



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food in relation to its study entitled “Supply management, dairy producers, and the Canadian dairy industry”.

* * *

[*English*]

CUSTOMS ACT

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-273, An Act to amend the Customs Act (marine pleasure craft).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce my private member's bill. It is entitled an act to amend the Customs Act, and it would change the Customs Act to allow private pleasure craft to transit Canadian waters without reporting to customs. Currently, any pleasure vessel that crosses into Canada along waterways such as the St. Lawrence River and the Thousand Islands, in my riding, must report to Canadian customs whether or not they plan to dock or anchor in Canada. The bill would harmonize with the United States. Currently, Canadian-based vessels can go into U.S. waters and not have to report as long as they do not land in U.S. water.

I am introducing the bill today to harmonize with the United States. It has been brought forward by many constituents in my riding, and I believe this will help to enhance tourism in the Thousand Islands and in Canada in general. It is something that also affects other areas of Canada where there are boundary waters. I am happy to introduce this bill today.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today, signed by petitioners from my riding and from across Canada. In both cases, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to draft legislation that would include adequate safeguards for vulnerable Canadians, especially those with mental health challenges, provide clear conscience protection for health care workers and institutions, and protect children under age 18 from physician-assisted suicide.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by dozens of residents from my riding of Burnaby South. The petitioners call on the Prime Minister to stop the new Kinder Morgan oil pipeline, which would export 890,000 barrels per day of raw bitumen off of the B.C. coast. The signatories note that the pipeline would bring massive environmental and economic risks but no real benefits for local residents. This is the same pipeline that the Prime Minister has stated he is drawing up plans to make a reality. Without a doubt, this is the number one issue facing our community, and my office has never received so many petitions from constituents. While the Conservatives and Liberals support the new Kinder Morgan pipeline, I urge the government to reconsider and take this petition seriously.

Speaker's Ruling

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition with a number of names of residents from my constituency on it, which basically talks about the significance of life and how important it is until natural death.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons and Parliament to continue to prohibit euthanasia and assisted suicide.

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions, and I will do so expeditiously.

The first petition calls upon the Government of Canada to introduce systems to reduce waste through extended producer responsibility where the producer ultimately takes responsibility at the end of the product's useful life. It is an excellent approach, and the petitioners want the House to consider it.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls for the labelling of genetically modified ingredients on food labels so that Canadians can make informed choices.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition contains hundreds of names of petitioners calling for the government to make it clear to the People's Republic of China that it is time to respect human rights and not persecute the people who practise Falun Dafa/Falun Gong.

• (1010)

JUSTICE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from the residents of Langley, which highlights that the Kaake family of Windsor, Ontario is grieving the loss of Cassandra and her preborn daughter Molly. Both were brutally killed in December 2014.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to pass legislation that would recognize preborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of a couple of dozen Prince Edward Islanders who are seeking a change to our electoral system.

They are calling upon the House of Commons to undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act and to introduce a suitable form of proportional representation after those public consultations.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: I see the member is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I am looking at the projected order of business for today, and it says very clearly that Bill C-14 is up for debate. I am surprised that the government is refusing to bring that forward when it is on the projected order of business.

I hope, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: that the order of the day not be Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, and that the House proceed to the consideration of report stage of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying).

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to make a ruling in relation to Bill C-6, which is an act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another act.

There is one motion in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-6.

[Translation]

Motion No. 1 will not be selected by the Chair as it could have been presented in committee.

[English]

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

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1050)

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

(Division No. 58)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
 Alleslev
 Anandasangaree
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
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 Mathysen
 May (Cambridge)
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 McKay
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 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Morrissey)
 Murray
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
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 Poissant
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Nicholson	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member for Vimy was not in her seat when you read the question and that the vote had begun. I would like you to rule on her eligibility to have her vote counted on this matter.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The member indicated that the hon. member for Vimy was not in her seat when I started reading the motion.

Was the member for Vimy present when I started reading the motion? If not, her vote cannot be counted.

The hon. member for Vimy.

Mrs. Eva Nassif: I was not in my seat. I was entering the House when you started reading the motion.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Vimy's vote will therefore not count.

* * *

• (1055)

[*English*]

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

BILL C-10—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act and to provide for certain other measures, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the Bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders on the day allotted to the consideration at the third reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the Bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the right to use both official languages is a fundamental feature of the House.

Yesterday, during the debate on Bill C-10, the members for Pierrefonds—Dollard, Mount Royal, and Laurentides—Labelle

spoke only in English. Today, the member for Québec is speaking only in English.

I would like to know if there is something preventing people from speaking in French.

The Speaker: As the hon. member knows, during debate, members can speak in the language of their choice.

Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their place so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am completely disappointed that the government has chosen to move time allocation on this very important bill.

My question for the minister is this. Bombardier's latest earnings report announced that it would record an onerous contract provision of approximately \$500 million as a special item because it is believed to have sold the C Series aircraft to Air Canada and Delta at a loss of \$4 million to \$5 million U.S. per aircraft. If the minister is still so delighted about Air Canada's purchase of the C Series, why is he in such a rush to get this legislation through?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As my colleague knows, this is an important opportunity to modernize the Air Canada Public Participation Act. This needs to be done for several reasons.

The first reason, and the most important, is that the current legislation was drafted and passed 28 years ago, and the competitive environment and operations of Air Canada, both domestically and internationally, have changed considerably since then. Now we have an opportunity to update that legislation.

This also represents an opportunity to work closely with Air Canada and the industry, as well as with the provinces of Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario, to ensure that this modification and update of the Air Canada Public Participation Act will help create jobs and stimulate economic growth in the future.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the minister.

The federal legislation that the Liberal Party was defending only four years ago stipulated that Air Canada had to keep its maintenance and servicing activities in Montreal, Winnipeg, and Mississauga.

The workers who lost their jobs four years ago began legal proceedings. They have rights. They took their case before the Quebec Superior Court, and they won. The case then went before the Quebec Court of Appeal, and they won. Their case is currently before the Supreme Court, and if the law does not change, they will win again.

Government Orders

I would like to know whether the minister plans to infringe on our rights as parliamentarians by imposing another gag order in the House to make it easier for the Liberals to trample all over the rights of the Aveos and Air Canada workers, who were going to win before the Supreme Court.

Is the minister in such a hurry because he wants to get Bill C-10 through as quickly as possible given that the Supreme Court is supposed to return to this case on July 15? Is that what he wants?

• (1100)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, you have a pretty good memory, and you will certainly remember that yesterday, when the bill was at report stage, my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, to whom I give my regards, declined to put forward his motions in amendment at report stage. This unfortunately put and end to debate at the important report stage.

I am not quite sure why my colleague chose to do this, but I respect his decision. As a result of what happened yesterday, the member and his party lost an opportunity to debate this bill more extensively at report stage. They chose not to take this opportunity, which is their business and their prerogative.

That said, we have a responsibility in government to work for the future and to create good-quality jobs for the future. That is what we are doing here, today, in debating this important bill. That is also what we have demonstrated in recent weeks, as we strive to listen to the industry, Air Canada, and, in particular, the concerns of the three provinces, namely Quebec, Manitoba, and Ontario.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister. He just said that he wants to work with the provinces, in particular, the governments of Quebec and Manitoba. However, we know that the Government of Quebec is calling on the federal government to wait for the agreement to be signed with Air Canada before passing this bill.

Why is the government in such a rush to pass a bill that, as my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie pointed out, violates workers' rights? It is steamrolling workers and ignoring the calls from the governments of Quebec and Manitoba.

Does the minister have the support of Quebec and Manitoba to move forward so quickly, when everyone is calling for the government to take its time and, in a way, to reject this bill?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and commend him on his interest in this matter which, as he knows and as we all know, is part of a broader government investment in the production and creation of high-quality, long-term jobs.

As we all know, over the past few weeks we worked collaboratively with the industry and with the governments of the three provinces. In the House of Commons, and I am sure my colleague agrees, we are pleased with Air Canada's commitment to create two centres of excellence in Quebec and Manitoba that will create good jobs for the future over the next 20 years.

We are also pleased with the bigger picture for Canada's aerospace industry, particularly as we see that Bombardier will get an order

from Air Canada for 45 planes. That is excellent news for Quebec, Manitoba, Ontario, and the rest of the country. This is good news and, again, we are pleased and honoured to work in collaboration with the industry and will all the provinces to ensure that this good news translates into concrete action and important developments for our workers, our jobs, and the economic growth of our country.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the bill does is kill thousands of aerospace jobs in this country.

The government should not be proud of bringing forward the bill, but I have to comment on the absolute chaos we have seen from the government this morning. In 60 minutes, we have now gone through three pieces of legislation. We were told today was to be reserved for Bill C-14. That was what was placed on the projected order of business. We arrived this morning and the government said no, it would bring in Bill C-6, and then it switched rapidly to Bill C-10.

We know why the Liberals are bringing in Bill C-10. They are trying to provoke closure and bulldoze this through, because yesterday parliamentarians tied in their vote on Bill C-10. The bill is so bad, the legislation is so destructive to aerospace jobs in Canada, as you know, Mr. Speaker, you had to break the tie. It was 139 to 139. That has only happened 11 times in Canadian history, and in fact, it is the first time that a majority government and a government bill has seen a tie vote broken by the Speaker.

Is that not the real reason why sunny ways have turned into dark ways and why the Liberals are trying to bulldoze the bill through? It is because they are embarrassed by the results from yesterday.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I said this in French earlier, but I understand that in some cases it is important to say things in both languages. Let me say it in English now.

As the member will recall, the vote was called at report stage debate of the bill when the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie did not move the motions the NDP had in mind, which unfortunately stopped the report stage amendment process, therefore concluding report stage debate on the bill.

This being the case, we followed up with the appropriate procedures and are now, today, in front of the House to ensure that this particular project, which is extremely important for jobs and growth in Canada, can go forward and have a great and significant impact on our jobs and our economy.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport in debate on the bill could not name one single stakeholder other than Air Canada that supports the bill.

Government Orders

I want to name a few. There is the attorney general of Manitoba, Quebec's minister of the economy, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

I will give him one more chance today. Could the minister name one single stakeholder other than Air Canada that supports the bill, and why is he so eager to shut down debate on a bill that is going to throw thousands of Canadians out of work? How can he stand by while these Canadians lose their jobs?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, a broad sector of our economy and our citizens do support the bill because it is in the broader context in which we want to promote growth and strong jobs for Canadians and for our economy in general. In particular, Air Canada's commitment to retain maintenance of its aircraft in Quebec and in the rest of Canada for 20 years will create important economic opportunities for individuals seeking to or already qualified to work in the sector.

I further commend Air Canada's intention to facilitate the creation of a centre of excellence on aircraft maintenance in Manitoba, as well as in Quebec. That will create additional employment opportunities in this very important sector for our economy. The Government of Canada is pleased with Air Canada's announcement of its intention to purchase up to 75 Bombardier C Series aircraft. As I mentioned earlier, this is good news for all of Canada.

Finally, I would add that the C Series is a major advancement in aviation, and all of the industry is aware of that. All efforts, including those made by Bill C-10, that promote the advancement of the aerospace industry in Canada are most welcome by all members of the House and a large number of people outside the House.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is related to why we have Bill C-10 before us today. It is because of Conservative government neglect a number of years ago. As a direct result, we had provinces taking Air Canada to court. What we saw in that was a number of stakeholders coming to the table where a consensus was built, where we are seeing, as the minister pointed out, a centre of excellence going to Manitoba and the province of Quebec. We are seeing guarantees of jobs, which is far more than the Conservative government ever got out of Air Canada.

Would the member not agree that Bill C-10 does set a framework that ultimately is part of a larger package that demonstrates that ours is a government that genuinely cares about our aerospace industry in all regions of our country?

• (1110)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for making those points very clear. He clearly says that this is a matter for all Canadians. The aerospace industry is important in all provinces, not only because it has important activities in some of them but because of the contractors, those benefiting in terms of jobs and growth opportunities, and the links that exist across Canada, generated by the important growth and presence of the aerospace industry in our country.

Not only are we very proud of the aerospace industry, but we also want to work very strongly to support it now and for the future. The current state of affairs is to modernize the Air Canada Public

Participation Act to assist that growth for the future for all Canadians and for the many workers directly involved in these activities.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so many things have been said in the debate on Bill C-10 that I am not sure where to begin. I want to try to make the government understand that this is absolutely not an urgent bill. Quite the contrary. I think that, today, the government is playing cheap partisan politics.

Two ministers from two governments are asking our Parliament not to act too quickly on Bill C-10 because the bill may adversely affect the agreements with Air Canada. These are the same agreements that the government is boasting about in the same empty and meaningless answers that it has been giving since the debate on Bill C-10 began. These same agreements, which are supposed to create jobs, are at risk because this government does not want to listen to the request of two provincial governments, two provincial legislatures. First, Quebec's minister of the economy has asked the federal government not to act too quickly because the bill could undermine or put an end to the agreement. Second, the deputy premier of another province appeared before the parliamentary committee to ask the federal government not to pass Bill C-10 because it does not contain any job guarantees.

Since all we are hearing is rhetoric and we have not been given any explanation or justification for this bill, could the government spokesperson stop repeating the same message and explain to us why the government wants to move so quickly on Bill C-10, so much so that it felt the need to impose another gag order? That is unacceptable. Why are the Liberals behaving like this?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite clear. We are doing this work because we believe it is important to support the aerospace industry in Canada and to act in collaboration with the provinces.

We have listened to the three provinces that are more directly affected, namely Manitoba, Quebec, and Ontario. We are working together with the industry. We are listening to the concerns of all those with an interest in this sector. We share these concerns and that is why we are doing this work.

To summarize, we are doing it because we believe that Canada's economic growth is important and that the aerospace industry is vital for this growth in many of Canada's regions. We are also doing this because of the jobs that the industry wants to create.

Government Orders

We are very proud of Air Canada. We know that it is operating in a very difficult competitive environment. We know that after 28 years, it is important to be aware of the evolution of this competitive environment and to adapt to it. We have that opportunity here because the Government of Quebec and the Government of Manitoba both announced that they wanted to end the litigation with Air Canada. The time is right to move forward and to once again support creating a good number of quality jobs throughout the country, and especially in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec.

• (1115)

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to use time allocation to get a warped and shameful bill passed. I listened to the sole Quebec member of the Liberal Party caucus who rose this morning to put yet another twisted case forward. He must have some basic knowledge of procedure to know that the proposed amendments were meant to scrap the bill and that triggering yesterday's vote did what the amendments would have done. Therefore, he cannot claim that by withdrawing the amendments, parliamentarians on this side of the House chose not to express their opposition to this bill. We wanted to fight the bill because it is pernicious.

It is really something to see the Minister of Families defend the bill introduced by the Minister of Transport, who had to be called to order because he misled the House. The Speaker recognized that but gave him the benefit of the doubt. However, what he said about the so-called agreement involving the governments of Manitoba and Quebec was completely false. If the Minister of Families has a modicum of intellectual integrity, will he acknowledge that this morning?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his questions.

We all have a stake in this. We are talking about developing our economy and creating jobs. There is no doubt that after 28 years, the Air Canada Public Participation Act deserves to be updated. The competitive environment has changed a great deal, and Air Canada needs to be competitive if we want it to keep playing an important role in Canada.

Air Canada employs more than 28,000 people in Canada. This company plays a major role in many of our communities and creates good jobs for middle-class families. Yes, I am the minister responsible for families and children, and I know that the standard of living of Canadian families depends on the jobs that the parents of those families can get.

It is important to recognize that we need to take a fresh look at this industry and this company in particular. The opportunity to do so presented itself when the governments of Quebec and Manitoba chose, of their own volition, to end their lawsuit against Air Canada and move forward with creating good jobs for the future.

This exercise calls on us to look ahead to the future, and that is what we are proposing in the House this morning. I think that progress has been made in the debate. Things could have been a bit different without yesterday's events, but so be it.

We are now at third reading stage, and I would invite all members of the House to reflect carefully on the decision they will make when

it comes time to vote. Voting for jobs for the future seems like a reasonable and important option to me not just for our growth, but also for middle-class families who truly need good jobs for the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, right from the beginning this has been a rotten deal. We can go right back to the day the Liberals announced the technical briefing, which I was at. I think they gave us two hours notice on a Thursday or Friday, and they had the briefing at 1 Wellington. I left that briefing scratching my head, thinking this was a rotten deal.

The minister was at the meeting. If he had said that Air Canada was helping out Bombardier and in order for it to do that, the government would help Air Canada out a bit, then I think a lot more people in the House today would have a better feeling about what the Liberals are doing. This is quid pro quo, absolutely 100%, and I wish those members over there would say what it is.

We have talked about the review of the Transportation Act, and we have done this and that. We have explored it all. However, the Liberals are talking about jobs and growth for the Canadian economy. Therefore, will the minister stand and say that there will be no more Embraer jets getting serviced in Brazil? Will he say that there will be no more Boeing jets serviced in Ireland? Will he say that there will be no extra jets serviced in Singapore, Hong Kong, China, and all the other ones? Is that what he is going to say? He is talking about jobs, but it does not sound like that to me.

Will he stand in the House today and say that this deal will not allow one more jet to be serviced in another country? Is that what he is going to do?

• (1120)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to modernizing the Air Canada Public Participation Act in light of, among other things, the comments the member just made.

Air Canada operates in a very competitive environment. We are proud of Air Canada, and we know how important it is to many communities across Canada. We want Air Canada to continue to be an important player in the welfare of our families across Canada. We want Air Canada to do this now, in the short term, and in the long run, which is why we are supporting and promoting the bill.

