-routine cases, which are often only called this because a residence questionnaire was issued. This creates an enormous gap of 24 months, perpetrating a two-tier system, and we believe this should be changed as well.

The NDP will continue to push the Liberal government to take these measures and to act urgently on lengthy wait times, huge backlogs, the issue around family reunification for parents and grandparents, and the barriers to citizenship that still remain in place.

New Canadians provide countless benefits to this country every single day. We see many of those Canadians in this very chamber, some elected for the first time. Others are returning members. That is the testimony of who we are, and it speaks about the strength of Canada to harness that. Those rules that create barriers for access to citizenship must be changed.

This deserves a system that recognizes all immigrants for their contributions in making Canada the wonderful country it is. We are built on a multicultural community basis. Let us harness those strengths, eliminate the barriers, and make sure Canada in its process, in its policies, and in its approach is truly Canadian and reflects our multicultural values.

Government Orders

Mr. David Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has gone to great lengths to tell us why Bill C-24 was a terrible bill, and I appreciate her support on this issue. The Conservative government went to great lengths to devalue Canadian citizenship, to make Canadians unequal, and to separate Canadians by the age of their stock. The minister warned that revocation of citizenship on the basis of a particular crime is a slippery slope, a sentiment with which I could not agree more.

I have citizenship in two countries and eligibility for citizenship in two more. I have never been to any of those other three countries where I either have or am eligible to have citizenship. My two-year-old daughter has multiple citizenships as well. Among my wife, me, and my daughter, we are either citizens of or are eligible to be citizens of Canada, Ireland, the Philippines, Spain, and Israel. This is the result from being from families of immigrants from all over the world. It does not even list the numerous countries like France, Turkey, Poland, and Australia where I have ancestry but not citizenship.

I am the result of that very Canadian story of immigrants coming from everywhere, getting together, and creating new generations of Canadians. Why should my daughter be subject to a slippery slope whereby she could be stripped of her Canadian citizenship and sent to another country in which she has theoretical eligibility for citizenship, but has never been and may not even have the intention to explore because of breaking that law the particular government has passed? I will ask her in a few years.

What value has Canadian citizenship if we give the government the right to revoke it at will? What is a Canadian if not a Canadian? The member's comments on Bill C-24 are essentially correct, and I want to thank her for helping us on the road to fixing a decade of mistakes by the last government on this file. It is not the only error it made and is not the only one on which we will be seeking help to rectify.

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments and for sharing some of his family history with us. I wholeheartedly agree that individuals who have dual citizenship, or can have dual citizenship, or multiple citizenship for that matter, should be treated the same as any other Canadian in this country. That is the premise of who we are. That is exactly the Canadian value we talk about.

It is not just I or the NDP who says this. Lawyers and people who are well versed with our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and with international law echo that point of view as well.

To that end, I am glad to see Bill C-6 being debated in the House to address some of these concerns. The member is absolutely right. There is still much more work to be done, and I look forward to his support on some of the issues that I have identified as missing in Bill C-6, on which we need action. Let us hope, and let us work together to make Canada a better place.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is striking how the government caucus is so keen to spread absolute misinformation about the existing bill that is being changed. Liberals gloss over the fact that this bill strips citizenship from convicted terrorists, that nobody needs to worry about this bill unless they plan on committing an act of terrorism.

Those are the people who are liable to lose their citizenship. The Conservatives' position is that convicted terrorists do not have a right to be part of the Canadian family if they are not going to accept our fundamental values.

The bill leaves in place, though, the option of stripping citizenship from those who obtain their citizenship fraudulently. I wonder if the member could comment.

Does she see this as an inconsistency? The government says people can lose their citizenship, in fact, dual citizens can be stripped of their citizenship, if they obtain their citizenship fraudulently, but not if they were involved in terrorism.

Does this not seem to suggest the opposite of the Liberals' rhetoric and that they regard fraud as a more serious matter than terrorism?

• (1720)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter is that if people commit crimes, whatever crime it might be, whether a crime of national interest or any other crime, they should go through the Canadian judicial system equally, fairly, and independently. Everyone should go through that process. No one should be able to escape that process. They should go to trial and then, if convicted, through the sentencing process as well. There should not be a two-tier process of what the sentencing might be depending on one's place of origin.

That being said, on the issue of fraud, the member actually raised a slightly different point, in this sense. When people commit fraud in their applications, they are effectively providing false information. They are lying about the information that they are putting forward. If that is the case, then there needs to be a mechanism to address that and that is what the bill speaks to.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent speech, which I think most members appreciated.

I am very pleased that we are going to vote in favour of Bill C-6 at second reading. I was here during the previous Parliament when the House passed Bill C-24, and this bill does address a number of problems.

However, like most members of the NDP, who made up the official opposition at the time, I opposed the discretionary power that the bill gave to the minister. Bill C-24 was not the only example of this. Various other bills gave discretionary powers to the finance minister, the public safety minister and, in this case, the immigration minister. I remember quite well that, at the time, the Liberal opposition agreed with us and was opposed to giving ministers new discretionary powers that would allow them to make decisions without necessarily going through the proper channels.

Government Orders

I would like to ask my colleague what she thinks of the provisions that grant this sort of discretionary power and how important she thinks they are. How does she suggest we make the process fairer than just allowing the minister to make decisions at his or her discretion?

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, the critic for finance. He has a history, having been here when Bill C-24 was tabled, and has gone through the debate. I appreciate the concern around discretionary powers given to the minister.

Bill C-6 does not actually address that. It still allows for the minister to have the discretionary power to revoke a citizenship. What I hope the government will do and would urge it to do is to, in fact, go back to the way the system was and put the authority to revoke citizenship before an independent body through the Federal Court system and for a Federal Court judge to make that decision.

That is the best way to do it, openly, with accountability, and to ensure politics stays out of somebody's citizenship.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for supporting the intent of Bill C-6.

I am sure the member will agree that the immigration file is one of the top files that the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship is handling. The former government brought in a regressive policy for 10 years and the minister tried to correct that in the first 30 sitting days of this House.

Is she satisfied that the minister is doing great work and is heading in the right direction?

• (1725)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that during the campaign the Prime Minister made a commitment to the Chinese community, particularly through the Chinese media, that if the Liberals formed government he would repeal Bill C-24 in its entirety. If we use that as a barometer to what is happening right now with Bill C-6, it actually falls short.

That being said, I do support the measures brought forward under Bill C-6 for the most part. There are areas I have identified where it needs further action and I hope I can count on the member's support in that regard.

I know the member made a comment in the media regarding the citizenship language issue, particularly the proficiency, or the level of the language. I hope I can count on his support to get his government and his minister to move in the right direction to reduce the proficiency level and to recognize the contributions of immigrants in that regard.

I hope I can also count on the member's support on the financial barriers and reducing the citizenship application fees.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my friend from Surrey—Newton.