We believe very strongly that this bill is extremely important, not only for Air Canada and the aerospace industry, which is tremendously important in Canada, but for all the families that depend on those jobs for their welfare and the welfare of their children.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have had a big disappointment today. There have been many over the past few weeks as well.

Government Orders

I went into politics to be the voice of all the people in my riding of Jonquière, of Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, and also of all Canadians. Now the government is preventing us from debating a bill that will get rid of the jobs of more than 2,600 families across Canada. We have no guarantees for these jobs, these workers, these families. Earlier we were talking about the future, jobs, and the need to modernize. Modernizing does not mean getting rid of jobs. We do not even know where many of these workers will go.

Will they be able to find new jobs if the maintenance is done in Mexico or, as my colleague said so well earlier, all over the world? It is unacceptable that we no longer have the right to speak, that we cannot be the voice of these families who will no longer have jobs.

What does the minister have to say to these families who will no longer have jobs tomorrow morning?

Why did the Liberals not wait until after July 15?

As my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said, the Supreme Court was going to get back to work. Why did they not wait?

The Government of Quebec continues to ask the House and implore the federal government to take its time.

What does the minister have to say to these families?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I applaud and I respect the message I just heard. I also applaud and respect the member, who spoke so personally and so effectively about the concerns she has regarding middle-class families in Canada.

Those are exactly the same concerns that are guiding us here today. Like my colleague, we have noted that jobs have been lost in this sector in recent years. We intend to create new jobs. We will do so by working closely with the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba. We are also listening to the concerns expressed by the industry, including Air Canada's concerns. We know that the domestic and international competitive environment has changed considerably in the past 28 years.

If we want the aerospace industry, which includes Air Canada and all the other businesses that are crucial to that sector, to continue to develop for the benefit of our families, our society, and our economy, we need to act. That is what we are proposing here today with this bill.

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Premier Aviation, which now conducts aircraft maintenance for Air Canada, is in favour of Bill C-10, and the Government of Quebec has written to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to show its support for Bill C-10.

I see why the minister says there is support for Bill C-10, so my question for him is this. Why is the opposition playing procedural stunts with such an important bill?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for having made a point rather clearly. It is important to note that we in the House are often concerned with procedures. What is more important is the outcome and real impact of our work on the

lives of real Canadians, real middle-class families, those who know that our future depends on the important actions of our government and, as my colleague very nicely mentioned, our ability to work together and to listen to the preoccupations of those who create jobs and those who want quality, durable jobs for the future.

I commend her for those comments and look forward to having everyone in the House support the bill so we can work together with the aerospace industry, Air Canada, and the provinces to create more jobs in this very important sector.

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge my colleague, the minister, but I have to admit that I am very disappointed.

We do not think that the bill before us today is urgent at all. Unfortunately, the Liberal government is taking this sort of approach more and more frequently. It introduces a bill and when things do not go the way it wants, it imposes a gag order. This is not the first time that this has happened, and I do not think that it will be the last. It is a bad approach.

What this debate all boils down to is Aveos workers and aircraft maintenance. The government says that the provincial government agrees, but wait. That is not completely true, because when the bill was announced, Quebec's economy minister, who is not just anyone, said that the federal government should not get ahead of itself, but should respect the negotiations and take all the time required. How can the member for Québec, the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, use the provincial government to support his argument when the Quebec economy minister, the Quebec government's top economic official, says to wait?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has 45 seconds or less to answer the question.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, since I have only 45 seconds, I will quickly acknowledge my colleague, for whom I have a lot of respect. I know that he is new to the House like me. Perhaps he does not remember, but during the last Parliament, his party's government unfortunately invoked closure over 100 times.

I realize that he may not have followed the process as closely as he does now, but I would invite him to look back a little for his own personal edification and perhaps to inform his judgment in the future. We certainly have not used this process nearly as much, but it must be very familiar to his colleagues on that side of the House.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

Government Orders

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Call in the members.

• (1205)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 59)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid

Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Tootoo
Trudeau	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Zahid — 171	

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cullen	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harceastle
Harder	Harper

Government Orders

Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Jolibois	Julian
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcel
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poillievre	Quach
Ramsey	Rankin
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Ritz
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Zimmer— 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

● (1210)

[English]

COPYRIGHT ACT

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.) moved that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (access to copyrighted works or other subject-matter for persons with perceptual disabilities), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-11, an act to amend the Copyright Act which concerns access to copyrighted works or other subject-matter for persons with perceptual disabilities.

Over 800,000 Canadians live with blindness or partial sight, and around three million Canadians are print disabled. This includes impairments related to comprehension, such as autism, and impairments related to the inability to hold or manipulate a book, such as Parkinson's. Around the world, there are more than 314 million people living with blindness or visual impairments, 90% of whom live in developing countries.

I am one of those people. I am very significantly visually impaired. In fact, I am legally blind, which means that I have less

than 10% corrective vision. That is not a lot of vision and one cannot read a lot when one has that vision. That is why I am so very pleased to be personally speaking to this very important piece of legislation.

Persons with print disabilities need to be able to read and access information to participate in society, including in the job market. However, there is a significant shortage of accessible books. Of the million or so books published each year, less than 7% are made available in formats accessible to visually impaired persons. What that means for somebody like me is that when I walk into a bookstore or a library, I do not get to choose what I read. My decisions are motivated by what material is available for me to read.

While there are audio books and e-books on the market, these formats are not typically accessible for someone who lives with blindness or print disabilities. For example, many commercial audio books or e-books are not easily navigable by a person with a print disability.

The shortage is also caused by the fact that copyright laws are inconsistent among countries, making it difficult to share accessible books across borders.

The Marrakesh treaty was negotiated to address this problem. This treaty establishes international standards for exceptions in national copyright laws to permit the making, distributing, importing, and exporting of accessible books. The goal is to facilitate the global exchange in accessible materials for the benefit of persons with print disabilities all over the world. Following the negotiation of the treaty, over 80 countries signed it. To date, 16 countries have either ratified or acceded to the treaty. These include Israel, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia, Brazil, Mali, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Peru, Paraguay, Mexico, India, El Salvador, the Republic of Korea, and Mongolia. The treaty will not come into force until 20 countries have ratified or acceded to it.

I am proud to say that we have introduced legislation in the House that would bring our copyright law in line with the Marrakesh treaty. Canada is playing an important role in working with other countries to bring the treaty into force internationally. The first step in Canada's domestic process is to pass this legislation, which will position us for the next step: accession to the treaty.

The legislation will make several targeted but important changes to Canada's copyright law to ensure that we meet the requirements of the treaty. For example, the bill will permit users to make large-print books subject to certain safeguards such as commercial availability limitations. In addition, the bill will expand the scope for making and providing, or providing access to, accessible copies outside of Canada by removing the limitations with respect to the nationality of the author.

Government Orders

Another important change the bill will make is to the technological protection measures, or digital locks, in the legislation. The bill clarifies that circumvention of digital locks will be acceptable as long as it will be for the purpose of providing access to persons with perceptual disabilities, and to permit persons with perceptual disabilities, or those helping them, to benefit from the exceptions for persons with perceptual and print disabilities.

The bill will also provide for exporting accessible format copies directly to beneficiary persons outside of Canada. The law will be clarified to indicate that organizations such as libraries could provide or provide access to accessible format copies directly to the beneficiary persons outside of Canada. However, they could only do so on the condition that the beneficiary person had made a request through a non-profit organization in the country to which the accessible format copy would be sent.

Another area of protection for copyright owners is the provision of moral rights. The amended act will continue to provide protections for these important rights, ensuring that users will respect the integrity of the work and reputation of the creator when making and providing adapted copies.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the benefits that will result from the coming into force of this treaty.

First, there will be greater access to books for persons with visual impairment or print disabilities, for example, in Braille and audio formats. This will include improved access to materials in Canada's minority languages and in French, reflecting the diversity of our Canadian culture.

• (1215)

Many different groups of Canadians with disabilities will benefit from this initiative. Students will have better access to print materials, helping them continue with their studies and better engage in the Canadian workforce. According to recent survey data, approximately 30% of students with visual impairments discontinue their education, which is significantly higher than the national average. They do not have access to books. They do not have access to printed materials.

Many Canadians will have the opportunity to enter in the labour force because of this legislation. Current data suggests that approximately one-third of Canadians with a visual impairment are not in the labour force.

Seniors, the group with the highest rate of visual impairment, will have better access to reading materials, which will help them maintain their quality of life.

Canadians from minority language groups will have better access to books in a variety of languages.

Schools, libraries and charitable organizations that work with Canadians with disabilities will benefit from reduced duplication in the production of accessible material.

I will pause here to talk briefly about the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. What this would do for the CNIB, and those of us who are clients of the CNIB, is quite frankly revolutionary.

There are innovations that we can bring to bear to facilitate the making and sending of accessible materials, thus increasing access through a global network.

Second, while the legislation would expand the exceptions for accessible materials for persons with perceptual disabilities already in our law, it would also include safeguards so that copyright owners would be encouraged to provide commercially available versions and continue to be able to enforce their copyrights against copyright pirates.

Once the Marrakesh treaty is in force, organizations that make accessible format copies of books, such as Braille and audio versions, will benefit from resource sharing. According to the CNIB, the cost of creating an accessible format version of a book can range from \$1,500 to \$5,000 per title. Allowing organizations to exchange copies across borders would result in access to a wider range of books in a variety of languages. It would also result in a more efficient use of resources. These benefits would not just apply in terms of access to the arts. It would support access to a greater variety of books, including textbooks and for research, expanding opportunities for people with perceptual disabilities.

Implementing the Marrakesh treaty is a priority for our government because we realize that creating a more inclusive environment for Canadians with disabilities reflects our collective values and fosters greater opportunities for all Canadians. Libraries, education institutions and organizations that help persons with visual impairment or print disabilities would benefit and be better able to support the education and employment of persons with disabilities.

Canada has an opportunity now to be one of the first 20 countries to ratify or accede Marrakesh, the number required to bring the treaty into force.

I encourage all hon. members to support the swift passage of this important legislation. There is no reason that Canadians with disabilities should have to wait for access to literature that will enable them to better participate in our economy and in our society. More can be done to ensure that copyright laws do not create additional barriers for those with a print disability and that users have access to the latest and best published materials from around the world.

Let us be leaders, not just in Canada but also on the international stage. Let us show the world how persons with disabilities are treated in Canada, which is with respect and dignity. Let us continue to forge a path toward an active and inclusive Canada.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on bringing this bill forward. As much as I have not had a chance to read the bill in great detail, certainly the intent of the bill and the direction we see is very positive.

Government Orders

Why is the bill being put forward today despite other legislation being on notice? This is an issue where there seems to be a substantial degree of consensus and it would have been nice to have moved forward with proper notice in a collaborative way. Instead, after indicating that the government would move a different bill, today we have closure on one bill, report stage on another, and now it is pushing this one forward. Why not move this bill forward in the collegial co-operative manner that something this important deserves?

• (1220)

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons we were so excited to get this bill going is because we have the consensus of all parties in the House. The members of the Conservative Party and the NDP have been very co-operative. This is an opportunity for us to get this done, to be one of the first 20 countries to accede to the Marrakesh treaty. It is seen as an opportunity to move something forward and celebrate the importance we put on this issue for Canadians.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on the bill. Procedurally, I really do not care how it got here because it is an important bill to pass. However, one of the things that does concern me, as a former employment specialist for persons with disabilities and somebody who was on the CNIB board of directors for a number of years, is that the bill is a small tool internationally and domestically for us to do something about the issue of accessibility, but it is not getting at the heart of the problem. The heart of the problem is that persons with disabilities are still ostracized from many opportunities of employment as well as other services because the supports are not there.

What specifically can persons with disabilities, in terms of their own communities, expect to receive in supports that will reverse this growing tide against them for employment opportunities and for inclusion because we have had cuts in resources, both provincially or federally, over the last decade?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, the number one bullet in my mandate letter is to engage in a consultation process that will ultimately result in accessibility legislation at the federal level.

Recognizing the exact challenges that the member has raised, we know we can do better in Canada. That is why the Prime Minister appointed Canada's first-ever minister responsible for persons with disabilities.

We know the number one barrier to full inclusion in society for Canadians with disabilities is employment. The way we get access to employment is by putting in place a suite of tools, programs of opportunities for Canadians with disabilities to engage in Canadian society in whatever way they see fit.

Absolutely, the Marrakesh treaty is one of those tools, but it is not the only one. I will be excited to bring forward the acceptability legislation at some point to the House so we can have a robust discussion on the full amount of inclusive tools we need to put in place for Canadians with disabilities.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is wonderful news, and I will be sharing this news with the Low Vision Self-Help Association of the West Island, which has been

active for a number of years and has done wonderful work in supporting those with a visual impairment.

My question is more of a technical nature. I understood from the speech that if a work is not available, it would be permissible to unlock the digital lock to allow for transmission of that work. In terms of works that are not electronic, perhaps it could allow unlimited copying.

The minister mentioned that the rules might be different if a publisher actually took this as an incentive to produce a work for the visually impaired. Could the minister comment on how the rules would work in those cases?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, the idea is that the Marrakesh treaty focuses on not making profit from making available accessible materials. If publishers, which I would personally think would be a fantastic advancement for publishing companies around the world, decided to make something available in an accessible format, they would not be able to avail themselves of the provisions in the same way under the Marrakesh treaty because there would be a commercial component to it.

One of the things we know, though, is making something accessible is not just providing it in large font. I will give an example. I have Kobo which enlarges materials, but I cannot actually find the materials on the screen because the icons are not enlarged or because the writing of the font of the program is not big.

There are a lot of barriers inherent in technology that although we can make something in super large font, we actually cannot find it if we cannot see. It seems like that would be a fantastic idea for publishers to do that, but it also means they would have to make their technology fully accessible as well.

The point we are trying to make with Marrakesh is from a non-commercial, non-profit point of view. Parents who are blind, who have sighted children, will be able to get cheaper, more accessible copies of books to read to their children. Parents like myself who are visually impaired and have sighted children will be able to have large-print books to read to their children. The list goes on and on of the incredible benefits that the treaty will provide.

• (1225)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister very much for introducing this legislation. It has been a great passion of mine since the previous government, under the leadership of industry minister Moore, who introduced similar legislation to implement the changes to the Copyright Act, which would allow for the sharing of books in accessible formats.

The member herself is an inspiration. It is great to see that she is the person who has the occasion to bring this opportunity to so many deserving people across the country.

Could the minister comment more broadly on the government's openness to take advantage of new developments in technology, the willingness of corporate leaders to be philanthropists, to help Canadians who are disadvantaged to access more opportunities like this in other areas than the one she has provided before us today?

Government Orders

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the member opposite for his tireless effort in this file. It has been an absolute pleasure and honour to work with him as we move this forward.

Our government is extremely open to providing new and innovative opportunities for Canadians of all abilities and disabilities, whether it be employment, service provision, and program provision. That is why I am so excited to be launching, in the upcoming months, a very robust consultation process that will engage Canadians with disabilities, business and non-profit organization leaders, on what we need in accessibility legislation. What does an accessible Canada look like? That is the question we are going to be asking Canadians. I know the time is right to have this conversation.

Businesses recognize the value. There is an extremely strong business case for hiring someone with a disability. We have an extremely strong business case for making businesses more inclusive. I could tell a leader of a company that it does not currently have access to 14% of the consumer base or that the labour shortage could be addressed by hiring a group of willing and capable Canadians to do those jobs. There is so much to be done right now in this area.

Canadians want to talk about it, our government wants to talk about it, and, more important, we are going to do something about it.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was on the copyright committee when the last legislation was put forward and the government absolutely refused to make the changes in the provisions that would have made it possible for people with sight issues to access materials. There was one fundamental principle, which was that the digital lock was sacrosanct. The problem is that this has affected university institutions, research, libraries, and digital archives.

However, it is not just sighted students who are affected in these situations. Universities will tell students who have hearing disabilities that the Copyright Act overrides their right to have closed captioning.

Given the fact that these changes have been made, which are good changes, there is the issue of establishing a clear balance in the provisions of the digital locks, which will still be WIPO compliant, to ensure that libraries can do their work without facing punishment and that the rights of other individuals with perceptual disabilities not related to sight can supersede the sacrosanct provisions of the digital lock provisions in the present Copyright Act. Will those changes be brought forward?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. We know that Marrakesh focuses primarily on the visually impaired, the blind, and others with more perceptual disabilities related to font size in accessible material. I have met with a lot of leaders in the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities who have brought that very issue to my attention. I am very keen to move forward with figuring out a way to address it. I am very excited that the deaf and hard of hearing are going to be an integral part of our consultations as we move forward on accessibility legislation.

I respect the cultural aspect of deafness and being hard of hearing, and I assure the House we will ensure that question is addressed in the future.

● (1230)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was very pleased this morning that the Minister of Justice introduced Bill C-16, which would guarantee equal rights for transgender and gender-variant Canadians. This bill passed in the House of Commons in 2011 and passed again in essentially the same form as a private member's bill that I introduced in 2013. I was very pleased the minister made a commitment to deal with this bill expeditiously.

Therefore, I would like to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, shall be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is great to rise today on this special occasion when the House of Commons rallies in unanimity to adopt an excellent piece of legislation, which would unlock the potential of thousands of Canadians to enjoy the blessing of literature.

One of the most inspiring parts of this job is that one gets to learn about the great genius that is held in each and every person in their own way. I think of the time when I bumped into a lady in the grocery store who was with her autistic daughter. The lady thanked me for a birthday card I had sent her and asked me when my birthday was. I said that it was June 3, which was four or five months away. Her daughter turned suddenly and said “That’s a Tuesday”. I opened my BlackBerry and looked forward, and it turned out she had accurately predicted the day of the week on which my birthday would fall, without even thinking.

I also think of my time visiting the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, where I learned of this massive inventory of audio, large-print, and Braille books being assembled every single day. Those books are sent to visually impaired Canadians across the country. Staff informed me there that some visually impaired readers can actually complete seven or eight books a week in audio format. I asked how that was possible, because one cannot play seven or eight audio books in a week even if one is listening eight or nine hours a day. The truth is that some are now able to listen to them on fast forward, and as a result, absorb more literature and content than a sighted person reading out of a book in a conventional format.

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I share these stories to impart to the House and Canadians that, as I said at the outset, there is a very special genius in each of us, especially in those people who have had to overcome disabilities. This is why I am so passionate about this particular piece of legislation.

To simplify what the bill would do, I turn the attention of the House to clauses 1 to 4, which introduce the following text.

It is not an infringement of copyright for a person with a perceptual disability, for a person acting at the request of such a person or for a non-profit organization acting for the benefit of such a person to

(a) make a copy or sound recording of a literary, musical, artistic or dramatic work, other than a cinematographic work, in a format specially designed for persons with a perceptual disability;

That sounds very legalistic, but here is what it means very simply.

It means that, if somewhere else in the world a book were produced in accessible format, large print, Braille, or audio, it would no longer be an offence under the Copyright Act for a Canadian to make a copy of it, to provide it to a visually impaired person.

This has massive implications. It means that Canadians who are visually impaired would have access to over one-quarter of a million published works around the world at no additional cost to them or Canadian taxpayers. Essentially, if we think of it in a traditional sense versus a modern sense, this is the implication of technology.

It used to be that, if I had a book and my friend in London had a book and we decided to trade books, we would each still have one book. However, in the modern digital world, if we decided to trade books, we would now each have two books. Taken more broadly, if all of the people of Britain had 100,000 accessible books and we had 100,000 accessible books, now both our countries would have 200,000 accessible books. The result here in Canada is that almost 300,000 additional works would be available through the use of technology and by breaking down legal barriers that previously prevented the sharing of those works.

• (1235)

That means that highly literate Canadians with visual impairments would now have a new cornucopia of reading opportunities, and the minister can take great pride in having brought forward the legislation that would make this development possible.

This is very important because there is something called a book drought for people who suffer from visual impairment. Only 7% of literature is translated into an accessible format at present, which means that if people are avid readers and suffer from a visual impairment, their opportunities to read, learn, and enjoy the great wonders of literature and research are dramatically curtailed. We should work hard to smash all of the barriers that stand in the way of intellectually curious people of all backgrounds who want to read and learn and expand their knowledge.

That is what the bill would do. I think of Diane Bergeron who is with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, a constituent of mine from Manotick, and her love of reading and literature and how many new opportunities she would have to read different books, reports, studies, and other literature that would make her life richer because this legislation would tear down barriers.

The good news is that Canada would be the 14th country to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty and implement this legislation. We need to get to 20. It will require a vigorous effort by the minister herself and other members of the cabinet, including the foreign minister, to encourage other countries to quickly follow Canada and get this ratification in 20 countries so that Marrakesh can achieve full force. However, we are making progress and we are definitely moving in the right direction toward that goal of 20 countries.

If I can broaden the perspective now, this is an example of a low-cost free-enterprise solution to a social problem. Historically we have thought whenever there is a social problem we need a gigantic, expensive bureaucratic solution. The Marrakesh Treaty is like a gigantic free trade agreement for books, and it brings no extra cost to Canadian taxpayers or to taxpayers anywhere in the world. It simply removes a legal obstacle and lets the marketplace and our charitable organizations do the rest. I would like to see us expand our imagination in this area.

For example, there are still roughly 9% of households in this country that do not have access to the Internet. One-third of them say it is because they cannot afford it. Both Rogers and Telus have indicated that they are prepared to provide \$10-a-month Internet to families in need. The challenge, though, is to find which families are actually in need.

Telus came up with a very innovative solution. It said why not include an information slip in the child benefit mailer that goes out from the Government of Canada twice every year. That slip would go to families with income below \$33,000 a year. It would include a pass code and instructions on how each of those families could gain access to low-cost Internet at the expense of Telus in its philanthropic efforts.

Those families who do not have a computer could get one from the computers for success program, which Industry Canada already runs. It takes donated computers, refurbishes them, and gives them to people in need. Telus is prepared to offer free technological instruction to families that might need it. Again, this would cost almost nothing to the Government of Canada, because we already send this mailer twice a year to inform families of their benefits and CRA already has the income data that would be necessary to do it. At the same time, it would connect families in need with low-cost Internet and ensure that all children have access to the Internet when doing their homework. Imagine trying to do homework today as a school child without access to the Internet. All of a child's classmates would have access to the biggest library in the history of the world and he or she would be stuck with a few textbooks from school.

Telus and Rogers and others are looking to solve these problems through philanthropic initiatives that cost almost nothing to Canadian taxpayers and rely on free enterprise as the engine of knowledge sharing.

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•(1240)

I think of brilliant social entrepreneurs, like Nick Noorani who came here as a highly successful advertising representative for McCann Erickson in Dubai. When he came to Canada he found it very hard, being an immigrant, to integrate into our economy. As a result, he ended up working for a long time at minimum wage jobs. He eventually built a successful life here, but it took him a long time to get there.

He has decided now to build a business that has the sole mandate of helping immigrants integrate into Canada before they even get here. He provides online instruction on how best to rent a home, how to get a job, and how foreign-trained professionals or trades people can get their licence to work in a regulated occupation in Canada, so that when they land in Canada they hit the ground running.

He gets no funding from the Government of Canada or from any government, and he does not charge any amount to the immigrants he is helping. How does he pay for it? He actually runs an advertising service. He gets sponsorship from banks, and in exchange, those banks open up a bank account for the newcomer, which means they get a future customer and the potential to make a good return on their social investment by helping finance social integration for newcomers. Construction associations, mining industries, and food processing companies all pay Mr. Noorani as well, so that he can connect skilled future Canadian employees with their industries and they can fill vacancies in their sectors. He then collects a very small fee in exchange for the service he provides.

He is providing a social service directly to Canadian immigrants so they can maximize their success when they arrive here on Canadian soil. He is doing it at no cost to them and no cost to taxpayers, but is doing it as a commercial enterprise, which is paid for by industry and corporations who are, admittedly, acting in their own interests, but doing so at the same time as advancing the interests of others. This is what Benjamin Franklin called doing well by doing good.

I share all of these stories today because I am hoping that Marrakesh can be an occasion where we look for free-enterprise solutions to problems that afflict the underdogs among us, the people who suffer and are held back by injustices, unfairness, or circumstances. We need to look for opportunities to help them springboard ahead and realize their full genius here in our great country.

I think of the Immigrant Access Fund in Calgary, which noticed that there were foreign-trained professionals who would immigrate to Canada and, despite their qualifications as engineers, doctors, and architects, would work in minimum wage jobs because they could not get their licence to practise. Immigrant Access Fund asked why not help them get loans, and financial institutions said they were not prepared to lend to them because they had no collateral or credit history.

The Immigrant Access Fund then went to philanthropic leaders in Calgary and asked them if they would be prepared to sign a loan guarantee to help these promising foreign-trained professionals who are now Canadians get time off work so they could do the study and exams necessary to get the licences to practise in their professions.

These Calgarians agreed to sign the loan guarantees. The loans went out. The foreign-trained professionals worked hard to get their credentials recognized in Canada through testing and training in places across western Canada.

The result was that incomes of participants rose, in some cases by over 100%, because they went from having a minimum wage job to a high-paying position in a regulated profession that was in high demand within their local economy. They did this with the investment of Calgary business leaders who wanted to give those people the opportunity to realize their full potential and share their true inner genius with the local Calgary economy and with Canada in general.

•(1245)

This was essentially the merging of philanthropy and commercial lending to help promising new Canadians make a maximum contribution.

By the way, the default rate on these loans was less than 1%, which demonstrated that when we invest in an ambitious, hard-working newcomer to Canada, they will pay back the money and they will pay back the country for the rest of their lives because they are so grateful for the opportunity to be full participants in the Canadian economy.

There is a whole plethora of opportunities for us as Canadians to unleash the power and the genius of every single Canadian through the free market economy, which of course has been the most powerful tool in the history of humanity to fight poverty and lift up the standard of living of every single person.

I think of Mark Wafer, in the Toronto area, who has hired dozens of intellectually disabled young people to work at his Tim Hortons locations. He says he has done this strictly as a business decision because they are, by far, his best employees. He wants to work with governments in order to transition toward market-based employment where disabled Canadians are given the opportunity to make the same money, doing the same jobs, and making the same contributions as everybody else. This is the essence of unlocking the genius that is in each one of us, in each Canadian.

It is our role to, as legislators, as business leaders, as community activists, to continue to work together in order to see more of this happen. I encourage the government to remember that, as in this case, where the government has done exactly the right thing, it is not always necessary to create new bureaucracies and new programs, new costs, and new regulations. Sometimes free enterprise, itself, is the solution.

I hope that over the course of this term in office, I can work with members of the government in order to realize that vision for visually impaired Canadians, for disabled Canadians, for new Canadians, for every Canadian who wants to make the maximum contribution to this country and realize their full potential as part of our economy.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Carleton on his excellent speech, and in fact, on his long-standing advocacy for this issue.

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How does the member best feel that Canada can advance the cause of getting 20 countries to ratify the treaty in as near as possible a time frame?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I think, obviously, the minister will want to lead the file on behalf of the government and Parliament. I think, at the same time, though, she will probably marshal the support of the foreign minister and other members of the cabinet whose job it is to interact with foreign governments.

I suspect the best way to do it would be to find the seven countries that are closest to ratification and target diplomatic efforts at those seven, relentlessly, until they do. I know the official opposition would be delighted to participate in those efforts, and we look forward to seeing the leadership from the government on that effort.

• (1250)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague.

The question before us, in terms of updating and signing onto the Marrakesh treaty, is also a question of where we need to go in terms of copyright. When we develop a copyright legislation framework in a rapidly changing technological environment, the laws that we put down one year can be superseded just by changes in the technology around us. Therefore, we have to have fundamental principles.

Works that are being made available should not be made available if it is interfering with someone's commercial right who would normally make them available, but also, we need principles around the provision to access works that would normally be considered under "fair use" provisions and the issue of the technological protection measures that are given in our copyright legislation the highest protection, superseding at times the rights of researchers, sometimes innovators, and certainly, the libraries. If something is under digital lock, they are not able to break it so that they can do a backup so it can be utilized in another format.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague, given the fact that we recognized, through this treaty, that there should be a right for those to make works accessible to those with visual impairments, if we have to then consider some of the nuances of copyright overall so that other good public uses of copyright, in terms of making things accessible, have to be considered, particularly for those with other disabilities, perceptual disabilities, for example, or hearing impairment, and also in terms of whether it is applicable for research and in terms of being able to save works that are under digital lock provisions.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I am open-minded to those suggestions. The basis of the copyright restrictions of which the member spoke is the desire to protect the intellectual property of the creator to ensure that there is some monetary benefit to the person who produced the product in the first place.

The legislation before the House right now would give a unique exemption to either individuals who have a visual impairment or organizations acting on their behalf. The bill is structured in a way so that it would not threaten the intellectual property or the copyright of creators. If that could be replicated in other areas to expand access for people with other kinds of disabilities I would welcome that. I cannot claim that I have knowledge of how that would be done.

The member mentioned people who have hearing impairments and if there was something similar proposed for people in that predicament I would be open-minded to supporting it. I must confess that I would need to study it more before I could make a firm commitment.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it seems that we are going to have widespread agreement across the various parties in this place that Bill C-11 is good and welcome. We want to see the Marrakesh treaty ratified and we want to make these changes to copyright to accommodate disabilities.

I did note that Michael Geist had made some proposals and I wonder if the hon. member for Carleton had noticed those. As Geist notes, this is a good first step, but our version is more restrictive than it needs to be. The provision in the bill for instance for charging royalties is not something that is required under the Marrakesh treaty.

I am assuming that the hon. member for Carleton knows that Mr. Geist is Canada's leading expert in this area of the whole digital world and copyrights and how they should be applied and how to avoid restrictive digital locks and so on. However, another point that Michael Geist made was that the export exception currently does not apply to works that are commercially available. This is another area that we might want to fine-tune.

Has the hon. member given any thought to those recommendations?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I have not read Mr. Geist's recommendations with respect to Marrakesh.

The legislation before us has a fairly comprehensive exemption that would solve the problems that are associated with people accessing accessible works. I point the member to page 1 of the explanatory notes of the Copyright Act changes. As I said in my speech, this note explains that it is not an infringement of copyright for a person with a perceptual disability or organizations acting on their behalf to "make a copy or sound recording of a literary, musical, artistic or dramatic work, other than a cinematographic work, in a format specially designed for persons with a perceptual disability". That language is broad enough but I leave it to some of the lawyers to confirm whether or not that is the case. I have been working with members of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. They seem to be happy with the way the bill is written and structured right now. I gather there will be opportunities for amendment.

I would only caution that we move quickly. The longer we wait, the longer the other seven countries will wait, and we need to reach 20, and the longer Canadians with a visual disability will have to wait in order to access literature.

Let us move quickly. We have amendments. Let us get them done, get them to the minister for her consideration right away and have her decide whether or not they are appropriate, and then pass the bill through committee, through the Senate, and into law as quickly as possible.

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•(1255)

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a bill for which I have been waiting for many years. I have to declare that I have some very personal reasons for fully supporting the legislation.

My husband is visually impaired. Through the years of his studies at the Regent College, we worked together. I was his research assistant, reading all his textbooks to him so that he could write his papers for graduation. We also asked the Crane Library, the University of British Columbia to provide him with research materials. Copyright is the number one concern.

We have also been trying to explore the Internet these days to download audio books. Right now, he cannot really read anything in print form. He is a highly intellectual person. For example, he has even audio-read *A Brief History of Time*. Many of us who have vision would not find this easy, but he is very keen and can actually give a lecture on that.

This is for people like my husband, for people who are highly intellectual, and who would like to use this as a research tool. He is still working hard. He is retired, but he is still going through a lot of audio books, including those on Buddhism and other religious studies.

This is coming from the point of view of a researcher. I am a former researcher myself. I was also a research assistant for my husband, and I am still a volunteer for CNIB. I have actually spoken to CNIB during my years as a member of Parliament.

I am so grateful that my hon. colleague is finally able to get to this. I want to ask the whole House to support this, not only for my personal reasons but also for all those who need the help. There are excellent people out there who love books.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, that is just another example of someone who will benefit from this, a prolific reader of literature who suffers from a visual impairment but who will now have access to over a quarter of a million new books and other publications in accessible formats, such as audio, large print, and Braille.

If members have not been to the CNIB headquarters, it is worth a visit. They have studios where radio personalities volunteer their time to go in and read books into their recordings. Those books are then available in audio format, formerly for Canadians but now with the Marrakesh treaty, they will be available to visually impaired people, like the member's husband, all around the world, who will enjoy the magic of literature, produced and recorded right here in a Canadian studio by an excellent organization, CNIB. This is another good reason to support the bill.

I commend the minister, the government, and all members for supporting this.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on the bill.

As has been the practice in the past, when New Democrats have given unanimous consent to allow ministers to split their spots in the opening round of debate to accommodate their schedules, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the member for Timmins—James Bay to split the time with myself. This member has been

active in the House on this file, and he is also the father of an exceptionally bright person, Mariah, who has been fighting for this issue since grade 1.

I would ask for the members' unanimous consent to split the time.

•(1300)

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Windsor West have the unanimous consent of the House to split his time?

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that really disappoints me. Friday was the 14th year that I have spent in this House. I came here with a variety of different experiences. I worked on behalf of persons with disabilities at Community Living Mississauga and then at the Association For Persons With Physical Disabilities. I was also a board member at the CNIB.

I can say that the member for Timmins—James Bay would add significantly to this debate. Although I have served in occupations and positions that helped support people with disabilities, as well as being a board volunteer, that does not do justice to those who have to live with young people and help grow them through a society that is inaccessible in many ways. I am saddened to hear that we did not have unanimous consent on that issue alone, given the fact that his voice would be empowering. It would be part of what we are trying to achieve, which is to have other nations support this bill, as we still do not have full support to accomplish that. That type of testimony would add value, substance, and help us put a case forward to deliver this. Unless we can get those supporting factions and countries to agree upon this, nothing will change. I am saddened by that.

Hopefully, we will see better days in the House than moments like this, as it takes away from the sincerity of trying to get something accomplished in a bipartisan way and demeans all of us with respect to the causes we seek here.

This is an important bill, and the member for Timmins—James Bay took carriage of it in the past. We have also had Peggy Nash, the former member for Parkdale—High Park from our party, who brought forward a motion which stated:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should immediately sign and ratify the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled.

I know that the current member for Windsor—Tecumseh is taking up this challenge as well for persons with disabilities.