It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the government's plan to repeal the unfair provisions found under the Citizenship Act that

were passed in the previous Parliament under Bill C-24, which allowed for the revocation of Canadian citizenship of dual or multiple nationals on the grounds of national interest.

Once again, our government is delivering on the commitments we promised Canadians during last year's federal election. From my perspective, Bill C-24 is not only a bill that personally affects the lives of many of my constituents but it also affects many Canadians across this country.

I note that in the speech by the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, he articulated two broad principles that governed the intent behind Bill C-6.

First and foremost, he enunciated the concept of a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, which was something that we had heard throughout the campaign, and that we found the notion of two different types of classes of Canadian citizens to be offensive.

The second concept that was articulated by the minister was with respect to peeling back the changes found in Bill C-24 that imposed new barriers on welcoming immigrants to this country and becoming Canadian citizens.

There are a series of four provisions within Bill C-6 that attempt to bring back a much more welcoming atmosphere to becoming a Canadian citizen. Those are very important principles. However, I want to focus on two different principles.

I first want to note that I appreciated the speech made by my friend from the New Democratic Party, the member for Vancouver East, who I thought articulated in very clear terms the reasons why her party would be supporting the provisions of Bill C-6. She also put forth some legitimate criticisms that she found, namely, that we did not necessarily go far enough in Bill C-6.

I take the point the minister raised that this government remains open to making reasonable changes, which is a reflection of this particular government. For example, this government would definitely entertain some of the issues the member articulated.

I want to get to those two broad principles that I would like to articulate in the short time I have to talk to Bill C-6 that I feel were particularly offensive under Bill C-24.

The first concept I want to advance, which was a central theme that had been articulated by the previous government and in particular by the former minister of citizenship and immigration, Chris Alexander, is the concept that citizenship is a privilege as opposed to a right. I strongly disagree with the former minister's position on this substantive fate.

The whole concept of strengthening the Canadian Citizenship Act, as minister Alexander had framed it, was that citizenship was somehow a privilege. From my perspective, once it is conferred, it attaches rights. There are obligations and responsibilities that come with citizenship, but it confers rights that are protected specifically under the charter, as my friend from Vancouver East had noted. Therefore, once it is legitimately acquired, the concept of citizenship should not be taken away capriciously.

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That brings me to the second concept. My friends in the New Democratic Party touched upon this particular theme both in the comments made by my friend from Vancouver East and in the question from the finance critic for the NDP, which is the concept of the encroachment of executive power and the lack of procedural due process that was found under Bill C-24. Again, I deeply oppose this concept.

• (1730)

I take the comments that my friend from Vancouver East noted seriously. She remains concerned that there needs to be procedural due process whenever citizenship is stripped away. This government would be amendable to those kinds of amendments to the legislation.

I found particularly odious the previous government's perspective to grant the minister the arbitrary right to decide which individuals would get to keep their citizenship and which ones would not. It was particularly odious because it could be done capriciously and without any sort of procedural due process. There would be no capacity to appeal. There would be no capacity to bring new facts to the table.

I know what members of the Conservative Party are ultimately going to say. They are going to say we would only be stripping citizenship from convicted terrorists. All we heard in the debate in the House from the previous minister and from my friends in the opposition is that at the end of the day once individuals are convicted of a particular crime, they should serve their time, and that is the ultimate sanction. Stripping citizenship from certain classes of individuals is not fundamentally appropriate. More important, it would undermine the whole concept of the fundamental principle of rule of law, where all citizens are treated equally. I note that concept was very well articulated earlier, and I want to reinforce that principle in my comments today.

These are really the fundamental issues of why I will be supporting Bill C-6 in addition to the principles that were enunciated by the minister.

My sense is that this is about what it means to be Canadian, what it ultimately means to create conditions where we are a welcoming society, as noted in the opening comments of the minister, a society that values people who come from around the world. My friend from Calgary Nose Hill articulated the same principles.

I do not agree with my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that somehow this is about an elevation of values. This is very much a values debate, but the value we are attaching is to the protection of fundamental principles, principles that are found in the charter, the principle of rule of law, the principle of equality. That is why we are here in this place. If we cannot protect those fundamental principles for the people we find most offensive in our society, then why are we here? That for me is the core of the debate and why Bill C-6 must be supported.

• (1735)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt always speaks eloquently, even when I do not agree with him. He is so good at making bad ideas sound good.

When it comes to this idea of fundamental principles, he gets at something important. When people choose to reject all the things that characterize Canadian values, when they do not buy in by trying to use the good name of Canadian citizenship to engage in violent terrorism against Canadians, against innocent people, against our values, is there not some point at which people can effectively take themselves out of that citizenship by their own convictions and actions against Canada, against Canadian values, against innocent people?

Let us make this concrete. What would happen when individuals who have the benefit of a Canadian passport travel around the world, use the access a Canadian passport gives them, undertake violence against civilians, plan terrorist activities, continue to use the good name of Canada, and have to be bailed out by us in certain situations? Is there not some point where individuals by their own actions take themselves out of the Canadian family by choosing to be involved in this kind of violence?

Mr. Arnold Chan: Madam Speaker, we agree that people we find offensive in our society, whether that be terrorists, murders, or whatever, need to be punished to the fullest extent of the law. We support that on the government side. The question is whether we create an additional penalty for certain classes of individuals. In this case, we are only talking about people who have a dual citizenship or the potential of a dual citizenship. Therefore, it can only be applied to certain people. From my perspective, that ultimately devalues the whole notion of equality of citizenship, which is much more fundamental.

There are many other mechanisms that my friend has articulated in his question that I think allows us to deal with it, whether that be confiscation of passports or travel restrictions. There are other mechanisms that we can impose on these types of individuals, but again, it gets down to fundamental values. The concept of equality is paramount.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for highlighting the questions I asked my other colleague from British Columbia. However, I would like a more specific answer.

At the time, we opposed, as did the Liberal opposition, granting such discretionary powers to ministers on such fundamental issues. That was the case for the public safety file and several bills dealing with finances.

In this case, we are dealing with immigration. Granting discretionary power to a person and their entourage by circumventing the process is fundamentally contrary to the rule of law. I would like to ask my colleague who touched on that issue for his comments.

What do he and his colleagues think of these powers that his party, during the election campaign, promised to eliminate, but that still remain in the hands of the minister and his entourage?

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Arnold Chan: Madam Speaker, as I said in my remarks, even the minister has acknowledged that no bill is ultimately perfect. That is why this government has adopted a process of strengthening committees and giving opportunities for members to exercise the democratic function in which they were elected.

I agree fully with the principle that executive power, particularly in a Westminster-style model, needs to be checked, and we are doing our best to do that. If there is a particular flaw in the bill, this side of the House will remain open to those effective changes.