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It is important to note that one of my heroes with respect to this battle was my late grandmother Marion Masse, who lived to over aged 90. She had to have her knees replaced. She had macular degeneration. Despite all of that, although she lost her vision, except for shadows at the end, she still won the bowling tournament for her rest home and was very much an active person. She was involved in creating the low vision for the blind group, an organization in Windsor and Essex County, that worked on issues that many of us would perceive as mundane, yet are truly important for social, economic, and cultural integration. One of the projects it worked on was menus being printed in large print or Braille to assist people when they would go out to eat to read the menu. Also, it was about the fact that they could go to safe places where they could be with their friends. They knew that the customer service they would receive was supportive and understanding. It was part of a culture where their disabilities were not pointed out and barriers were not created.

One of the most frustrating things is that we are still creating barriers today, despite having the economics and the ability to not do so. We even experience that in the House. For a number of years, I have been using Braille cards, as a member for my constituency and in my work here. The House of Commons will not allow my staff to have those because it is a resource issue. Therefore, the House of Commons is denying that accessibility and support provision.

Our constituency offices had been placed on hold for funding improvements. That has been cancelled with respect to upgrading. After years of putting aside some budgetary allotments, I was finally able to make my office accessible. That is not provided for us as members. Funds for upgrades were made available, so we were able to put in a door for accessibility, an accessible washroom, and those types of things. I would like to see an audit done of the offices of all members of Parliament, including my own. We would quickly discover that they are deficient with respect to accessibility, whether that be with respect to visual or mobility impairments. These different measures are not provided.

• (1305)

In fact, even without my previous employment experience as a job specialist, I can say that Ottawa is one of the most inaccessible cities in many respects around the Hill, because of the curbs. Even for those with a child, it is like off-roading when it comes to Sparks Street and other places. We build inaccessibility in as part of our due diligence of construction, and it is not necessary.

This treaty will be very important in Canada, in setting aside some battles on the cost and the compensation with regard to increasing accessible print, books, and audio. We see that happening with format sharing when we go to purchase a movie now. We can actually purchase it in formats that are different than what we would assume is one version. We can purchase it so it is available on a mobile device, on a computer, and as part of a video consul. We can purchase it online. We can go into the store and purchase it. There is a series of ways that we can do so.

We think about the same context with books and information and cultural development that we have. For those who think that the age of books is done, it has recently had a resurgence. There are many

applications for people with visual disabilities, of any sort, who can take advantage of these materials. It is important.

I can also argue that there are people who may not qualify for the official recognition of a disability but who have some type of visual challenge. Obviously, I have one with my glasses here. However, there are others who have to switch between vision products and use some of these print versions, depending on the stage of their life. Macular degeneration, for example, is a condition of transitioning to a degradation of vision, and a person might need multiple formats.

This treaty will allow for some compensation to be extended, but under a specific format that, more importantly, would also allow the universal sharing of this information, whether that be a book on politics, culture, betterment, or children's material. All of those different things are looked at and taken care of. That is important, because it does tend to lead to a safe environment for persons with disabilities with visual impairments to explore different types of subject matter, which can also lead to different formats.

When I worked for the Association for Persons With Physical Disabilities, I worked with an individual who was blind and required modifications on the job. At that time, it was the beginning of allowing translation devices on computers. This was before Rosetta Stone and all of the different ones. The Dragon was before that, and there was a series of others that came into place. The devices would actually read back to people what they were typing. We were able to get into that type of technology in the early 1990s. It was not perfect, but it worked well. This individual could have a job, and it was very important.

I have had other important experiences over the years. I can mention this person's name because she is a dear friend and she was a client of mine. Lynn Fitzsimmons became a clerk in the insurance industry. What was required for Lynn was the simple identification of files. We had them in larger print and they were colour-coded. At dental offices and other types of medical offices, there are systems in place that are colour-coded to make it easier for the administrators to select those files off the counter. We did a similar type of system for Lynn, and she became gainfully employed. She is very much a leader in the disability field, and a wonderful mother and active person in our community, with her husband Phil.

We were able at that time to do the colour-coding system because we had to look for something that was economical. Working for a not-for-profit agency, we had very limited resources. It was at a time when there were cutbacks to all of these programs. It was the first program in Ontario that allowed support on the job for persons with physical disabilities.

The simple accessibility of these materials, which were not expensive to begin with, allowed for someone to be employed for approximately 10 years in that one position. It was an excellent system of colour-coding that enabled her to do the administrative work. Also, it allowed the individual for the insurance company to be extremely successful in this model environment, because he then hired her as an administrative assistant who could accomplish all of these goals.

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•(1310)

The reason that this is important is because work defines us in many respects. However, this country is woefully inadequate with regard to the supports for persons with disabilities and work.

Work brings up a number of issues that are very important. One does not just get an income, but health, wellness, and mental and physical abilities are affected by work in a very positive fashion. We meet people, friends, and have relationships that we would not otherwise have, which brings us out of a closed environment. Therefore, when we see those opportunities emerge for persons with disabilities, it is quite important in the overall picture for Canada to be an equal society.

Sadly, we are not anywhere near that in Canada, hence my question previously with regard to upcoming matters. I do not think there needs to be consultation on certain issues. We should move the lower-hanging fruit off the tree right away to improve it.

I came from an era where we had employment equity. There were those who backlashed against it, but it opened a door for me to at least plead the case for why an employer could benefit from hiring a person with a disability, whether it be Lynn or other persons with physical challenges. We were able to say that they have less employee absenteeism. They have fewer work-related accidents. They stay longer on the job. Their training retention is a benefit that an employer would receive, as opposed to the expense of people rotating through a job. Most importantly, they also prove to be a product-quality person at the end of the day, versus many other workers getting the job done. Also, one of the indirect benefits is the fact that it is a morale boost for companies.

There was an individual with a physical disability who I had helped to work at Costco. I took in shopping carts with him for four to five months. He stayed there, and the job accommodated him six or seven years later. He had worked in a workshop until the age of 48 and was now employed at Costco. When he finally became physically challenged by the snow and the weather, Costco moved him inside and found a job for him there. It was a wonderful experience for everybody involved. He is an incredible individual.

My point is that socially, he would remember everyone's birthday, bring in a birthday card and all of those different things. People loved that. The fact is, he had his own employment, his own gainful experience, and friends who followed afterwards, which is important.

When we look at Bill C-11, we have Canada joining with nations, many that have not valued persons with disabilities previous to this particular effort and maybe in a holistic way. When we measure Canada's results on this issue, it is not very good, given the fact that we have been active and have had not-for-profit organizations opened in Canada for decades. We are still fighting the good fight, and we still do not have that type of support system in place. Therefore, hopefully the bill will push many other organizations and countries to make sure that we have it.

I have some statistics on poverty for persons with disabilities, because I want to show the increase in poverty for persons with different types of disabilities. There is the aging and poverty rate at 15% of Canadians, mobility at 15.2%. There is the "any disability"

area, which is around 14.4%; and seeing poverty, compared to that, is 17.1%. Therefore, we have a heightened challenge there.

Some of the things we have done have been piecemeal across the country. My good friend and former councillor, Ron Jones, who was previously a district fire chief, became a city councillor when I became a member of Parliament. One of his last gestures on council was to make the west end of the city, basically the area I represented, accessible for street corners and cuts. It included new technology for visual disabilities and others, to make it more accommodating than in the past. This was just a few years ago. It is something that should have been done years previous, but it just was not. We do not have any centralized approach for these things.

•(1315)

I cannot believe some of the mistakes. I am a hockey coach and a hockey dad to my daughter and son, and I cannot count how many arenas I have been to that are inaccessible for all types of disabilities, including the hockey players' bags. I just cannot believe the way some of the arenas are built, with no regard for persons with disabilities or an aging population that wants to watch their grandsons and granddaughters play hockey. I just cannot believe some of the barriers in places built with money that has come from federal grants.

When I was on city council I served on the disability committee for a number of years. There was a group of individuals who had different types of challenges and disabilities. My good friend Dean LaBute, was among them. He was very active in the CNIB for a number of years, for decades, actually. They would audit proposed municipal projects based on the disability format. The projects had to pass, whether it was a fountain area, like the memorial fountain built in honour of the late member of city council and mayor, Bert Weeks, who was involved with work on the waterfront. A waterfront clock was placed there. The committee audited that.

There were still some challenges afterward, but at least we took care of some of them. The projects had to be audited that way. Why do federal infrastructure grants and programs not have to be audited for disability accommodation as well? It is very important. If government money, grants, and support are going to be provided, why are projects not being looked at through some type of disability lens?

The fact of the matter is that despite the issues that pose challenges to persons with disabilities, including visual disabilities, they make contributions to society and they are taxpayers. Their money is quite literally going to projects that are inaccessible to them. It makes no sense whatsoever and it is a real concern. How fair is it that? They get up and go to work in challenging environments. There are less constraints in the private sector.

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Try being a person with a disability, who is underemployed right now because the jobs don't match the person's skills, and having to raise the inaccessibility issue at work. Think about the challenge of having to do that as a worker. How many workers do I know today who are scared to question the practices of their employer under health and safety acts because they are fearful of losing their jobs or being blackballed? That happens every single day.

We just had May Day for injured workers. How many went through that process at work, where it was not safe, and they did not return to their sons and daughters at home one night because the workplace was not safe? Think about that for persons with disabilities, who are fearful about raising inaccessibility at the workplace. They pay their taxes. Government projects are put in place by federal, provincial or municipal governments, and accessibility is not built into the process. It is supposed to be. It is supposed to meet municipal codes. I have been there and done that, but it does not go through the necessary auditing processes.

There are a number of issues regarding persons with disabilities that are clearly important and need to be addressed. The New Democrats have called on the Conservatives and Liberals to move on this file and we appreciate most of the co-operation we have had, but unfortunately, there was none on splitting my time.

● (1320)

As a result, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion: That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-11, an act to amend the Copyright Act (access to copyrighted works or other subject matter for persons with perceptual disabilities), be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to the committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no consent.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the motion, the government had promised the opposition that we would pass Bill C-11 at all stages at an appointed time agreed on by all parties. Of course, the government broke that commitment by calling Bill C-11 this afternoon without notice.

We do not believe in playing politics on this important issue and we do have another slot we want to use—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The unanimous consent motion was actually defeated, so I think it is not really a point of order, but the member might want to incorporate that into his comments at some point if he has the opportunity to do so.

Is the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Charlie Angus: No, Mr. Speaker, on questions and comments, but I am more than willing to be recognized.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite and all of my colleagues here in the House for their heartfelt support and their consideration of this very important issue.

I just wanted to correct the number of countries that have actually ratified the Marrakesh treaty. It is 16. Canada will be the 17th. After Canada, there will only be a need to have three more countries ratify this treaty, so we are a little further ahead.

I did want to acknowledge the member's comments around the role of parents who have children who are visually impaired and blind. As parents we set the expectations and we dream for our children. The hon. member dreams big for his children, so I want to commend him on that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her contributions, obviously, in this subject matter and getting it moving right away. I think that is important to note.

Even though my two motions have failed here today, I still have hope that maybe my third will eventually pass. It may be something else, but I am trying.

At any rate, I thank the minister for her contributions and also for correcting the number of countries. I am hopeful that we can use this as a springboard to push other countries toward it. I am hoping the government has a real strong strategy on doing that and maybe a goal line set for it maybe in the fall for getting the other countries on board with this.

One of the things we can do is create momentum with this. I am pleased that the government has brought this forth. I would also like to note that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has been raising this with New Democrats as well. We appreciate the interventions.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues coming to me from a constituent who has children who are disabled is the issue of tax deductibility. I want to hear the member's thoughts on this.

We have heard of people who want to claim on their taxes necessary equipment to assist them, but then it is called a toy by the CRA, something like an iPad or necessary applications. It would help them actually access these materials getting misidentified by CRA.

I would be of the view that this is an important issue to move on as well to ensure that yes, people have access to these materials, but also that they get the equipment to help them consume this material and that they be treated fairly under our tax law. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

● (1325)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to this question.

Government Orders

My first battle here in the House was stopping the disability tax cuts from being eliminated by the then Liberal government. John Manley was the minister at that time and the Treasury Board was pushing hard for him to do that. I give him all the credit in the world for standing up and not doing that.

The challenge with the disability tax credit to this day, and the member for New Westminster—Burnaby has been doing a wonderful job on this, is making sure that people are aware of the tax credit. I would ask anyone listening to this debate to go to their member of Parliament's office and ask for information and assistance to get the disability tax credit, because it is a credit that can go back 10 years.

With regard to taxation policies and new technology, there is certainly a lot we need to look at, because some of these devices the member is talking about are necessities, not luxuries.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest, and I know my colleague has had a passion for this for years.

I was really hoping to speak to this because I would have followed up on the issue that the minister talked about, the fight that parents have. People probably do not understand the institutional blocks that are put in the way of children with disabilities. My daughter fought from grade 1 on. She has had to go to the human rights commission time and time again. These are fundamental issues. I would think it would have been a good thing to discuss.

In my 12 years here, I have never ever seen government use its power to stop opposition members from splitting their own time, except today, with what I think is the unfortunate and poisonous behaviour of the member for Winnipeg North. He would not allow our own party to participate using our own time.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague what he thinks it does to the quality of debate in the House when we see such poisonous interference in a discussion that should be about building us as a Parliament into something a little more credible, a little less partisan, and a little less cheap.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, there was a genuine feeling of disappointment when I heard that, because I thought, first, generally speaking, most members in the House do not want to hear me speak for 20 minutes anyway.

That aside, I cannot say where I did not hear something, but I am seeing red right now, because this affected the ability of my colleague to speak, and it undermines a systematic approach we have had to let people speak and split the speaking times. It is rather unfortunate because that is a passive aggressive way to basically get something done as punishment, or some other type of thing, that should be absent on this bill. We have done everything we possibly can. In fact, I gave credit to the parliamentary secretary for industry for approaching me on this and making sure we had cleared the decks for this. Despite us going through a number of different challenges, orders of business, and all those different things, we did so.

The member for Timmins—James Bay was there by my side every single time to protect my flank so we could get this done. Then what do we get? We get that kind of nonsense rearing its head. It is

unfortunate though, because I think, in my heart of hearts, some of the Liberal backbenchers who cannot even participate in debate here today should finally be standing up for themselves, their communities, their constituents and persons with disabilities, because they should have a voice here too.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate, given the importance of this legislation and what appears to be all-party support for a worldwide treaty and the leadership role that Canada could play, that the NDP has chosen to play party politics on this issue. Statements in terms of division of speaking time have been denied in the past. There is an idea behind negotiations, supporting agreements, and so forth that should be respected.

There is no doubt that many members of the chamber would love the opportunity to express their thoughts on legislation of this nature. How wonderful it would be if the House sat many hundreds, if not thousands, of hours from my perspective. Then everyone would be able to share their thoughts on everything. Unfortunately, out of goodwill, at times there are limits put in place, such as what we are talking about today, because we want to see the legislation pass.

Would the member not recognize that Canada can and does play that leadership role, and part of showing that leadership is in fact seeing the legislation pass in a timely fashion?

• (1330)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, Canada does not play that role right now because of members like him and their attitude in the House, claiming we are playing partisan games when I openly thanked the parliamentary secretary for supporting this and pushing the issue along.

We have shown our capabilities in this matter. We have shown that when it comes to this House, at the end of the day, we need to stand as one to show that united element to our friends abroad on this debate. What do they get at the end of this? They get to see parliamentary inside games from the PMO on something we care deeply about here and elsewhere. That behaviour shames a lot of the chamber, but fortunately, there are many more of us who will rise above that type of manner.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this subject. I will be splitting my time with the member for Lethbridge who also serves as our party's critic for disabilities. She is doing a phenomenal job in that role, standing up for vulnerable people.

This is a great bill. It is a bill that all parties as well as unrecognized parties agree on, but it is important to express some disappointment about the reality of the process and how this debate has come up today. We had Bill C-14 on the Notice Paper. Then we had a vote to concur in Bill C-6. Then we had closure on Bill C-10. Now we are on to Bill C-11 without notice.

Government Orders

I say this precisely because of the importance of the bill. It is a bill that we should all be coming together not only on substance but on process. Had we the notice, had we been able to plan this debate at a time when all parties were ready and organized for it, we would have been able to get so much more out of this conversation. There would have been an opportunity to bring in stakeholders perhaps, to listen to and to observe this debate. This would have given all parties the opportunity to ensure that those who really wanted or needed to speak to this were in a position to do so.

Instead, this very important substantive legislation is being used as a procedural weapon, it seems. The government tabled the bill on March 24. As much as the minister has mentioned the urgency of moving this forward, the Liberals could have at least given notice that they were going to do it today. We could have had the bill debated earlier. This is a missed opportunity.

In the previous time slot, my colleague from the NDP, the member for Windsor West, wanted to split his time and a government member blocked that from happening. We have these missed opportunities of collegiality, missed opportunities to work together to put our best foot forward as a House. It is unfortunate, because we agree with the issue and can work together on it. Yes, there are times for partisanship in this place, but the bill should not have been one of those times.

I do not blame the minister for this. I have spoken to the minister at committee and I know she is committed to working across party lines on important issues. However, this speaks to the House leadership on the government side and how it views absolutely nothing it seems as beyond partisanship.

I want to get that out of the way because it is important to put on the record.

Let us talk about the bill. I am very proud to be speaking in favour of it.

Just to highlight for those who may be just joining the debate, the bill has three substantive different parts to it.

The bill would allow not-for-profit organizations acting on behalf of a person with a disability to convert books and other works into an accessible format without first seeking the permission of the copyright holder. It would instantly allow books that were currently not in accessible format to be converted into those formats. That is an important change, one that would make a positive difference.

Also, as part of the treaty that the bill would operate under, the Marrakesh treaty, which was signed in 2013 and would now through this legislation be ratified, it would allow the sharing of those works between different countries participating in that treaty. There is the domestic element of allowing people to have access to this important information. There is also that international element, encouraging sharing between different countries of this vital material.

Finally, the bill would make important related amendments to digital lock provisions.

Obviously we are going to support the bill. It is getting a lot of consensus. This is the conclusion of a prior process of which the previous government was certainly a part. Budget 2015 set out a plan to implement this treaty. Page 286 of budget 2015, stated:

The Government will propose amendments to the Copyright Act to implement and accede to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

The ability to access printed information is essential to prepare for and participate in Canada's economy, society and job market. According to Statistics Canada, approximately 1 million Canadians live with blindness or partial sight. The Government will propose amendments to the Copyright Act to implement and accede to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled (the Marrakesh Treaty).

● (1335)

Aligning Canada's copyright limitations and exceptions with the international standard established by the Marrakesh Treaty would enable Canada to accede to this international agreement. Once the treaty is in force, as a member country, [Canada] would benefit from greater access to adapted materials.

It is worth nothing that this process has been in place. Certainly, this was the plan laid out in Canada's economic action plan 2015. However, we are very pleased to see the new government continue on with this important work. This work needed to be done.

I would like to specifically motivate the philosophy behind the bill. It is essential that every person has access to books. Books are a major part of all of our lives, and they are an important part of every child's life.

My daughter, Gianna, and I read books all the time. I read books to her on Skype when I am in Ottawa. I cannot imagine what it would be like to have a child who has a visual impairment and who is unable to get books which he or she can read. My daughter is a voracious reader. I brought four books with me and we went through them all in one evening. I need to bring more books with me next time I come to Ottawa, clearly. It is great to see how important books are to us all, especially kids. We need to ensure that people of all ages, including children, have access to reading material of all kinds.

As has been discussed in the House, people's reading decisions are not limited by the availability of books.

Again, I cannot imagine what it would be like to really want to read a particular book, whether a novel or a work of non-fiction, and be told that because of a disability, I cannot read that book, that the book is not available to me, that the knowledge is not available to me. I think that would be a very difficult thing for anyone to deal with. That is why this legislation is important for ensuring that everyone has access to books, that there can really be the full sharing of knowledge that takes place.

Everyone in every situation should have access to as much knowledge, as many books as possible. There can be nothing but good that would come from more access to books for more people.

I also want to talk about the international dimension of this. One of the things we know about Canada is that many people maybe have come here from other places or maybe were born here, but who like to read books in other languages. They might be more comfortable in a language other than English or French, or they simply enjoy reading works from a range of different languages. Specifically, the international dimension of this treaty would allow Canadians to have greater access to books in other languages that may be in a better format which they can make more use of.

Government Orders

Some of the countries that have signed the treaty so far are Argentina, El Salvador, India, Mali, Paraguay, Singapore, UAE, and Uruguay. In a multicultural Canada that likely means more access to materials in languages like Hindi, Punjabi, and Spanish. It is important that through those international sharing takes place for all Canadians, not just those who want to access things in English or French, have access to them.

Noting the countries that have signed the treaty so far, it does not look like there are that many Francophone countries. In addition to us ratifying this, there is a lot of value in Canada playing a role, encouraging other countries to ratify and, in particular, seeing if we can use our relationships through the Francophonie to encourage more Francophone countries to ratify this and therefore ensure we have good access to more French-language materials.

We need to get to 20 countries. It is important that we get those 20 countries ratifying. I understand from the minister that we only have three more to go. This is an important leadership role Canada can play and the continuing advocacy we have to do.

I mentioned this during questions and comments, but I have had a constituent raise with me the importance of ensuring those tools people access that allow them, as people with disabilities, to operate in the world, to read, and to do other things, it may be an iPad or a speech app on a phone, are tax deductible. I see measures that address those issues as aligning well with the measures in this legislation.

I look forward to supporting the bill.

• (1340)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share the member's affinity for this bill and his support for it. I just have a quick question for the member.

It has been said many times that it is never the wrong time to do the right thing. Why does the member see this as the wrong time to do the right thing? He must agree this is the right thing. We all agree on it. Let us get it done. Let us get this bill passed. I would like to hear his comments on that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, just on the procedural point, we have said we will pass this after question period.

I did not say that it was the wrong time to do the right thing. What I said was it helped to give notice if people planned on doing the right thing, and if they wanted others to go ahead with them.

It is always the wrong time to use cheap procedural tactics when we have a bill that is this important. We should be working together on this. All the government had to do was give notice that this would be up for debate. We could have engaged more stakeholders. This would have been a good opportunity for all parties to work together.

There is obviously still collaboration around the content of the bill, but things like letting the NDP members split their time, things like giving advance notice, these are basic elements of courtesy that are normally observed in this place. It is disappointing to see, on legislation this important where we should be coming together, that not happening to the fullest extent.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my colleague's question of the right time.

All of us came to the House this morning fully under the impression that we would be debating Bill C-14. Through the joint committee study, through the justice committee study, we were told time and time again that we did not have time to get all these witnesses in. We were under a tight time frame. We were under the deadline of June 6.

Today, we were hoping to start debate on Bill C-14. Instead of that, we have had at least three different bills brought to the House today, taking up the time that members of the House could be debating Bill C-14. The clock is ticking.

Again, what are my colleague's feelings about why the government would have chosen today to implement three bills that could have been passed another week when Bill C-14 was under such a tight timeline?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, obviously Bill C-11 is the kind of bill that we want to see move forward as quickly as possible. We are doing all we can to move it forward in a reasonable way, given the way this has been handled.

However, the best way to address these issues is if parties can work together on these things. This morning, again, to have one bill on notice, to have a different bill put forward for concurrence, to then move closure on a different bill, and then to have this bill brought up, I do not want to be talking about this, quite frankly. If we are going to be talking about Bill C-11, I would rather be talking about the substance of the bill. It is substance on which we can all agree.

However, this has to be said. Canadians need to know that there has been a missed opportunity here, a missed opportunity to engage more people and to engage more stakeholders in a conversation that needs to happen. If this is sunny ways, I do not know what clouds would look like.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on a couple of occasions, through requesting the unanimous consent of the House, the NDP, in particular, have put forward the thought of having this bill passed through all the different stages. The Conservative Party has denied that unanimous consent.

Could the member explain to the House why the Conservative Party has chosen to deny a unanimous consent that would have ultimately seen the bill pass before lunchtime today? Would the Conservatives possibly entertain that now?

• (1345)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry if the member missed my specific intervention where I specifically addressed this point.

Government Orders

I will just identify again that our position was that having agreed in the past to pass Bill C-11 at an appointed time agreed on by all parties, this was the commitment that had been made. Then the government broke that commitment by putting this bill forward, totally without notice.

We do not want to see the government playing politics with this issue. This is an important issue, and we would like to move forward on a consensus basis. We have said that after this speaking slot, we will agree to pass Bill C-11 after question period.

It is not a substantial difference in terms of time. We want to move forward with this as well. However, there is a missed opportunity here in terms of engaging stakeholders and in terms of working together collaboratively among the different parties.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate what my hon. colleague said when he mentioned that this is a missed opportunity to work together as colleagues in the House. Back in my riding, people have told me many times that they are looking for us as parliamentarians to take those opportunities where we can collaborate and work together to make legislation better, to serve Canadians from coast to coast to coast. This was one of those opportunities, and unfortunately, it was missed today because of the rush that was put on Bill C-11, a bill that would amend the Copyright Act.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Carleton for his hard work on this piece of legislation when the Conservatives were in power. The member can be assured that there is support from this side of the House with regard to this legislation, because we can see how it would enhance the quality of life for those with a visual impairment and therefore do not have the access they need to library services. Canadians who are print disabled should have the same level of access as all Canadians, and so again, I will reiterate that we do support this legislation going forward.

This legislation would build on that which was introduced previously by the Conservative government to allow for charities and not-for-profits to produce alternative formats for copyrighted material. The important limitation is that this is a not-for-profit exemption, so no one would be able to make a profit off an artist's or a writer's intellectual property. This is a key point, because the legislation would be for the betterment of all Canadians. It would serve our nation as a whole and not profit.

The bill addresses a barrier to inclusion for those with a visual or comprehension disability, which is why we support this legislation for building a more inclusive society.

We all support efforts to bring into effect the World Intellectual Property Organizations' Marrakesh Treaty, as it is known. This treaty is designed to remove barriers to the access of alternative format print materials through changes to domestic copyright laws on an international basis, while also facilitating the sharing of literary materials among nations.

I agree that reading material should be accessible to all. Growing up in my home, I had parents who put a lot of emphasis on the importance of reading. Before I was able to read, my mom spent a lot of time reading to me, believing that it helped with development. I do see where it has had a positive impact. I learned to read at a very

young age and I enjoyed it tremendously. I learned much through my reading. I can only imagine what it would be like for someone who does not have access to reading materials to take advantage of the opportunities for learning, enjoyment, and cultural engagement in the same way that I was able to.

We can all agree that this legislation is important and that it would address a pressing need of those with visual or comprehension disabilities. However, the minister overstates how this legislation would increase the employment opportunities for persons with a disability. There are other factors that have to be understood on this matter.

We have all heard the personal stories of those living with a disability, how difficult it is for them to secure and maintain employment, or how difficult it is for them to have a sustainable income. These individuals are looking for the leadership from the present Liberal government that they saw under our previous Conservative government. Unfortunately, the government appears to be going after the low-hanging fruit on this file, with legislation that was already in motion, introduced under the previous government and largely in the same format as we see it today.

The Liberal government promised in its platform to introduce a national disabilities act, and unfortunately we have not seen any movement forward on that. The focus of such an act would be to address the systemic barriers to accessing employment and community services that are faced by persons with disabilities.

Bill C-11 is a much-needed piece of legislation for Canada. It is a much-needed initiative going forward. Persons with disabilities in this country are asking the present government for a real plan and sustained leadership. They are asking for employment opportunities and for equality in all things having to do with life.

While this legislation before us today is a good step, it is not adequate and it does not show leadership in the way Canadians need.

● (1350)

It is unfortunate that there was no mention of persons with disabilities in the Speech from the Throne or in the Liberals' 2016 budget, again reiterating that the current government is not taking seriously those persons with disabilities.

Our Conservative government had a strong record of providing new tools and programs to give persons with disabilities control over their future. Under the initiatives brought in by the late Jim Flaherty, we increased training for employment, increased accessibility for those who have a disability, and ensured they are able to join employment forces. We funded community projects to make facilities more accessible to those with a physical disability. We created a registered savings plan so that parents were given new tools to financially plan for their child with a disability.

Statements by Members

While we support this legislation that is before the House today, we are left asking some very significant questions. We wonder where the ambition of the current government has gone, where its promises lie. We wonder if the current government is going to follow through on its commitments to a national plan with regard to those with disabilities. Again, not having seen it in the 2016 budget and not having heard of any sort of plan in the Liberals' throne speech, we are left wondering these things. Why is it that the Liberals have not made inclusion of persons with a disability a top priority?

What I have heard on the ground from those people living with a disability is that they want to work so that they can provide for themselves. They want opportunities to seek employment and to not be discriminated against as they do so. Again, they are looking to the current government to take leadership in this regard. We know that among us it is often disabled individuals who are the most impoverished. Because they cannot find the type of employment that perhaps others can, they are left with a rather meagre income. As a result, they are living in poverty and do not have access to the services and the lifestyle that perhaps the rest of Canadians have. They want to be able to access public spaces, to participate in their communities, and to be contributing members. Once again, they are looking to the current government to provide some leadership in these areas.

I have not heard of this bill, Bill C-11, as being a top-of-mind concern for constituents when so many of those persons with a disability are in fact living in poverty because they cannot access employment. Once again, I would reiterate that the minister is overstating that this bill that is before the House today would create greater employment opportunities to the extent that she has implied. Although it would be a helpful step in that direction, once again I implore the government to take adequate steps in this direction.

While we support this legislation and the intent that it holds, we are left asking this. Where is the plan to address the more serious issues that face the Canadians among us who have a disability? Where is the leadership that the current government promised for the sake of all Canadians, to have an inclusive place within Canadian society?

• (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, what we have been listening to for the last little while is what has become very clear in terms of the overwhelming support for the bill. We recognize in the contributions, whether from the minister or members opposite, that there seems to be very good and substantial support for the bill.

I would ask if there would be the unanimous consent of the House to see Bill C-11 pass through all stages at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciated my colleague so articulately speaking to this issue. I do want to note that she probably had to prepare her comments at the last minute because the government has

not been giving the due process that important bills require, which is the ability to plan to speak. I would like my colleague to reflect on that particular issue, especially in light of the comments just made by the parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, again, at the beginning of my speech, I mentioned that this, unfortunately, is a missed opportunity for us as parliamentarians, and for Canada as a whole. I know there are people within my constituency, and I am sure others here do as well, who talk to me about working collaboratively in the House. I assure them that there are opportunities to do so. This was one of them. This was an opportunity for us to come together and work collaboratively on an issue that we can agree upon, in order to better serve all Canadians as an inclusive culture and society as a whole.

Yes, indeed, today was a missed opportunity and a very sad day for not only the House but Canadians in general.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it may be an unfair question to ask one member of the Conservative Party, but in trying to understand why we would reject an opportunity for Bill C-11 to be taken through all stages of debate and deemed passed at this stage, the only voices I heard saying no were from the Conservative Party. However, I heard nothing but positive comments in every speech, including the hon. member's, in support of this legislation.

I am wondering if she can provide any explanation—though perhaps she does not know what was in the minds of her colleagues when they said no—as to why we would not have seized that opportunity.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, once again, I will reiterate that the House had a fabulous opportunity to join forces, to collaborate, and to work together as colleagues from all sides of the House. Unfortunately, when the members opposite decided to rush this legislation without going through due process, they gave up that opportunity. They hurt that opportunity, thereby hurting Canadians, because Canadians want us to be unified on the issues, where we can be.

Again, today we missed an opportunity to work together on all sides of the House, and it is a sad day.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

SICKBOY PODCAST

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize three young men in my riding of Halifax who are using comedy to break down the stigma of being sick. Jeremie Saunders, Taylor MacGillivray, and Brian Stever are the creators and hosts of Sickboy Podcast. The three best friends host comedic and insightful conversations with guests living with illnesses like cancer, PTSD, anorexia, lupus, and others. The idea came to them when they observed the unusual and often uncomfortable way people react around illness.

Statements by Members

Jeremie lives with cystic fibrosis and is working to take his positive outlook to the podcast's audience. Sickboy Podcast made the best of 2015 list on iTunes, and most recently it captured the attention of Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield, who appeared on the podcast just last week. We can all tune into Sickboy Podcast on iTunes or on its website.

Jeremie, Taylor, and Brian have done great work. They make Halifax proud.

* * *

● (1400)

WILLIAMSTOWN, ONTARIO

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize and congratulate Linda Merpaw of Williamstown, whose article about Williamstown, the historic village she now calls home, will be published in *Our Canada* magazine this summer. While Linda freely admits she is not a writer, she should be proud that her article will be published for all Canadians to read and hopefully consider a visit to this charming and welcoming community.

Williamstown, like many communities across Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, has a rich cultural history that predates Confederation, including an annual agricultural fair that was initiated in 1812. Every summer, I have the honour and privilege of attending the Williamstown Fair, now recognized as the oldest annual fair in Canada. Each year, thousands of visitors travel to the fairgrounds to take in a truly unique country fair experience. I encourage all of my colleagues to make a trip to Williamstown this summer to do the same.

I applaud Linda's work and want to thank and congratulate her for sharing her insights and passion for her community with all of Canada. Bravo!

* * *

[*Translation*]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, is above all a day to celebrate the victories won by the LGBTQ community around the world in recent years.

We also recognize that this community still faces barriers that prevent us all from building a truly inclusive and egalitarian society. Not too long ago, there was a stigma attached to homosexuality. Differences were seen to be shameful.

Fortunately, there is no longer a stigma attached to homosexuality, but there is a stigma attached to homophobia. We should be happy about that. However, we cannot forget that the LGBTQ community still faces prejudice and violence every day.

In 2016, human beings are still being excluded and marginalized because of their sexual orientation. That is unbelievable. There is beauty in all of our differences. Accepting our differences can only make us better as individuals and as a group. Love has no gender, which is why we all celebrate the vibrant—

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. member for West Nova.

* * *

TRANSPORT DE CLARE

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Transport de Clare, Nova Scotia's first not-for-profit community-based transportation service, on celebrating its 20th anniversary. I had the honour of marking this amazing organization's milestone this past Saturday.

[*Translation*]

Since its inception in 1996, Transport de Clare has been helping seniors, people with reduced mobility, and the economically disadvantaged get to important appointments and actively participate in their communities.

[*English*]

I thank the dedicated staff and volunteers who make the lives of others better every day with this service. I wish its founder, Claredon Robicheau, all the best in his retirement after 20 years. It is because of his vision and hard work that Transport de Clare is truly a success story that makes the whole community proud.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to commemorate the 12th international day against homophobia and transphobia.

There is much to celebrate when we think about the progress that has been made in this country, from 1979, when Svend Robinson became the first MP to come out as gay, to Bill Siksay, the former MP for Burnaby—Douglas, who introduced the first bill to prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression.

I am particularly honoured to pay tribute to the hard work of countless Canadians like Bill, and my colleague, the member for Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke. Their tireless advocacy comes to fruition today as we applaud the proposed inclusion of gender identity to the human rights code, and to the hate crimes section of the Criminal Code.