All things ultimately require balance. At the end of the day, there is also a function of protecting Canadians and security. However, that should never be done in such a way that it is capricious, or without the application of the rule of law, or the principles of both procedural and substantive due process.

● (1740)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as an immigrant to this country, I fondly remember the day, July 17, 1987, when I became a Canadian citizen. It was one of the proudest days of my life and something I had dreamed about ever since I moved to Canada in January of 1984.

This is my frame of reference in speaking in support of Bill C-6. I always understood Canada to be a country that welcomed refugees and immigrants and inspired them to strive to become Canadian citizens, to take that step toward full membership and permanent belonging in Canadian society. This is why Conservative Bill C-24, introduced in 2014 by the previous government, is so concerning to Canadians across Canada.

Even the hon. member for Calgary Forest Lawn, a former parliamentary secretary and the longest continuously serving Conservative MP in the House, has publicly said that he has always opposed the bill.

The member has been quoted as stating that he was “taken to task” by members of his own party for being one of the few MPs on that side of the House to vote against Bill C-24.

Bill C-24 was an attempt by the Conservative Party to fundamentally change what it meant to be a Canadian as part of political branding exercise. The act created two classes of Canadians: those that only had Canadian citizenship and those who were at risk by having dual citizenship. Using their typical rhetoric of being tough on terrorism as justification, the Conservatives completely devalued what it meant to hold a Canadian passport.

One of the most troubling aspects of the act is the way that Canadian citizenship could be so easily revoked. For example, convictions abroad that convinced a government official that an individual was a national security threat may prompt a process where Canadian citizenship could be stripped away.

By no means does our government support citizens involved in terrorist offences, or espionage, or treason inside or outside of Canada's borders. However, this ability to remove citizenship from dual citizens is a problem.

First, a Canadian citizen without dual citizenship from another country could never have their passport revoked for the same crimes committed abroad.

Second, it makes Canadian citizenship a tool for the criminal justice system. Punishment for crimes should be decided in courts of law, either in Canada or outside of Canada, but the possibility of losing one's Canadian passport as a form of punishment is completely inappropriate.

Last, for the minister to have such wide discretionary powers in the review and revocation process is a complete breach of due process and fairness.

There are also aspects of the Conservative's Bill C-24 that only serve to discourage immigrants from wanting to become Canadian citizens. Immigrants want to apply for Canadian citizenship and attachment to Canada by the days they were physically present in the country. As a result, thousands of immigrant applicants are forced to sacrifice academic and employment opportunities or family obligations abroad just so they do not put their citizenship application process in jeopardy.

● (1745)

Bill C-6 will correct and repeal many of the wrongs contained in Bill C-24. Allow me to outline some of the significant changes being proposed by sharing stories I have heard over the past few months in my riding of Surrey—Newton.

To the young man I met in November who was scared about travelling to the country of his dad's birth for fear of being targeted and arrested by a repressive government regime, I say that Bill C-6 will remove the grounds for revocation of Canadian citizenship that relate to national security.

To the immigrant mother of two young children who came to my constituency office worried about what might happen to her application if she temporarily returned to her homeland to care for her sick mother, I say that Bill C-6 will reduce the number of days that someone will have to be physically present in Canada before applying for citizenship, and that they will receive credit for the time they have spent in Canada before becoming a permanent resident.

There was also a man who was very nervous about applying for citizenship for his quite elderly, sick mother, who struggled with English.

When the Minister of Immigration was giving his speech, I got a call from one of my constituents, Dawinder Mann. He came to this country many years ago as a refugee. His mother, sister, and all his brothers and children are settled here, but unfortunately his wife was not able to apply for Canadian citizenship. She is in a position where her country of origin will not issue her a passport. Now she is not able to pass the English requirement. She is 54. Therefore, she would not be able to get a passport either from Canada or her country of origin. Now her husband is very happy that his wife, Harjinder Mann, under the new legislation, in a year's time will be able to apply proudly for Canadian citizenship and be able to carry a Canadian passport.

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These are the types of stories that encourage me to support the Minister of Immigration, the work he is doing, and the bill he has brought forward.

I believe passionately in the power of Canadian citizenship. I believe that the Government of Canada should do everything in its power to encourage newcomers to become Canadian citizens. The Canadian passport is sacred and highly sought after across the globe.

This is why using Canadian citizenship to fearmonger or as a means of control or simply as a political prop is so very wrong. As our Prime Minister has said, and I say again, a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, and our Minister of Immigration has also said that. This is why he brought Bill C-6 forward, so that every Canadian can feel that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian.

I encourage all members to support Bill C-6 so that what it means to be a Canadian can once again be used to unite rather than divide us.

I am thankful for this opportunity to share my thoughts with my fellow members.

• (1750)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on your appointment, as I congratulate the member for Surrey—Newton on his recent election back to this place.

The member repeatedly troped that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, which, of course, is true, just as it is true that a traitor who hates Canada is a traitor who hates Canada.

The member opposite can look up on YouTube a video of a Canadian citizen who went abroad to join the genocidal terrorist organization Daesh, ISIL, in Syria. He hates Canada violently, so much so that he videotaped himself soaking his Canadian passport in gasoline, setting it on fire, and then for greater certainty, shooting it with his Kalashnikov, all the while belonging to an organization that has declared war on Canada and which seeks to kill Canadians “wherever they can be found”, according to that organization’s leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi.

Is it the position of the member opposite that the Government of Canada should reissue this gentleman a new passport pursuant to the adoption of the bill before us?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, over many years I have had the opportunity to have discussions with the former minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He knows very well that every person in the House is strongly loyal to Canada. I am certain this is just one example that the member has given to us in the House, and I personally do not support those who are not loyal to our country.

However, there are ways to deal with that situation, such as what the member for Vancouver East clearly said, that there are codes and the rule of the law that will deal with it. People should be punished under the law if they commit a crime.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I want to raise two hypothetical situations for the hon. member for Surrey—Newton.

I want to say on the record how pleased I am that the new government is bringing in Bill C-6. I wish that the Liberals would repeal Bill C-24 in its entirety.

I will give another example to the member for Calgary Midnapore, who paints the worst case. I will take that worst case and ask how does it benefit world peace and security to take someone who is dangerous and put them back in their country of origin? Would that government feel well with them? Are they barred from ever coming back to Canada?

Let me take another example. The reckless Bill C-51 passed by the previous government included offences of so-called terrorism. Part 3 of Bill C-51, which I call the “thought chill section”, deals with things placed on websites that might encourage “terrorism in general”. It could include a Che Guevara poster the way it is worded. Therefore, a person who is innocent, but might have dual citizenship, could be found guilty of a terrorism-related offence for something as innocuous as an image on a website. It is anti-democratic and wrong, and thank God the current government is bringing it down.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for the work she has done for Canadians, particularly on the environment file, as well as for her input in supporting what we are bringing forward on this side.