However, there is still so much to do. There are still too many places where discrimination, persecution, and violence are practised with impunity.

Today, let us pledge to continue to work towards a world where everyone is equal, no matter their race, colour, gender identity or gender expression.

* * *

SEALING INDUSTRY

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am wearing a seal jacket, made in Newfoundland and Labrador, in recognition of Seal Day on the Hill. Today we affirm our support for sealers and the sealing sector, and acknowledge the importance of the sealing industry to the families who live and work in the northern and eastern communities in Canada.

Statements by Members

Sealing is not only central to the traditional culture of many indigenous communities, but essential to their very survival. For generations, many northern and coastal communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous, have depended on the seal for food, clothes, and economic sustenance.

Our country is proud to be a global leader in sealing best practices, and our seal harvest is humane, sustainable, and well-regulated.

I encourage all members of Parliament to join me, representatives of the sealing industry, and community leaders after question period today in the Speaker's lounge to learn more about the sealing industry in Canada.

* * *

• (1405)

AIRDRIE HEALTH FOUNDATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the leadership and commitment demonstrated by Michelle Bates of Airdrie. Ms. Bates has endured every parent's worst nightmare, the immeasurable loss of a child. Her 5-year-old son, Lane, fell ill and passed away in an ambulance en route to a hospital nearly 30 kilometres away, after Airdrie's urgent care centre had closed for the night.

What has resulted from that terrible tragedy is a mother's remarkable and tireless campaign to improve health care in our community. Ms. Bates founded the Airdrie Health Foundation to secure 24-hour health care for our growing community. She has brought together numerous community leaders while the foundation actively fundraises for a new facility and for medical equipment.

Her drive to bring 24-hour care to Airdrie, home to 60,000 Albertans who do not have access to full-time emergency care, serves as a legacy for her son Lane, and is a powerful example of leadership within our community. I want to thank Ms. Bates and everyone involved with the Airdrie Health Foundation for their tireless dedication.

* * *

CRIMEA

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1783, Russia first occupied Crimea and so began a tragic history of 160 years of occupation and multiple ethnic cleansings of the indigenous Crimean Tatar people.

On May 18, 1944, Stalin ethnically cleansed all 240,000 Crimean Tatars to central Asia. Over 100,000 perished. Among the survivors was the legendary Mustafa Dzhemilev, who spent 18 brutal years in Soviet gulags for demanding the right of return for his people.

Two years ago, Russia once again militarily invaded and annexed Crimea, and Mustafa has once again been banned from returning to his ancestral homeland. Putin's Crimean terror includes disappearances, torture of detainees, and summary executions. Twenty thousand Crimean Tatars are now refugees. May 18 commemorates the anniversary of the mass ethnic cleansing and genocide of Crimean Tatars, and on this date we will welcome the legendary Mejlis leader Mustafa Dzhemilev to Ottawa.

Slava Krymskym Tatarom.

[*Translation*]

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MEMORIAL DAY

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to meet several leaders in the Armenian community, including Bishop Abgar Hovakimian of the Armenian Apostolic Church. He has been a vigorous advocate for the well-being of the Armenian people here in Canada and abroad, and he has raised many people's awareness of the violence that Armenians still face today.

April 24 is Armenian Genocide Memorial Day, a day of remembrance and mourning for the victims of the 1915 Armenian genocide. We must honour this day and protect our Armenian brothers and sisters.

[*English*]

As Canadians, we should stand against violence and injustice wherever it is found. Reckless bloodshed is still commonplace in this world and the pursuit of peaceful resolutions to end atrocities and elicit stability requires dedicated actors.

* * *

FORT MCMURRAY FIRE

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to celebrate the people of Elgin—Middlesex—London and all Canadians. It is during these times of disaster that Canadians show their true compassion and support for each other.

This story starts with a member of my community contacting my constituency office for assistance. A generous constituent had stepped forward with a truckload of toiletries to help the victims of the wildfires in Fort McMurray, and they were looking for support to get the goods to Alberta.

Adam from Home Hardware connected with my husband, Mike, and after a few calls between members of the Conservative spouses association and the Bonnyville fire chief, a solution was found to transport all the goods to Alberta. With the great work of Adam from Home Hardware and the Bonnyville Home Hardware, a store transfer was created, with the shipping covered by Home Hardware, to deliver all of the goods and additional items donated to St. Thomas Home Hardware to Alberta.

I would like to thank our great community and all the members who have helped the families in our riding and for all the members in Fort McMurray.

I am proud to be Canadian and part of the Alberta Strong movement.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every year, 24,000 Canadian men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, and over 4,000 will not survive. One in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. However, thanks to early diagnosis and improvements in treatment, mortality is dropping, and five-year survival is now 96%.

However, we have not won the battle yet. That is why, on May 28, in Winnipeg, I will be riding my Triumph Bonneville in the annual Ride for Dad. Across North America, thousands of riders will be holding motorcycle parades through their cities to bring awareness and raise funds for research to defeat prostate cancer.

If any members of the House wish to help, I will let them know how they can pledge funds for this great event. Together we can watch prostate cancer ride into the sunset.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Please join me in celebrating equality for all Canadians.

Today, I encourage all my colleagues to reach out to one another and promote individuals to be their true selves, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

I had the pleasure of working with different organizations in my riding, such as UBU Atlantic, a group that is working hard to help support our community by helping students and adults in understanding their journey, easing into transitioning, and supporting their families.

A special thanks goes out to an amazing constituent in my riding, Michelle Leard, who truly plays a vital role within this organization.

I am very excited that our government has introduced legislation that will help ensure transgender and other gender-diverse people can live free from discrimination. Let us provide a safe, open, and inclusive community for all.

* * *

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, we mark the international maternal, newborn, and child health week.

Maternal, newborn, and child health was made Canada's top international development priority by our Conservative government. Through the MNCH initiative, we supported micronutrient programs that ensured millions of children around the world received essential vitamins, vaccines, and had access to clean water and sanitation. About 80% of the beneficiaries were women and children. When women and children benefit, the whole world benefits.

We can be proud of the difference we have made in the lives of the most vulnerable around the world, particularly mothers and newborn children. We are happy that the government is continuing

with the groundbreaking development initiatives begun by our Conservative government.

I invite all members to attend a reception on Parliament Hill this evening to mark the importance of MNCH, which is organized by the Hon. Asha Seth and the Hon. Norman Doyle.

* * *

CAPTAIN NICHOLA GODDARD

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Tim and Sally Goddard live just around the corner from me in Charlottetown. Today is a very sombre anniversary in their household. Exactly 10 years ago, their daughter, Captain Nichola Goddard, was killed in combat in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Sally and Tim established Nichola Goddard Foundation Inc. in her memory. That organization helps fund solar powered lighting systems in medical facilities in Papua New Guinea, where Nichola was born. The foundation also funds scholarships at the University of Calgary and the University of PEI.

Tim Goddard, who holds a PhD, remains involved in Afghanistan. He trains teachers there so they can strengthen and enhance their public education system.

[English]

Today, I ask the House to join me in remembering and celebrating the life and work of Captain Nichola Goddard. Lest we forget.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the pronouncement of the minister to conduct a comprehensive review of the temporary foreign worker program, our study at committee is doing anything but that. We have only six sessions to hear from witnesses, no explicit focus on the areas where abuse is rampant, and the committee's proceedings are not being televised despite our repeated requests.

However, what matters here is that the exploitation of workers in Canada is not being taken seriously.

Temporary foreign workers come to Canada to pick our food, take care of our kids, serve in our restaurants, and run our economy. They, like Sheldon McKenzie, die from injuries sustained on the job; like Erik, they get paid \$2 an hour; like Gina, they are fired when they speak up. They are exploited because of the system we have created.

Forty years ago, workers would have been immigrants to Canada and, as the CLC said, we believe in immigration, not exploitation. Access to citizenship is key. Opposition to the TPP that sets up further loopholes is key.

Our message to the Liberal government is to put an end to the public relations exercise and take key steps to end the injustices that take place on our watch.

* * *

• (1415)

AIR CANADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite an overwhelming majority, the Liberals nearly lost a vote in the House of Commons yesterday. Unfortunately, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley flip-flopped on his promise to represent his constituents and instead supported Bill C-10. The member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley—

The Speaker: I want to bring to the attention of hon. members that statements by members, and we have had rulings from past Speakers, are not supposed to be used to taunt other members in the House. The previous Speaker made rulings to that effect, and that will continue.

The hon. member for Brampton South.

* * *

PARAMEDIC ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to welcome the Paramedic Association of Canada to the House of Commons today. These dedicated men and women serve on the front line of health care delivery and public safety across Canada and are proud members of the first responder community.

From coast to coast to coast, paramedics enrich Canadian communities while saving people's lives. There are an estimated 33,000 paramedics who care for thousands of Canadians every day. They serve in our municipalities, remote communities, and our Armed Forces.

We cannot forget the daily challenges of their profession and are reminded of this when talking about paramedic wellness and the high rates of PTSD suffered by first responders.

They are everyday heroes and it is an honour for us to host them in the House of Commons today. Please join me in welcoming them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after more than two years of study, the National Energy Board will deliver its decision on the Trans Mountain pipeline this week.

However, rather than accept an independent science-based process, the Prime Minister wants a review of the review. The last thing Canada's energy sector needs right now is more uncertainty created by more political Liberal interference, but that is all the government has to offer.

Oral Questions

When will the Prime Minister stop creating uncertainty and quit stalling on vital pipeline projects?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the uncertainty has been created by 10 years of a government that refused to understand that we can only build a strong economy when we are protecting the environment, when we are listening to Canadians, when we are building partnerships with indigenous peoples, and when we are respecting the science that surrounds all these projects.

The fact is that for 10 years the members opposite could not get it done. We are committed to building a strong economy by protecting the environment at the same time.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this was a very thorough review. It involved more than 1,600 participants, including local municipalities and 35 indigenous groups. However, the Liberals feel there was insufficient reviewing. They added a parallel review, so that when they received the independent review, they could review both reviews together.

Still unsure about whether this is enough reviewing, the Liberals are now giving the whole process another review. When will the Prime Minister stop reviewing his reviews and make a decision?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yet again, the members opposite are demonstrating that they did not understand why, for 10 years, they were unable to get anything done.

The reason they were unable to get anything done is that Canadians lost faith in their capacity to look out for the big picture, to build a strong economy while protecting the environment.

We are working very hard, as Canadians have asked us to do, to restore their faith in our processes, in our government, in our capacity to build a strong economy and protect the environment, together.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of faith, after months of delays, the Liberals finally announced their process on electoral reform, and it is a sham.

The committee is dominated by Liberals, with principles written by Liberals, and the Liberal cabinet will make the final decision. They could not have designed a process that is less democratic.

Will the Prime Minister finally commit to giving all Canadians a final say in their democracy by holding a referendum?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, for the members opposite to be talking about consultation and referendum is the height of irony, since the previous government rammed through the Fair Elections Act that was designed to disenfranchise thousands upon thousands of Canadians from being able to vote against that government. They failed in that attempt.

Oral Questions

What we have committed to do is to consult with Canadians, to engage with Canadians about how to build a better electoral system and how to build a stronger democracy. Canadians' voices will be heard, and we will fulfill our promise of ending first past the post.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that more Canadians voted in the last election than in the past, which means that we did a good job.

It is unfortunate to see that six Liberal MPs will be allowed to decide the future of democracy in this country. It is really unbelievable. The electoral reform that Canadians want should take into account Canadians' views, not just the Liberals' views, as well as their ability to choose.

Will the Prime Minister promise to hold a referendum?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed to consulting with Canadians and listening to Canadians who have concerns. For 10 years, they had concerns about how their government was behaving. They made the right choice in the last election, choosing a party that is committed to reforming our electoral system. That is exactly what we are going to do, in order to ensure that Canadians' voices are heard and to give them a better government. That is what Canadians expect us to do, and that is what we will deliver.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely proud to have left the government with the best debt-to-GDP ratio and the best job creation record in the G7. We will see what the Liberals end up delivering. Maybe they will deliver nothing more than words. We shall see.

What is the logic behind using social media to hold consultations when it is so hard to know where the social media users are from? Will people from other countries be sharing their point of view?

We think that it is important to know where Canadians stand on this and that there needs to be a referendum.

Will the Prime Minister commit to holding one?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to doing things differently, listening to Canadians, and talking to them about the future of our country and our electoral system, unlike that party, which imposed changes to our electoral system without consulting Canadians and without talking to the opposition members. We are committed to doing this in a responsible, open manner in order to build a better electoral system that will serve all Canadians better. That is what Canadians asked us to do. That is what we are going to do.

* * *

[*English*]

MARIJUANA

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice, appearing at committee today, said that the Liberals' approach to legalization would "ensure that we decriminalize the use of marijuana". Once again, these are mixed signals from the government, while thousands of mostly young Canadians are still getting criminal records for personal use of marijuana.

If the government is, indeed, willing to decriminalize, our question is simple. What the hell are they waiting for?

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that is not parliamentary language, and I would ask if perhaps he could rephrase that in his next question. That was inappropriate.

The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we made our commitment to legalize marijuana around two fundamental principles: one, that right now it is too easy for young people to get access to marijuana under the current regime, and second, the fact that funds from the sale of marijuana fund, to the tune of billions of dollars, criminal organizations, street gangs, and gun runners.

That is what our focus is and why we are going to be legalizing, patrolling, regulating marijuana: to protect our kids and to protect our streets.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question is this. What in heaven's name are they waiting for?

[*Translation*]

The government is promising to legalize marijuana. Just today, the minister said that the Liberals would also decriminalize it.

Now, the question is whether the government's legislation will include provisions to pardon everyone convicted of possession or personal use of marijuana.

Will there be a pardon, yes or no?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our commitment to legalize, control, and regulate marijuana is based on two principles.

First, it is too easy for young people to get access to marijuana under the current regime, and we must protect them.

Second, street gangs, organized crime, and gun runners are making billions of dollars every year from the illegal sale of marijuana.

That is why we committed to controlling, regulating, and legalizing marijuana. Obviously, when we legalize something we also decriminalize it, but legalization and control are what is important.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals took office, thousands of young people have been convicted and will have a criminal record for the rest of their lives. What are the Liberals waiting for? When will they decriminalize marijuana? Even Jean Chrétien is calling for it, for heaven's sake.

When he was a member of the opposition, the Prime Minister strode, swaggered, and strutted before the Parliament Buildings with Aveos workers. He chanted "solidarity" into a megaphone saying that these jobs were so important and that this was ridiculous.

Oral Questions

Why is he now cutting off debate on something that he—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's aerospace industry is extremely important to economic growth. It is also a source of high-quality jobs in Canada.

That is why we are proud to introduce a bill on Air Canada that will guarantee jobs in Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec in Air Canada's manufacturing and aircraft maintenance sectors. We are going to build a strong aerospace industry in Canada for the future through our bills and our commitment.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that the government is proud of exporting thousands of good Canadian jobs.

[*English*]

With closure, stacking committees, and whipping votes, whatever happened to real change and sunny ways?

Liberals are retroactively stripping thousands of good jobs from Canada. He stood in front of Parliament with the workers of Aveos, screamed solidarity into a microphone, and now he is letting those jobs go elsewhere.

What is the excuse?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Quite the opposite, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to creating the high-quality jobs that the aeronautic industry has always brought forward. That is why we are pleased that this Air Canada bill would guarantee jobs in Manitoba, in Ontario, and in Quebec. These are the kinds of good, high-paying jobs we need as we invest in our aerospace industry, as we build a brighter future for all Canadians.

I am pleased for the opportunity to highlight what we are doing in terms of creating economic growth for middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join the middle class.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Democratic Institutions seems to really love Liberal doublespeak. On one hand, she claims to want Canadians to be able to participate in a democratic process, but on the other, she appointed six Liberal MPs to rig the future of Canadian democracy.

The only way to truly consult all Canadians is to give them a direct say through a referendum.

Will the minister finally drop the talking points and commit to giving all Canadians a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over 60% of Canadians in the last election voted for parties committed to changing the first past the post voting system. Canadians want it changed because it provides an election outcome that is not consistent with the results of the election. It is a system inherited from a distant past, not designed to meet the needs of a multi-party democracy.

Many countries around the world have developed other systems, and we would do well to learn from them.

It is time for a 21st century model of elections, and we are committed to delivering on our promise to Canadians.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to encourage more Canadians to vote, the Liberals first have to realize that we cannot accomplish that by taking away their right to vote at all.

Canadians are demanding the right to have a say in a referendum before any changes are made to their electoral system. That right belongs to all Canadians, not this minister and her six Liberal cronies.

If the Liberals were truly listening to Canadians, as the minister claims, they would already have heard that loud and clear. Why will they not hold a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in 1872, Canada adopted a secret ballot. In 1918, women began to be extended the franchise. In 1920, the office of the Chief Electoral Officer was established. In 1960, voting rights were extended to indigenous persons. In 1970, those under the age of 21 were allowed to vote.

None of these changes were the result of a referendum. They happened because the parliamentarians of the day displayed leadership and courage. That is the kind of leadership and courage that the members of this House need to have.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1430)

The Speaker: As I said before, members on all sides of the House manage to hear things that they do not like without reacting. I encourage others to do that. The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston does not react very often, but he did that time.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a country that claims to be democratic, what can we say about a government that wants to change the voting process, the very foundation of its democratic system, without consulting all Canadians?

Right here in Canada, every province that changed its electoral system consulted its people by holding a referendum.

Can the minister reassure us that she will do everything she can to convince the Prime Minister of Canada of the importance of holding a referendum to consult all Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and his party had 10 years to enhance our democratic institutions and listen to Canadians.

Oral Questions

We were elected on a promise to bring our electoral system into the 21st century, and while I appreciate that there is an appropriate time for this House to be partisan, and I do appreciate that, this is not one of those times.

The leadership required from every single member of this House to ensure that the voices of those constituents in their ridings who are not traditionally heard are brought to this House will be paramount, and I am looking forward to collaborating with all members of this House.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is quite right. The House can be partisan, and the Liberals have definitely proved it on this issue.

The Prime Minister already announced that the first-past-the-post system was no longer an option. The Liberals have told us that they prefer a preferential ballot system and they are putting together a partisan committee without consulting the opposition parties.

Today we see that the government has already made up its mind about this, even though ministers' so-called consultations have not even started.

Can the Prime Minister tell us and tell all Canadians that they will have a say in a referendum?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have risen in this House dozens of times. Every single time, I have extended an invitation to all 337 members who are here with me to be part of this process, to help us engage with those in their ridings whose voices are not traditionally heard.

What have I heard? A call for a referendum. That is all that the party opposite has brought to the table. It is time to turn a new leaf. It is time to put the interests of Canadians ahead of party interests, and I look forward to working with all members to that end.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Democratic Institutions talks a big game when it comes to hearing the will of the people. However, it appears that she is scared of actually asking Canadians in a referendum as to how we should elect members of Parliament. First she delayed forming the committee; then she gave six Liberal MPs the final say in what system the committee recommends; and now the Liberals have ruled out directly asking Canadians for their voice. When will the Liberals stop the games and give Canadians the final say in how we elect members of Parliament?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to doing politics differently. We are committed to hearing from all Canadians across this diverse nation on what their thoughts, their values, and their aspirations are for our democratic institutions. I look forward to working with all members of this House to put party interests aside and work toward a common interest that serves the best interests of Canadians now and for generations to come.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to push for a fake consultation process that perhaps a few thousand people will be involved in. A referendum would allow tens of millions of Canadians to have their voices heard.

This Liberal minister believes that she knows better than Canadians. Will the Minister of Democratic Institutions allow all Canadians an opportunity to weigh in on this important discussion by holding a referendum?

• (1435)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we want to hear from all Canadians, and we intend to use a multitude of methods, including the special committee, town halls, for which every single member of this House needs to take responsibility, social media platforms, and additional processes that work to ensure that every citizen in this country is allowed to be part of this conversation. This is an opportunity to engage those who are not currently engaged in the democratic process. It will require a collective will and effort on behalf of every member of this House, and I look forward to that collaboration.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 27 years ago, the House voted unanimously in favour of Ed Broadbent's motion, thereby promising to eliminate child poverty. Governments since then, both Conservative and Liberal, have made absolutely no progress.

A report published today describes an alarming situation in this country, particularly with respect to first nations children, a federal government responsibility. Six out of ten children on reserves live in poverty. For shame.

What will the government do to help first nations children?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with the member.

The situation is totally unacceptable, and we have to do better. We believe that the historic investments for indigenous communities in budget 2016 and the generous and fair Canada child tax benefit will lift many children out of poverty.

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. There is a poverty crisis in indigenous communities across this country, and the Liberal budget does not cut it.

In Manitoba, three out of four children living on reserve live in poverty. This did not just happen. It is the result of years, decades, of underfunding of education, housing, child welfare, health, clean water, and the list goes on. Despite a clear ruling from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, Liberals still have failed to provide equitable funding for child welfare.

The question is this. When will the government drop the delays and increase funding to first nations in Manitoba and across the country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that this has gone on for far too long. We do believe that in budget 2016 we are making historic investments in housing, water, education, and all of the things that will raise these children out of poverty and do the right thing by these children. They only have one childhood.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my apologies for being so incensed earlier, but the minister insults the 65% of Canadians who would like to see a referendum when she suggests that somehow this is about taking rights away from Canadians.

After years of the Liberals doing nothing to give voting rights to women or to aboriginal people, Conservative governments introduced those motions. I do not know if that means that elections are inappropriate because they produce the wrong policy results.

Canadians are smarter than the Liberals think. Canadians know that a referendum is the best and most decisive way of determining the public's will. Canadians also know that they are not less enlightened than this minister. Will the minister or will she not give us a referendum?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are all students of history in this House. It took the collective will of every member in this House, years ago, to extend the franchise to women, to extend the franchise to indigenous persons, to be creative and innovative and establish the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. That takes leadership. It takes vision, and it takes a collective effort by all members of this House. I look forward to working with the honourable critic toward that end.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what leadership takes. It is designing a new electoral system that is good enough that it wins over the support of the majority of Canadians.

I will tell members what cowardice is. That is the way out: designing a system to favour their own party and ensuring that Canadians do not get a say, so they can rig election 2019.

Why on earth does the Prime Minister think he can rig the next election? Why does he think he can do that? Why does he think it is not the right of the Canadian people to decide whether or not the system he is designing is satisfactory?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not share the cynicism of the member opposite.

We need to work together. We need to put parties' interests aside and serve the best interests of Canadians. Every single member of this House now has an extraordinary responsibility. That is, to reach out in their communities to those—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1440)

The Speaker: Order, please.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills will come to order and not speak until it is his turn to speak. Members have very strong views on many issues that come before us, and there are different views, but most members are able to listen to opposite views without reacting and yelling out. Let us show respect for this place and for the public who elected us and put us here.

We will now listen to the hon. Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Hon. Maryam Monsef: Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to see such enthusiasm for the renewal of our democratic institutions. It is time to put the interests of Canadians ahead of our partisan interests. It is time to work together to ensure that our electoral system meets the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister says that we need to work together in her warm tones, while at the same time stacking the entire process for a Liberal rigging of the process by which we choose this Parliament that belongs to the Canadian people.

We believe in government of, for, and by the people, not of, for, and by the Liberal Party.

In her litany of our Conservative electoral reforms, she neglected to mention the 2005 P.E.I. referendum, the 2007 Ontario referendum, the 2009 British Columbia referendum.

The problem for the Liberals is that those voters did not give those Liberal governments the answer that they wanted.

Why not let the people decide, rather than the Liberal Party?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the compliment about my tone. Indeed, that is the positive tone that Canadians voted for.

In the referenda that the member opposite cited, nearly half of the population did not vote. Is that okay? Is that acceptable? Or, can we use the tools available to us in the 21st century to ensure that those who have barriers that need to be overcome are addressed and heard in this important conversation?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the two-thirds of Canadians who demand a referendum on how they elected their MPs will not be confused by the smugness of the minister. The last time we had a referendum in this country, which was 1992 under a Conservative government, 14 million Canadians voted. In a typical parliamentary study, fewer than 100 witnesses appear.

How could she possibly think that a process involving dozens or hundreds of people is more inclusive than one involving tens of millions?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would like to put all his consultation eggs in the referendum basket. I do not agree with this approach.

Canadians deserve a more inclusive approach, designed to meet the needs and the opportunities of the 21st century.

Oral Questions

The member opposite, and all members in this House, need to accept responsibility, to ensure that the voices of those Canadians who are not currently and traditionally engaged in this process are heard and are reflected in the final outcome.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the election, Liberals in places like North Vancouver and Burnaby promised voters that Liberals would redo the Kinder Morgan pipeline review. The Prime Minister repeated this promise, and the people of B.C. believed him.

However, this week, the National Energy Board will report on Kinder Morgan, using the exact same broken process as the Conservatives.

The Liberals' new add-on process, little more than a smokescreen, would actually do nothing to fix the NEB review process.

Why has the Prime Minister broken his promise to British Columbians?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we had the pleasure today to announce the appointment of three very distinguished western Canadians who will spend the next number of months consulting with people up and down the Kinder Morgan line, both in indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

We knew that the process that had been used so far resulted in no pipelines being built to tidewater in 10 years. We then took the decision of changing the process to invite people in to show them that it has credibility, which will give us a better chance than that process did.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the man who ran to be Prime Minister on such bold progressive promises would not even recognize the politician sitting in the Prime Minister's chair today.

The Liberals swore on a stack of Bibles to fix the Conservatives' failed environmental assessment process. The Kinder Morgan pipeline is exactly the kind of project that needs a serious and credible environmental review. This is a Conservative pipeline under a Conservative review process with just a Liberal fig leaf hiding over top of that fact.

Where are all the B.C. Liberals who promised to do things differently? Will just one B.C. Liberal stand up today and justify the unjustifiable?

● (1445)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are very distinguished western Canadians who are going to take a bit of time, but not too much time, because the final decision on Kinder Morgan will be taken before Christmas. That was the promise we made on January 27 when we announced a set of interim principles. We delivered on a very important part of that promise today and we will deliver a final decision before Christmas.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Minister of National Defence expressed keen personal interest in training military personnel in French.

Since being elected, I have worked very hard, as my colleagues can attest, to achieve full independence for the Royal Military College Saint-Jean with respect to university teaching, thereby promoting the use of French, one of the pillars of our Canadian identity.

Can the minister tell the House if he supports restoring university status to the college?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce my intention to restore full university status to the Royal Military College Saint-Jean.

[*English*]

It is a good day for bilingualism in Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces. I look forward to working with the Province of Quebec to make this happen.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have created massive uncertainty when it comes to building pipelines. Nothing new is being proposed and current projects like the Trans Mountain expansion, proposed because of Conservative leadership, created a stable investment environment in Canada.

Are the Liberals at all concerned that companies like TransCanada are taking good jobs to Mexico instead of creating jobs right here in Canada?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, we have removed the uncertainty. We have announced a set of principles that will govern this review to restore the confidence of Canadians and we have even given a precise date. The certainty of a date and the certainty of principles is a lot more certainty than we had from those people on the other side of the House.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, red tape and political interference is not leadership. It sends the wrong signal to new investment. Even John Manley said that the Liberals have consultation constipation.

When will the Liberals get out of the way and allow jobs to be created in the oil sector?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said many times that among the more important responsibilities of the Government of Canada is to move our natural resources to tidewater sustainably. The only way that will happen is if we have wide-ranging conversations with indigenous communities, those who want to protect the environment while we grow the economy.

Oral Questions

We have given to Canadians the certainty of those principles. We have given to Canadians the certainty of a decision by which those principles will be acted on. We think we are doing it in a way that stands a better chance of achieving all of our objectives.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal excuses for not approving pipelines are getting sillier and sillier. On February 23, the National Energy Board appeared before the environment committee. When asked about the impact of upstream greenhouse gas emissions on the Trans Mountain project, it testified, “The board found that they were not directly related to the project they were assessing”.

The Liberals are replacing the independence of this board with a highly politicized and unaccountable politically appointed process. Why are the Liberals so opposed to resource development?

• (1450)

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not replaced anything. We have introduced a set of conversations with Canadians, after which Canadians will say, “Yes, this has been a fair review, according to principles that were made transparent for all”, because we believe that if there is going to be success at building major energy infrastructure, the project has to carry the credibility of Canadians, which for the last 10 years it has not had.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are ragging the puck again.

It is critical that Canada build the pipelines required to get its natural resources to market. However, instead of allowing independent scientific experts to do their job, the Prime Minister and his secretary are playing energy politics at the PMO. After years of pipeline applications reviewed by the independent NEB, the Liberals are adding further obstacles by creating a new, highly politicized panel to review these projects. These games are costing hard-working Canadians their jobs, so why are the Liberals putting Canadian firms at a competitive disadvantage within the global marketplace?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an independent group of distinguished western Canadians, all of whom will be known to those members, will, along with the regulator, assess the evidence that has been offered by Canadian people, evidence-based through the regulatory process, along with an assessment of upstream greenhouse gas emissions, along with meaningful consultation with indigenous communities, all of which must be in place if we are going to carry the confidence of Canadians.

* * *

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of temporary foreign workers were forced to leave Fort McMurray because of the fire. They are now living in great uncertainty. They have no alternative income and no family to fall back on. Many have lost their documents, including work permits and permanent residence applications. They do not know if or when their jobs will continue. They do not know if they will be sent home.

What is the government doing to help these temporary foreign workers?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am troubled by the fact that any citizens, any workers, have been displaced from Fort McMurray. The situation of the temporary foreign workers is very dire. The fact is that every employer of a temporary foreign worker is responsible to ensure their living accommodations and their workplace. In this circumstance, those conditions are no longer available.

Service Canada is available for each and every one of them, and we will work with them and the employers to find a reasonable alternative.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are worried about the foreign workers in Fort McMurray, but many other foreign workers in Canada are also dealing with horrible situations. Most recently, we learned of four people from Guatemala who came to work on a farm in Quebec. Because they were afraid that they would be sent back to their own country, they were forced to work up to 22 hours a day and were sometimes paid only \$2 an hour.

What does the government intend to do to ensure that temporary foreign workers are not exploited?

[English]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation, as we are learning, for the living conditions and working conditions of some temporary foreign workers is completely unacceptable. We have initiated a broad review of the temporary foreign worker program. Any employer that is not providing a decent working situation for temporary foreign workers should be reported to our government and we will take immediate action, removing their licence to ever have temporary foreign workers in this country.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in *The Globe and Mail* yesterday, the worldwide champion of the Magnitsky Act, Mr. Bill Browder, called the foreign affairs minister's rejection of the legislation an outright betrayal. He is horrified about why we are lagging behind our U.S. and European allies and not enacting this legislation immediately.

Are the Liberals afraid to stand up to Putin and tell him his regime's corrupt officials, murderers, and torturers, and their blood money are not welcome in Canada?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the Conservatives did nothing to concretely address the Magnitsky case for the past decade.

Oral Questions

There are two important aspects to understand. First, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, we already have the ability to ban individuals involved in the Magnitsky murder from entering Canada. Second, with regard to sanctions, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development has been mandated to look at our sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act and to develop recommendations for what else may be required. I am sure we all look forward to that report.

• (1455)

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion was passed unanimously in the previous Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday, Bill Browder, who is seeking justice for Sergei Magnitsky, indicated that the Minister of Foreign Affairs just wanted to make nice with Russia. Mr. Browder was disappointed that the government is not going to change the Special Economic Measures Act, which excludes corrupt officials, human rights violators, and torturers. Our law addresses those shortcomings and is supported by members from all parties.

In the name of justice, will the minister side with our allies and support this bill?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the name of justice, we have made clear the unacceptable behaviour by Russia on many fronts. We will continue to defend human rights issues. The government increased sanctions on Russia just in March. We did that in coordination with our allies, the U.S. and the EU, which is what makes them effective.

The motion last year with regard to the Magnitsky Act asked that we explore sanctions, and that is exactly what we are doing under the Special Economic Measures Act.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not want to confuse what is happening with Russian aggression in Ukraine with human rights abusers in Russia.

Bill Browder, who has been seeking justice for Sergei Magnitsky for years now, says that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is wrong. He calls the argument from the minister a betrayal in every possible form, and is especially deplorable because it involves the appeasement of a dictatorial regime.

Our Conservative legislation would close all the loopholes. These measures are supported by members of Parliament from all parties. Does the minister think that he knows better than Bill Browder, Bob Rae, and Irwin Cotler?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think every member of the House benefits by the determination to see justice for Sergei Magnitsky. There is no question about that.

With regard to our legislation and our processes, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act already bans anybody involved in those murders from entering Canada. Our Special Economic Measures Act

is being opened up to look at our legislation with a view to what we could improve upon.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this morning the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that Canada has been asked to join the International Syria Support Group and that he would be partaking in crucial diplomatic discussions currently under way in Vienna.

This is the first time Canada has been invited to join this select group as it focuses on reinvigorating peace efforts concerning Syria and expediting the delivery of critical humanitarian aid to besieged areas of that country.

Allow me to congratulate the government, and ask that this House be informed what having Canada at the table for such important discussions will mean.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to restore Canada's role on the international stage.

Canadians should be proud that we have been invited to participate in these Syrian peace talks. Participation means we are better placed to help restore peace and humanitarian aid relief in Syria. That civil war has claimed the lives of 400,000 people and has displaced millions.

After 10 long years, Canada is being asked for our advice and our involvement. Today, we are at the negotiating table adding Canada's voice to one of the most important global security and humanitarian crises of our time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is putting the lives of our soldiers in Iraq at risk by publishing photos of their faces.

The minister does not think that there was anything wrong with publishing the photos because the defence staff approved it. However, in the same type of photos authorized by the same defence staff a year earlier, the soldiers' faces were blurred out. The minister's explanation therefore does not make any sense, particularly since we have learned through the *Ottawa Citizen* that operational security was put aside for public relations value.

Will the government do the right thing and admit that it made a mistake?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the pictures the member is talking about are from the visit the chief of the defence staff made to Iraq. During that time, there were pre-approved interviews and pre-approved photos that were published. That was done with the utmost safety of our members in mind.

The difference that the member talks about is no politician was on this trip, and those pictures previously were not authorized by the Canadian Armed Forces to be released.

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we already knew that the CBC/Radio-Canada board of directors was operating in secret. Now we know that they work in English. Yes, sir.

We have long known that a Conservative-filled board of directors was meeting in secret and not making its minutes public. According to the *National Post*, this is because of a backlog issue.

Now, we know that the last letter of intent for the Radio-Canada sale in Montreal was sent out in English only.

Come on. Is anyone at the controls here? Can Canadians count on the heritage minister to put an end to this nonsense, for goodness' sake?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As the minister responsible for official languages, I expect CBC/Radio-Canada to publish its documents and communicate in both official languages.