As I said earlier about the regressive immigration policies in the Citizenship Act of the previous government, the current minister, in the first 30 days of sitting, has made a lot of progress, which I personally commend. I am sure that every person who is concerned about our Canadian values will commend the minister that we now have.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to again thank my constituents for the honour of serving them in the House for the seventh time.

I am here to speak to Bill C-6. Unfortunately, one of the government’s priorities is to restore the Canadian citizenship of terrorists who are filled with hatred towards Canada. They hate our country and they hate being Canadians.

Like the vast majority of Canadians, I believe that citizenship is essential to the Canadian identity, especially since the passage of the Canadian Citizenship Act in 1947, which set out three requirements for citizenship applicants.

First, applicants must live in Canada for a certain period of time, so they can become familiar with their obligations, our customs, our laws, and our Canadian values.

Second, for over six decades, the Canadian Citizenship Act has required applicants to be able to communicate in one of Canada’s two official languages. There is a reason why citizenship is an essential sign of our community and national identity. To be a full member of a community, a person must at least have the ability to communicate with other members of that community. It is no coincidence that “communicate” and “community” come from the same root word.

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In a country as diverse as ours, it is essential that we have certain commonalities in order to be unified in our diversity. One of these essential commonalities is the ability to communicate in one of the two official languages. Obviously, there are a number of proud Canadians who do not currently speak one of the two official languages. However, since the Canadian Citizenship Act was passed in 1947, we have been encouraging them to work toward successfully meeting that goal and thus becoming full members of our community.

Third, the 1947 act requires a basic knowledge of Canada, our laws, customs, values, democratic institutions, and history because this great democracy did not happen by chance. Canada is far more than just a reflection of the world.

[*English*]

I recall the Prime Minister saying in an interview recently that Canada is “the first postnational state” and that it has “no core identity. I, and I believe the vast majority of Canadians, flatly reject that fatuous notion. Canada is a proud nation with a particular history rooted in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, we are ambitious for new Canadians, for all Canadians, to know what our identity is and how, through the struggle of generations, through the organic development of these remarkable parliamentary institutions, through the core values of our society, such as the rule of law, the equality of opportunity, and equality before the law, we managed to develop this country that is something of a model for the world. It did not happen by accident, and this country is far more than just some kind of a post-modern reflection of the world. It comes from a particular set of institutions and values that are incarnated in our laws, and we are ambitious for new Canadians to know that history.

● (1800)

Canada is maintaining the highest sustained levels of immigration in its history. In the past decade, Canada welcomed over 2.6 million new permanent residents and swore in over 1.6 million new Canadian citizens. That was during the prime ministership of the now member for Calgary Heritage.

We are maintaining the highest per capita levels of immigration in the developed world. Some countries have aberrant years when they are a little higher, but on a sustained basis, what we are doing with respect to immigration in this country is unprecedented in our history and, indeed, in the modern history of the developed world.

I maintain that we cannot take for granted the success of our model of unity and diversity, that we must be very deliberate, intentional, about ensuring that there is unity in our diversity, that we do not end up replicating the failed experiences of certain other western countries which are struggling with problems of social exclusion, ethnic enclaves, ghettoization, often which become the precedent factors for radicalization, extremism, social discord, and even violence.

We must not, through happy talk, pretend that there are no challenges to maintain social cohesion. This is not and should not be considered an exclusively conservative value or idea. It was, after

all, the late Prime Minister Mackenzie King who adopted the Citizenship Act in 1947 with these clear obligations for new Canadian citizens. It was former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, who, in 1997, spoke in the chamber about the need for civic literacy as one of the factors to bind us together. What did he mean by civic literacy? He meant a certain common vocabulary about who we are as a people, about our institutions, about from whence we came.

The citizenship program, the citizenship law, is designed, in principle, to help develop that sense of social cohesion, of common Canadian values. I reject categorically the notion of the Prime Minister that there is no such thing as a common Canadian value. There is. This country, this culture, rejects completely the attitude of certain cultures around the world which treat women as property rather than people, for example. That is why, as minister of citizenship and immigration, I was proud to work with new Canadian communities.

[*Translation*]

I was also proud to work with experts and departmental officials to renew the citizenship program by making legislative and administrative changes.

When I became the citizenship and immigration minister in 2008, I discovered that many new Canadian citizens could not speak even very basic French or English. They could not communicate with their fellow citizens. In a way, they were excluded from the Canadian community.

I discovered that even though they had received 100% on the exam to test their knowledge of Canada, some people knew very little about our country, because unscrupulous immigration consultants were selling the test answers to people who were applying for citizenship.

I also learned that there were networks that were helping people who did not live in Canada and had never lived in Canada to commit fraud.

● (1805)

They remained outside the country in tax havens but hired unscrupulous consultants to arrange for testing and fraudulent documentation for citizenship applications. That is appalling and unacceptable.

[*English*]

We are a generous and open country and we simply ask for those who seek to join the Canadian family that they respect our basic laws, customs, know something of our country, and ideally are able to communicate in one of our languages. That is why we needed to reform the program.

One of the ways in which we did so was a modest expansion of the residency requirement in Canada from three out of four years to four out of six years. That still gave people a great deal of flexibility, one-third of the time spent outside of the country to address the kind of exigencies mentioned by the previous speaker. However, I do not think four years is an unreasonable request for people to develop a durable, meaningful attachment to this country. Four years was still the lowest threshold for residency to obtain citizenship of any major democracy in the world.

Government Orders

Canadian citizenship should be the gold standard; it should not be the bargain basement of citizenship in the world. I do not think it is unreasonable to say 48 months is a period in which to develop a meaningful attachment to our country.

With respect to the provision on declaring the intention to reside in Canada, the regulations and the legislation were absolutely clear that people who became Canadian citizens, having signed that declaration, who had to leave for any reason, would not be penalized, and their citizenship would not be revoked. We simply wanted them to consciously declare that their citizenship was not just about obtaining a Canadian passport as a political insurance package.

Millions of Canadian citizens live abroad, including members of my family and most of our families. Most of them maintain a durable attachment to our country. However, regrettably many hundreds of thousands of them who the moment they obtained their Canadian passports left this country and have never come back. We can use politically correct happy talk to pretend this does not happen, but we all know that it does.

We all know cases where we have had to organize massive evacuations for tens of thousands of people who had not lived in our country for years, who had not paid taxes to it, who had not contributed to it, but who pulled out their Canadian passport as a document of political convenience. I believe that passport represents far more. It represents a loyalty of Canada to the citizen and a reciprocal loyalty of the citizen to our country. It is not a document of convenience. It should never be that.

That is why we simply said to these applicants to please express to us that it was actually their intention to reside in Canada, their new country. We welcome them.

I spoke as minister to citizenship judges who quite literally told me that they had seen people coming to take the oath at the ceremony with their bags packed. They were going directly from the ceremony to the airport to return to their countries of origin. That is not consistent with what we consider the sense of a durable connection to Canada. Therefore, I find it regrettable that the Liberals are eliminating this.

Perhaps what I find most regrettable in this is the perverse priority given by the government to the bill to restore citizenship to convicted terrorists. We have heard a lot of demagoguery from the government about the notion that the previous Bill C-24 in the last Parliament created some ostensible two-tier Canadian citizenship. What complete rubbish. Ever since the 1947 Citizenship Act was adopted by Parliament, there has been a power to revoke citizenship or to renounce it. When people say that citizenship is irrevocable, they simply do not know the law. It is revocable in this and every other country and always has been.

● (1810)

In the original 1947 act, adopted by a Liberal government, among the grounds for the revocation of citizenship was the conviction for treason or acts of war against Canada. That was a provision in our law under multiple Liberal governments from 1947 until amendments to the Citizenship Act in 1976 when that was repealed.

Essentially, what we did in 2014 in Bill C-24 was to re-establish the original Liberal law to say that if individuals violently hated our

country we would take a conviction of their violent hatred as evidence of their voluntary, wilful, and deliberate renunciation of the obligations implicit in their Canadian citizenship. That is what that provision, to be repealed in Bill C-6, permitted us to do, under judicial review and in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I mentioned a case that was immediately dismissed, because they do not want to address this issue. It was dismissed out of hand. However, I would invite any member and anyone viewing this to go on line and simply Google “Canadian burning passport in Syria”. They will get two or three images of Canadians who have travelled to join a group. It is not just some group of militants, but a genocidal terrorist organization that has declared hostility and war on Canada and inspired an attack on this very Parliament. It is crucifying children, beheading members of religious minorities, and raping girls as young as eight. They have gone to join that organization, whose membership is illegal in Canada. In more than one of those images we can see these “Canadians” burning and shooting their Canadian passports.

The position of the members opposite appears to be that, if those men who are clearly expressing their violent hatred for Canada were to download a form from CIC's website to renounce their citizenship, fill out the form, sign it, put it in an envelope, and send it to Ottawa, they could therefore renounce their citizenship. That is a terribly cramped and legalistic view of the facts and of citizenship.

I am sorry, but if individuals deliberately go and join an organization at war with Canada—parenthetically, committing genocide—destroy their Canadian passports as a clear indication of their renunciation of those passports and the citizenship they symbolize, we should have no compunction about saying we read their actions for what they are, they constitute renunciation, and we will renounce their citizenship if they are engaged in such acts of terrorism.

The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for whom I have great respect, raised a completely ridiculous, demagogic argument. This is not about having a sign of Che Guevara on a website requiring a conviction in a Canadian court of a terrorist offence or treason that would carry at least a two-year penal sentence. No one in the history of our legal system has faced a terrorist conviction of two years for expressing views. This is about violent terrorism.

What the government is telling us in the bill is that someone can take up arms against our country, so violently do they hate it, like that man in Toronto whose citizenship has been revoked. He was the ringleader of a plot that planned to kill thousands of his fellow citizens in an act of extreme political violence, to demonstrate his violent hatred for our country. In so doing, he renounced his citizenship. He did so through his volition.

Government Orders

The power of revocation simply reflects the volition of those who renounce it violently through such acts of treason or terrorism. The power of revocation does not apply to immigrants versus native-born citizens, as the demagogues in this debate have implied. The only reason it is limited to dual citizens in this application is our legal obligation under the international convention on the prevention of statelessness.

Therefore, I appeal to the members opposite and around this place to think seriously about the meaning of our citizenship and to oppose the provisions of the bill.

● (1815)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the essence of this bill was expressed in a prominent exchange between the former prime minister and the current Prime Minister in the Munk debate during the election campaign, which some see as a defining moment, a turning point, in the campaign. Therefore the essence of the bill is not a surprise to the Canadian people, who voted for a Liberal government on October 19.

The hon. member was talking about Canadian values and accusing the Liberals of believing that there are no Canadian values, which I found to be a slightly outrageous statement. Liberals believe that one of the clearest expressions and codifications of Canadian values is in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The United States does not allow for the revocation of citizenship as a result of a Supreme Court decision. Some European countries that were cited by the hon. member do allow for revocation, but their systems of law are not as similar to the U.S. system of law as ours.

I will quote Dale Gibson, a legal historian in Alberta, who, in comparing these laws in different countries, stated that "...surely the American legal system is considerably closer to ours than many of the European ones" that allow revocation of citizenship. The U.S., unlike Britain, has a constitutional bill of rights.

Therefore, I would like the member's comments on the fact that the United States, which has a very prominent war on terror, does not allow for the revocation of citizenship.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his re-election. He is always a very serious participant in the debates in this place.

First of all, it was the member's own Prime Minister who said that there is no such thing as a Canadian identity and that this is a post-national state. None other than the Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh, the former Liberal minister, upbraided him for that ridiculous assertion.

Second, the member is wrong in asserting that the United States does not have a power of revocation. There are limited grounds for revocation in the United States. They are not based on a U.S. Supreme Court decision but on a constitutional amendment that dealt with the granting of citizenship to slaves following the U.S. Civil War.

Here is the thing. Our Prime Minister is meeting with President Obama tonight. President Obama and the American administration have a rather less delicate way of dealing with American terrorists abroad. It is true that they do not go through the hassle of the paperwork and judicial applications to revoke their citizenships;

rather, they send missiles, launched by drones, and eliminate them. I think the kinetic elimination of U.S. citizens who have committed terrorist offences rather makes the point.

As well, virtually every one of our peer liberal democracies has provisions analogous to those in Bill C-24 for the revocation of citizenship from traitors or terrorists.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my friend from Calgary Midnapore. He brings intelligence to his arguments, even when I disagree with him, but his most recent comment was somewhat disturbing. It almost seemed a longing to bring in what the U.S. does with citizens who are committing acts abroad. I do not know if the evocation of the idea of killing Canadians with drones was really what he was reaching for or suggesting in the Canadian context.

My question is twofold. One part is a question about the values in the Citizenship Act of 1947 and the idea that those values are somehow in a fixed and permanent state. We did not allow first nations people to vote in elections in 1947, so Canadian values can evolve and progress over time, and clearly do.

The question I have for him is on a somewhat salient point, and I am sure he has an answer to it.

In the instance of Canadian citizens committing one of these acts, particularly here in Canada, is it not better to arrest them, as the law in Canada provides for, rather than to revoke their citizenship and send them into a conflict zone, which is likely where they would be going, and thus allow them to further perpetrate those very heinous acts that we all deplore? Is there not an argument to be made at times that if someone is a dual citizen and has committed an act either abroad or here in Canada, the arresting of that person and the containing of that hatred would be a more beneficial circumstance than simply sending the problem overseas for someone else to deal with?

● (1820)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member on his re-election and note that he is always an extraordinarily thoughtful participant in debates in the chamber.

I was not suggesting that Canada replicate the American policy of Democratic President Barack Obama to assassinate American terrorists abroad. I was simply raising the point to put in perspective how very modest our approach is compared to that of our closest ally, whose president is feting our Prime Minister in the White House tonight.

The member raised an important question that reflects a misunderstanding about the process. It is quite possible that a Canadian citizen would be convicted of serious terrorist offences abroad. Following what is called an "equivalency assessment" by the Department of Justice, if that offence is determined to be an offence in a legitimate court system with adequate evidence and would constitute a serious offence here, citizenship could be revoked without that person ever coming back to Canada. Take for example the fellows who were over there and burned their passports. That would be the kind of example I am citing.

Moreover, if the person is in Canada, the revocation of that individual's citizenship would in no way obviate their arrest and prosecution and conviction and incarceration under Canadian law.

Here I would mention the Toronto 16 ringleader, who is about to get out on parole. I would rather have him under the watch of another country's security system than potentially posing a risk to us here in Canada.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-24 provided for the revocation of citizenship for both native-born Canadians and immigrants. To be clear, the bill in front of the House would restore a two-tier citizenship, because it would provide for revocation of citizenship only for immigrants. It would return us to the system that we used to have in place. Revocation would not be allowed for people who were born here but only for immigrants to this country who have become naturalized and hold a second citizenship.

Liberal members of Parliament need to be clear on this. We would be going to a two-tier citizenship with the bill in front of the House. Native-born Canadians would never have their citizenship revoked. Only the citizenship of immigrants to this country who are naturalized and hold a second citizenship could be revoked.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, the member is absolutely correct. Bill C-6 leaves untouched the 1976 revocation provisions for those naturalized citizens who obtained their Canadian citizenship through misrepresentation. This would include, for example, the Nazi war criminals who did not disclose their participation in crimes against humanity in applying for and obtaining their Canadian citizenship.

However, I who was born in this country could never have my citizenship revoked under the provisions of the bill, but an immigrant could. The member is absolutely right: if we want to play the game about two-tier citizenship, it applies far more clearly to Bill C-6 than it did to Bill C-24.

My father was a fourth generation Canadian who had an Irish passport. He had dual citizenship. If he had joined the IRA, heaven forbid, and been convicted of that, with a penal sentence of two years, even though he was a native-born Canadian, he could have had his citizenship revoked. However, immigrants to Canada from India or China, for example, who automatically lose the citizenship of their country of origin in being naturalized to Canada could never have their citizenship revoked under the provisions of Bill C-24, because it excluded its application to people who did not have dual nationality pursuant to our obligations under the international Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

• (1825)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Obviously there are a lot of people who want to participate in this debate, so I would ask that the questions and answers be as short as possible so that everyone can have a say.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to split my time with the hon. member for Fredericton, and to be here to speak in favour of Bill C-6.

Government Orders

I would like to acknowledge our presence on this traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples. Indeed, had it not been for all the ways that settlers like me and the hon. member's father and great-grandfather were welcomed onto this land, we would not have succeeded individually or collectively.

The Government of Canada is committed to a Canada that is both diverse and inclusive. Canadians know that our government recognizes that we are strong because of our diversity and not in spite of it. Indeed, no one in the House would argue that efficient immigration is one of the key pillars to our success, economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally, as a nation that is aging.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship have been clear from the outset. Inclusion and diversity are crucial to our future as a country and also to the role we play on the international stage. We need to encourage that diversity and take steps to ensure the path to citizenship is not only a flexible and fair one, but also one that encourages all Canadians to take pride in the immense privilege it is to be a Canadian.

Speaking to an audience at the Canadian High Commission in London shortly after taking office, the Prime Minister eloquently said:

Compassion, acceptance, and trust; diversity and inclusion—these are the things that have made Canada strong and free. Not just in principle, but in practice. Those of us who benefit from the many blessings of Canada's diversity need to be strong and confident custodians of its character.

I can speak to that personally. It is a great privilege and honour to call myself a Canadian. It is a strong attachment to Canada and those values of inclusion, compassion, acceptance, and trust that we hold dear that are at the core of what it means to be a Canadian. It is this deep attachment that motivates settlers like me to serve our communities and to give back wholeheartedly.

The proposed measures in Bill C-6 will increase and foster a greater attachment to Canada, and also ensure the integrity of our immigration programs and combat fraud. All Canadians need to be treated equally, regardless of whether they were born in Canada, naturalized, or hold citizenship in another country. As the Prime Minister famously said, "A Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian".

I am pleased to support this bill for a number of reasons.

I think of my riding in Peterborough—Kawartha. This small rural riding that has welcomed over 100 Syrian refugees has allowed a new beginning and a new life for our new Syrian neighbours, but in that process we have come together. We are building networks, programs and relationships that allow us to tackle the more complex challenges of our time, like truth and reconciliation.

I also think about Trent University and Fleming College, two post-secondary institutions that are critical to the vitality of my riding in Peterborough—Kawartha, and the international students who proudly attend and take part in the academic and the co-curricular activities offered on these two campuses. Indeed, these international students bring an energy and a great deal of talent to our community and our economy, and this bill would recognize all that they contribute. We will work toward allowing them to stay to build their lives and start their families in our community.

Government Orders

I also think of businesses like General Electric. General Electric has been critical to the establishment of Trent University. It benefits immensely from the internationally trained professionals who come to our community, filling its labour gaps and contributing to our economy and through philanthropic activities.

● (1830)

Whether an international student, or someone who works at GE, or a new Syrian to our community, we should acknowledge, encourage, and reward the choice that individuals make to come to Canada and to call this place home. They are experiencing Canada, especially before citizenship matters. Their choice to be here matters.

This bill is essentially about Canadian identity. Canadians are proud of our country and our values. We welcome immigrants. We help them settle, integrate, and succeed. This is our history, our present, and our future.

We encourage all immigrants to take the path to full membership in Canadian society. One of the strongest pillars for successful integration into Canadian life is achieving citizenship.

I will take this moment to thank my mother, the women who took the citizenship test on behalf of myself and my sisters so that in the midst of being a teenager, new to a community, to a country, being homesick, experiencing culture shock, wanting to go back home, and missing those we left behind, my sisters and I would not have the added anxiety of preparing for a test. We benefited from the great equalizer, and that is the Canadian school system, and worked on our language and cultural understanding. It was my mother who stayed up night after night to ensure that she aced that test, and that she did.

I encourage all my hon. colleagues to join with me and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship in supporting Bill C-6.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member spoke very eloquently and passionately, but I did not hear much discussion of the substantive content of the bill.

The effects of the bill, as we know and as we have heard in the House, is that if a person with a Canadian passport travels to another country and is involved in genocide or is involved in terrorism, things that are clearly at odds with our values, we do not have a way of revoking that citizenship. We do not have a way of telling people that we do not have to rescue them anymore if they get into trouble, that they have severed that bond with Canadians.

It is all well and good to say that people like that should be in prison, but if they are in a different country and the only option we have is revoking their citizenship, surely at some point they have severed that connection.

In her response would the member address this and perhaps other substantive components of the bill? We agree that we live in a great country and all that, but what is in the bill that is actually worth supporting? That is what we need to hear.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Madam Speaker, I trust the member has received the substantive details of the bill. Quite a bit of work and research goes into developing these kits, so he should please feel free to review it.

What I can speak to is this. The legal system, the justice system that we have in our country exists for a reason. Other nations have similar systems in place, some stronger than ours, some not as strong. It is incumbent upon us to recognize that in the House some of the matters we address, if not all, are sensitive and delicate in nature. We need to be mindful of preventing the creation of a two-tiered citizenship system that degrades the very core of Canadian identity.

● (1835)

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, on the issue around the pathway to citizenship, many barriers have been put up. There are two particular ones which I wonder if the minister could support advancing to her government, and that is to eliminate the financial barrier.

As the minister may know, under the previous government, the application fees for citizens went up significantly, from \$100 to \$520 for an adult, with an additional \$100 for a child, and other associated fees.

In addition, the language proficiency issue is also very onerous for many immigrants. The level has now moved up to a level 4 proficiency, and many immigrants may not be able to pass that test.

Could I have the minister's support to have her government make changes in those two specific areas in order to facilitate the pathway to citizenship for many immigrants who desire it and who would be excellent Canadians?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her work toward ensuring that more immigrants feel included in Canadian society.

The government recognizes that integrating and attracting immigrants to our soil is essential to our social, economic, cultural, and environmental prosperity.

To that end, as members may be aware, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship has been mandated to enhance our current citizenship and immigration pathways to ensure that they are not just more accessible but also more fair. I look forward to working with all members of this House to achieve that end.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for her excellent speech in the House today. I think we can all agree that immigrants have contributed a great deal to this country and have built our great nation.

Unlike some who have commented in the House today, I think it is very fortunate that we have Bill C-6 before us that intends to improve and speed up access to citizenship, which can help immigrants become successful people in our society.

I would also like to make a comment regarding terrorism, which keeps coming up today. We live in a society that has an excellent justice system, so does the minister feel that terrorists should be prosecuted in this justice system, and not be sent overseas to justice systems that may not be as great as ours and that may not have the security we have in place?

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Madam Speaker, as one of my hon. colleagues has said before, terrorists belong in jails and not on airplanes.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, on February 24, Michael Phelan, a Federal Court judge in British Columbia, ruled that a regulation on medical marijuana that had been implemented by the former Conservative government was unconstitutional. The federal government now has six months to change the rules.

However, when I questioned the Minister of Justice and got a response from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice on February 25, my question went unanswered. The Liberals had no position on whether they would comply with the ruling and allow people who need medical marijuana to grow the plants themselves at home for their own treatment. We did not get an answer.

According to Justice Phelan, the health and safety of consumers diminished when they were limited to purchasing from licensed producers. The over 100-page document says that “access to cannabis for medical purposes [has] not improved” since the Conservatives' decision.

The NDP's position on medical marijuana is consistent with the Federal Court's ruling. The NDP has always supported the use of medical marijuana.

The Conservatives, meanwhile, chose to play politics with this issue of access to marijuana by imposing regulations to restrict access, which limits people's options and increases costs. We hope that the Liberals will not take the same path.

On a slightly more general note, we are still waiting for the Liberals to consult medical experts, patients, and advocacy groups on this issue. We expect the Liberals to keep the promises they made during the election campaign, and for years before that, to legalize marijuana.

Every time we asked the question, the Prime Minister always said that it would happen during the first year. Contrary to what the Prime Minister said, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice is saying that it probably will not happen during this government's first term, so perhaps not before the next federal election.

The government is improvising and creating uncertainty. Even police authorities are wondering what they are supposed to do. There are young people right now who have criminal records for simple possession, and it makes no sense. The burden is too heavy for Canadians. Giving someone a criminal record for simple possession is not the goal, nor will it do anything to tackle the drug trafficking that is happening right now.

Adjournment Proceedings

Furthermore, enforcing the prohibition brought in by the Conservatives will not eradicate organized crime, curb young people's access to the drug, or ensure any kind of control over quality.

Will the Minister of Justice please tell us when the Liberals will actually legalize marijuana, keep their promise, and finally accept the ruling of the judge of the Federal Court of British Columbia on the medical use of marijuana?

• (1840)

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I thank the hon. member opposite for opportunity to clarify some of the issues she raises.

With respect to her initial question concerning the Federal Court decision on the Allard matter, what I subsequently answered, and, frankly, I should have done much better job at and answered the member more directly, was that this is a very complicated decision. It is now in the hands of our Justice officials in consultation with our ministry of health officials.

There is an important discussion taking place between those officials because of our interest in maintaining the safety and health of all Canadians. That review is taking place, and when it is completed a decision will be made by the ministry with respect to how the Federal Court's decision will be dealt with. However, I want to assure the member opposite and the House of our unwavering commitment to work expeditiously to address the public safety and public health concerns of all Canadians.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify exactly what has been said.

During the campaign, our Prime Minister was unequivocal. He said that it was our government's intention to legalize, regulate, and restrict marijuana. We set our goals on the protection of our children, to reduce and restrict access that children have to this drug, because the overwhelming evidence of the science is that marijuana can be a very unhealthy thing for developing minds in adolescence and young adults. We want to protect our children and believe that can be done far more effectively through a regulatory regime than through criminal sanction.

We also want to take the profits of the illegal marijuana market away from organized crime and reduce its influence on our communities. I can say from experience, having worked in many of our disadvantaged communities, that the level of violence and victimization that takes place in those communities as a direct result of the illegal activity around marijuana takes a terrible toll on those communities. We believe that a strictly regulatory regime based on a public health model will protect our communities, as well as protect our children.

Adjournment Proceedings

We believe that a public health approach will enable this country to assure all Canadians in all communities that marijuana can be made available legally to responsible adults, but that its production, distribution, retail, and consumption would be controlled by regulation to ensure that we can achieve both our public safety aims and public health aims.

Now the member opposite has also asked the very important question of when this will be done.

Our Prime Minister said that he would begin this work right away, and the work has begun. I have been given direction by my minister to be the government's liaison on this initiative. Our minister has indicated that she is establishing a federal-provincial-territorial task force responsible for the development of these regulations based on research and evidence. That task force is currently being assembled, and I am hoping for an opportunity in the coming weeks to advise the House of the progress we have made.

• (1845)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear the parliamentary secretary say that the work has begun. We would like to know when the Liberals intend to legalize marijuana. Will it be this year? Will it be during the next election? That is what people are confused about right now.

As the parliamentary secretary said, this could take a while because there are consultations and research to be done. In the meantime, young people or others who use marijuana for personal use could be arrested by the police. Given that marijuana is still outlawed, those people could end up with a criminal record.

The Prime Minister himself admitted that he has used marijuana, smoked a joint. He was lucky he was not arrested. He does not have a criminal record or stains on his record, which allows him to be a minister. Not every Canadian is that lucky.

In the meantime, does the Liberal government intend to decriminalize marijuana possession?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, in the throne speech, the Prime Minister made it perfectly clear that marijuana would be legalized, regulated, and restricted in this mandate, and that is the work we are undertaking.

On the issue of decriminalization, I will be very clear. We rely on evidence and the advice of experts. A report by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto has indicated that decriminalization is a half measure that will do nothing to reduce the social harms of marijuana, that it does not protect our kids, that it does not take away the profit from organized crime, and that it does not facilitate a robust public health response.

The evidence of other jurisdictions has told us that ineffective half measures, such as decriminalization, will only complicate and undermine the implementation of an effective regulatory regime that will achieve our public health and public safety goals.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, during question period on January 27, I asked the minister what action she was planning to take to ensure compliance with the Canada Health Act.

Quebec has legalized ancillary fees for public health services even though this practice violates the Canada Health Act. It is unacceptable that people's finances should determine their access to health care.

In November, my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie wrote to the minister to inform her about this situation, and I have risen twice in the House to ask the minister what the federal government is going to do to put a stop to this practice.

The minister did reply to the letter, but she did not say a word about ancillary health fees even though her mandate letter clearly states that her “overarching goal will be to strengthen our publicly funded universal health care system”. To me, strengthening a universal health care system does not mean forcing patients to pay \$500 for the use of instruments involved in performing a colonoscopy. Allowing ancillary fees results in unequal access to medical services, and the federal government should intervene to stop this.

If we take a look at some of the ancillary fees that are being charged, we can see some alarming figures: \$40 for the application of a four-square-centimetre bandage following a minor surgery, \$200 for the insertion of an IUD, \$500 for the use of instruments. One need only take a quick glance at the Canada Health Act to know that such practices are against the law.

The law specifically states that provincial and territorial health insurance plans must provide coverage for all medical and hospital services that are medically necessary. Charging ancillary fees for health care services clearly violates the principle of fair and universal health care coverage. In this specific case, the Canada Health Act is not being enforced.

What is more, this system has encouraged health professionals to adopt practices that go against the principles of equity and universality. For example, some doctors' offices charge \$300 for \$20 eye drops, or \$150 just to create a file.

In some cases, the legalization of ancillary fees has led some doctors to violate their code of ethics. This measure violates the principle of equity and is misleading for Quebeckers. We need to stand up for the principle of a free, accessible, and universal health care system.

Allow me to recap. Quebeckers are becoming poorer as a result of the legalization of ancillary fees. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Canada ranks second in pharmaceutical expenditures per capita. This affects everyone.

This measure affects the quality of life and the health of citizens. In this case, there is a huge gap between the rich and the poor. No one should have to choose between getting treatment and paying rent.

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In addition, there is a risk that other provinces could adopt this plan, which would lead to interprovincial medical tourism.

This measure is helping create a two-tier health care system. I ask my colleague once again: what will the minister do to ensure that the public health care system is accessible from coast to coast to coast?

• (1850)

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address my colleague's concerns about the federal government's commitment to Canada's health care system and to the Canada Health Act. I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment.

Let me begin by assuring members that the government is fully committed to protecting our publicly funded health care system and will defend the fundamental tenet that all Canadians should have reasonable access to medically necessary care based on need and not the ability to pay.

In fact, the fear that user charges and extra billing would erode access to needed medical care and lead to a two-tier health care system was the major motivation in the development of the Canada Health Act.

Prior to the act, many Canadian families were left to pay doctor and hospital bills out of pocket. Those who were able to pay received the medical attention they needed, but those without sufficient means either did not get the required care or struggled to find the money to pay for it.

Essentially, the Canada Health Act was brought into force to protect the basic values of fairness and equity that are fundamental to the Canadian identity. The act sets out national standards for provincial and territorial health insurance schemes and promotes these standards by linking federal health funding to them. Our government stands by these national standards and will continue to uphold this commitment to all Canadians.

If physicians charge patients a fee when providing an insured service in their clinics, these charges will contravene the Canada Health Act and will strike at the core principles of public health insurance in Canada. The basic principle of access to health care based on need and not financial ability would be disregarded.

Canadians not only want and expect their governments to work together to preserve, modernize, and strengthen publicly funded health care in Canada but also want them to protect it. Let me again emphasize that it is our government's desire to work in collaboration with the provinces and territories to ensure our publicly funded health care system is strong and that Canadians have access to the care they need, when they need it.

Some of our greatest achievements as a country, the things that matter most in the daily lives of Canadians, came about when federal, provincial, and territorial governments worked together to

forge solutions to complex problems. Medicare is a perfect example of this co-operation and collaboration.

Our government will continue to provide this critical leadership and has already taken the first steps by re-engaging with the provinces and territories. Our health care system represents the best of Canadian federalism. It is flexible enough to respond to the different regional needs, while protecting the national principles that Canadians hold dear.

That is why I say with absolute certainty that our government has always defended medicare and will continue to do so. Canadians should have full confidence in our government's determination and ability to uphold the principles of the Canada Health Act. Working with the provinces and territories, our goal is to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to high quality care, regardless of their ability to pay.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that the parliamentary secretary supports the principle that I put forward and that she is concerned about the well-being of Canadians. However, Quebecers do not have access right now to the health care they need because they cannot afford to pay the fees.

I am very proud to be a member of the party that created medicare. We will continue to be its strongest defenders. We must tirelessly promote the improvements to be made and act quickly. Yes, we must co-operate with the provinces in order to deal with this situation. However, we must act quickly on ancillary fees in Quebec. I can see the faces of those people who, even today, cannot afford these fees.

[*English*]

Ms. Kamal Khera: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her important work and passion on this file.

Our government recognizes and values the benefits of a publicly funded health care system, which promotes equality by ensuring all eligible residents have access to health care services without direct charges, regardless of their economic situation. We recognize that access to medically necessary care is a high priority for all Canadians. We will continue to ensure that Canadians have access to this care based on their need and not their ability to pay.

Our government is re-engaging on health care. We are committed to negotiating a new health accord with the provinces and territories, while also modernizing our Canadian health care system. Canadians can have full confidence in our government's determination and ability to uphold the Canada Health Act and its spirit.

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 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

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