I would also like to thank my colleague for informing me yesterday of CBC/Radio-Canada's lack of transparency in making its documents public. I made a point to work with CBC/Radio-Canada to ensure that the documents are made public, and it is working on doing so.

* * *

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our veterans, indeed all Canadians, were shocked when the former Conservative government decided to close the Veterans Affairs service offices across the country. In my own riding in Sydney, we helped offer service to veterans in Cape Breton and all Nova Scotians. The community was outraged with the flagrant disrespect that the previous government showed to our men and women in uniform.

Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs update the House on measures regarding the Veterans Affairs service office in Sydney, and across the country?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has been on me since day one about opening these offices, so I am glad to report that budget 2016 is a great one for veterans.

Not only will we be reopening the nine offices closed by the previous government, including in Sydney, Victoria, but we will be opening a new office in Surrey, B.C., and bringing mobile services to the north. This, along with hiring more staff to reduce the veteran case manager ratio toward 25:1, will mean better in-person service, including in Cape Breton, for our veterans.

Oral Questions

PARKS CANADA

Mr. Jim Eglski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House, the member opposite said that he was more than happy to have a conversation with me about the mountain pine beetle. Unfortunately, on the ground in Alberta, government employees have been told they cannot talk to the local officials about this issue.

Why are the Liberals muzzling scientists and researchers who are critical to this issue?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do find it a little ironic to hear the other side talk about the muzzling of scientists.

The mountain pine beetle is a very serious issue, and we talked about it a little yesterday. Parks Canada is working with the Government of Alberta on a mountain pine beetle action plan, which I think the hon. member has actually reviewed. It will address not only Jasper National Park but the adjacent areas.

Jasper National Park is now finalizing an operational plan to support this management plan, and we would be more than happy to sit and go through that with the hon. member.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time I have asked the government about employment insurance for remote regions where the black hole is a fact.

The government never promised to protect those workers. It is not so much that the members are ignoring an MP by refusing to answer me, it is that they are blatantly abandoning workers.

I am reaching out to the Minister of National Revenue. Will she commit to standing up for her own constituents, the working people of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, as I am standing up for them in the House and standing up for my own constituents, the working people of the north shore?

Will she talk to her colleague, the Minister of Labour, and work out a way to help workers by fixing the black hole problem once and for all?

[*English*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that we have now invested \$3 billion for unemployed workers in Canada. Not only is it unfair to suggest that we are not treating workers well, we have come to the table, as promised, helping workers from region to region, and we continue to be there for all Canadians.

Business of Supply

● (1505)

[Translation]

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, government MPs like to talk about consultation. On March 29, the Minister of Canadian Heritage said that she wanted to consult employees, unions, Montreal elected officials, and artists about the sale of Maison Radio-Canada. She said that all options were on the table.

Two weeks later, a document surfaced about the conditions of sale of the tower, which was in English only, to boot. That is pretty fast for consultations.

Were those groups consulted, or is CBC/Radio-Canada's board doing whatever it wants, as usual?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I would like to reassure my colleague, as I reassured the critic, that we will ensure CBC/Radio-Canada complies with requirements related to our two official languages.

As I have said several times, we expect CBC/Radio-Canada to engage in discussions and consultations with community stakeholders as part of this process.

That being said, I would like to remind my colleague that CBC/Radio-Canada operates at arm's length. For that reason, there will be no political intervention or interference in this matter.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of three members of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, which was awarded the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize: Mr. Houcine Abassi, Mr. Abdessattar Ben Moussa, and Ms. Wided Bouchamaoui.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[English]

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Bernd Kölmel, Chair for the Delegation for Relations with Canada and delegates of the Canada-Europe 37th Interparliamentary Meeting.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

The House resumed from May 12 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:07 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, May 12, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking

of the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

[English]

And the bells having rung:

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]

● (1515)

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

(Division No. 60)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Harper	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater	Nicholson
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Rayes	Reid
Richards	Ritz
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Tilson	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Zimmer— 90

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya

Business of Supply

Ashton
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boulерice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Choquette
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Harcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Leboutillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Rodriguez

Aubin
 Badawey
 Bains
 Baylis
 Beech
 Benson
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Chagger
 Chen
 Christopherson
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Drouin
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fuhr
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marcil
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mihychuk
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Patuzé
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado

Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Sanson
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudeau
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid — 221

Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

● (1520)

[Translation]

OPPOSITION MOTION—FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

The House resumed from May 13 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Thursday, May 12, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the opposition motion relating to the business of supply.

● (1525)

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

(Division No. 61)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Angus
 Barlow
 Berthold
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Brown
 Carrie
 Clarke
 Cooper
 Diotte
 Dreeschen
 Falk
 Gallant
 Genuis
 Godin
 Harder
 Hoback
 Johns
 Kenney
 Kitchen
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Leitch
 Lobb
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)

Albas
 Allison
 Anderson
 Arnold
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Block
 Brassard
 Calkins
 Chong
 Clement
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Eglinski
 Fast
 Généreux
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Harper
 Jeneroux
 Kelly
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Lebel
 Liepert
 Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Malcolmson
 McCauley (Edmonton West)

Government Orders

McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
O'Toole
Poilievre
Reid
Ritz
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong

McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Rayes
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Shipley
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Van Kesteren
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Wagantall
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Waugh
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MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Paradis
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Pauzé
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
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NAYS

Members

Aldag
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Anandasangaree
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Blair
Boissonnault
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bittle
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boulerice
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Dusseau
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

[*English*]

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 19 minutes.

* * *

COPYRIGHT ACT

(Bill C-11. On the Order: Government Orders)

May 17, 2016—Second reading of Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (access to copyrighted works or other subject-matter for persons with perceptual disabilities)—The Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any standing order or usual practices of this House, Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Copyright Act (access to copyrighted works or other subject-matter for persons with perceptual disabilities), be deemed read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

Speaker's Ruling

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying), as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: There are 16 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-14.

Motion No. 5, submitted by the hon. member for Victoria, and Motion No. 10, submitted by the hon. member for Montcalm, propose additional amendments to provisions of the bill that were previously amended in committee. Both motions seek to amend what is meant by "a grievous and irremediable medical condition".

It should be noted that very similar definitions were proposed and defeated in committee, although they were proposed in reference to a different clause. In the view of the Chair, the objective of these motions is essentially identical to that of the amendments defeated in committee, and these motions will therefore not be selected for consideration at report stage.

[*English*]

The Chair has received letters sent by the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton, the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, and the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga arguing that certain motions, though previously defeated in committee, should be selected at report stage as they are of such exceptional significance as to warrant a further consideration, in accordance with the notice to Standing Order 76.1 (5).

Motions Nos. 2, 11 and 15, submitted by both the hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte and the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga, as well as Motion No. 8, submitted only by the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga, will not be selected by the Chair as they could have been presented in committee. The Chair has difficulty accepting that they should now be accepted at report stage when no attempt was made by either member to present them in committee.

Motions Nos. 4 and 9, submitted by the hon. member for St. Albert—Edmonton and the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, seek to ensure that a person who suffers from an underlying mental

health condition has undergone a psychiatric evaluation to confirm that they are capable of giving informed consent in relation to a request for medical assistance in dying. Motion No. 14, submitted by the same two members, seeks to ensure that people are free to refuse to provide medical assistance in dying. All three motions are identical to amendments defeated in committee.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

The same is true for Motion No. 6, submitted by both the hon. member for Montcalm and the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. This motion seeks to delete paragraph 241.2(2)(d), which states that an individual's natural death must become reasonably foreseeable in order for the individual to be considered to have a grievous and irremediable medical condition.

[*English*]

In the case of the motions submitted by the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Motions Nos. 7, 12 and 13 are also identical to amendments defeated in committee. Motion No. 7 seeks to amend paragraph 241.2(2)(d) to reference instead that the person's natural death must be imminent. Motion No. 12 seeks to add a paragraph providing that no substance is to be administered to a person who is capable of self-administering. Motion No. 13 provides for a review of the safeguards in relation to a request by a competent legal authority. Motion No. 3, which provides that a person must have consulted a medical practitioner regarding palliative care options prior to making a request for medical assistance in dying, is very similar to an amendment defeated in committee. The only distinction between the two is that the latter provided that such consultation had to have taken place within the 15 days prior to making the request.

The Chair appreciates the arguments put forward by hon. members as to why they consider these amendments to be of such significance as to warrant further consideration at report stage. I recognize that this is an important issue on which many members have strong and varied opinions. The Chair notes that the bill before us is unique, in its far-reaching social, moral and constitutional implications. The Chair also notes that, given the variety of opinions expressed by various members in all parties in relation to the provisions of this once-in-a-generation bill, the Chair is open to the argument of exceptional significance as contemplated in our Standing Orders. For these reasons, the Chair is prepared, on this occasion, to give members the benefit of the doubt and to select Motions Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13 and 14, even though they were previously defeated in committee or are similar to motions previously defeated in committee.

[*Translation*]

All of the other motions, Motions Nos. 1 and 16, were examined, and the Chair is satisfied that they meet the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5), which deals with the selection of motions in amendment at report stage.

Therefore, Motions Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 16 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

I shall now propose these motions to the House.

Government Orders

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-14 be amended by deleting Clause 3.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 5 on page 6 the following:

“(f) prior to making the request, they consulted a medical practitioner regarding palliative care options and were informed of the full range of options.”

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 5 on page 6 the following:

“(f) they have, if they suffer from an underlying mental health condition, undergone a psychiatric examination performed by a certified psychiatrist to confirm their capacity to give informed consent to receive medical assistance in dying.”

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by deleting lines 17 to 21 on page 6.

● (1535)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by replacing lines 17 to 21 on page 6 with the following:

“(d) their imminent natural death has become foreseeable, taking into account all of their medical circumstances.”

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 9

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 26 on page 6 the following:

“(a.1) with regard to paragraph (1)(f), have obtained from the certified psychiatrist a written and signed report following the examination confirming that the person is capable of giving informed consent;”

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 12

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 30 on page 7 the following:

“(3.1) As it relates to medical assistance in dying, no medical practitioner or nurse practitioner may administer a substance to a person if they and the medical practitioner or nurse practitioner referred to in paragraph (3)(e) concur that the person is capable of self-administering the substance.”

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 30 on page 7 the following:

“(3.1) The medical practitioner or nurse practitioner shall not provide a person with assistance in dying if the criteria in subsection (1) and the safeguards in subsection (3) have not been reviewed and verified in advance

(a) by a competent legal authority designated by the province for that purpose; or (b) if no designation is made under paragraph (a), by a legal authority designated by the Minister of Health in conjunction with the Minister of Justice for that purpose.

(3.2) The designation referred to in paragraph (3.1)(b) ceases to have effect if the province notifies the Minister of Justice that a designation has been made under paragraph (3.1)(a).”

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC) moved:

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-14, in Clause 3, be amended by adding after line 26 on page 8 the following:

“(7.1) It is recognized that the medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health care institution care provider, or any such institution, is free to refuse to provide direct or indirect medical assistance in dying.

(7.2) No medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other healthcare institution care provider, or any such institution, shall be deprived of any benefit, or be subject to any obligation or sanction, under any law of the Parliament of Canada solely by reason of their exercise, in respect of medical assistance in dying, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the expression of their beliefs in respect of medical assistance in dying based on that guaranteed freedom.”

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP), seconded by the member for Montcalm, moved:

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-14, in Clause 9.1, be amended by replacing line 22 on page 13 with the following:

“Health, no later than 45 days after the day”

● (1540)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your thoughtful ruling and your recognition that this is indeed a historic event and, as you said, a generational issue. In Motion No. 1, I have suggested that we delete clause 3 of the bill, which is one of the central features of it.

The Supreme Court's ruling in the Carter case was a watershed moment for many Canadians, especially those who had fought so long to have their suffering recognized and their autonomy respected. I was proud to support the principle of Bill C-14 during second reading. I did so thinking of Sue Rodriguez of Victoria, Gloria Taylor, and Kay Carter, and of all of the others who paved the way for the rights of other suffering Canadians to be recognized by the Supreme Court and by Parliament.

While I was proud to support the bill in principle, at the time I raised serious concerns about particular provisions in it. Still, I was optimistic that these concerns would be resolved and the bill improved by hearing from experts and making the necessary amendments in committee. Sadly, that was not to be done.

The first day of consideration in the justice committee ended without a single opposition amendment accepted by the Liberal majority. By the end of the week, after more than 100 amendments were proposed, just 16 were accepted. Of course, I am pleased that my amendment was accepted to strengthen the government's commitment to providing more Canadians with palliative care, mental health supports, better services for patients with Alzheimer's and dementia, and culturally appropriate services for indigenous patients. I thank my colleagues from all parties for supporting my amendments to that end. However, many of the handful of changes at committee were simply minor technical changes.

Government Orders

Along with members from several parties, I offered a solution to the glaring flaw in the bill, the elephant in the room, namely the fact that it simply did not square with the Supreme Court's ruling. I proposed using the exact words of the Supreme Court to determine eligibility. That was of course one of the main recommendations of the special House Senate joint committee that addressed this bill. Sadly, all of these proposals were rejected. It became clear that the government had no interest in changing the central feature of this bill. Therefore, does the Liberals' bill square with the Supreme Court decision in Carter? The answer is clearly no.

The Supreme Court declared the two laws that prevented medical assistance in dying:

...void insofar as they prohibit physician-assisted death for a competent adult person who (1) clearly consents to the termination of life; and (2) has a grievous and irremediable medical condition (including an illness, disease or disability) that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual in the circumstances of his or her condition.

That language defined the circumference set out by our highest court as to who had the right to physician-assisted dying. Outside of that circle, there remains a total ban on assistance in dying. Mature minors, those who have lost or never had the capacity to give legal informed consent, those with solely psychiatric conditions, and those with merely minor medical conditions were never eligible in the Supreme Court decision. However, within the circle are all consenting competent adults with a grievous and irremediable illness, disease, or disability that causes enduring and intolerable suffering.

This bill would erase the circle set by the Supreme Court and draws a much smaller circle within it, covering only those nearing the end of life and facing what is called reasonably foreseeable natural death, a phrase which just recently the Collège des médecins du Québec called incomprehensible from a medical perspective.

A lawyer representing the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association at the court hearings said this to the justice committee, "Bill C-14 cuts the heart out of our victory in the Carter case". By adding an end-of-life requirement onto the court's ruling, Bill C-14 would revoke the right to choose from an entire class of competent adult Canadians. That group is everyone suffering intolerably from an irremediable but non-fatal condition.

• (1545)

I have constituents in my riding who fall into that outer ring beyond the circle of rights recognized by the government, people who are suffering, who saw their suffering recognized by the Supreme Court and who cannot, for the life of them, understand why the government now insists on removing their right to choose this option.

What justification has the government offered for this disturbing decision? At the House and Senate committee, and again at the justice committee, some argued we could not afford to expand the circle of compassion, that the Supreme Court ruling could not be obeyed in full, that not all those who were granted rights in Carter could see those rights upheld because to do so would pose an unacceptable risk to vulnerable persons.

These are important arguments, but they are not new. In fact, they were advanced ably and in great detail before the Supreme Court of Canada. Here is what the court wrote.

At trial [the Crown] went into some detail about the risks associated with the legalization of physician-assisted dying. In its view, there are many possible sources of error... Essentially...there is no reliable way to identify those who are vulnerable and those who are not. As a result, it says, a blanket prohibition is necessary.

I emphasize this:

The evidence accepted by the trial judge does not support Canada's argument... The trial judge found that it was feasible for properly qualified and experienced physicians to reliably assess patient competence and voluntariness, and that coercion, undue influence, and ambivalence could all be reliably assessed as part of that process....As to the risk to vulnerable populations (such as the elderly and disabled), the trial judge found that there was no evidence from permissive jurisdictions that people with disabilities are at heightened risk of accessing physician-assisted dying....no evidence of inordinate impact on socially vulnerable populations in the permissive jurisdictions...no compelling evidence that a permissive regime in Canada would result in a "practical slippery slope". accepted by the trial judge does not support [this] argument.

That was the conclusion of the Supreme Court after considering the evidence and arguments raised in Carter, the very same evidence and arguments that were advanced at the joint House and Senate committee, which I was honoured to serve on, and at the justice committee just last week. After considering that evidence and those arguments, the court issued its ruling in Carter, establishing the right to choose medical assistance in dying for everyone inside a carefully measured circle of eligibility.

Quite simply, there was a large circle of eligibility. The government has chosen within that circle to define a smaller class. It simply cannot do that if we believe in the rule of law, if we believe in the fact that the Supreme Court should be listened to in this case.

In conclusion, I simply cannot support moving any further with a bill that would revoke from an entire class of competent adult Canadians rights granted to it by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Victoria for his passionate remarks. It has been a great pleasure serving with him on the justice committee. I always appreciate his intellect.

The amendment the hon. member is putting forward would strike clause 3 from the bill. However, if I look at clause 2, all of the exceptions in that clause relate to exceptions that are set out in section 241.2, which is set out in clause 3 of the bill. Effectively by removing clause 3 of the bill, all of the exceptions disappear from clause 2 of the bill because they are all found in clause 3 of the bill.

While I understand the hon. member's desire to create a greater class of people, could he explain how the rest of the bill can continue to exist since all of the references in all the remaining sections of the bill relate back to clause 3?

• (1550)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. friend, the chair of the justice committee, who did an excellent job in herding cats during the exercise that we were part of and a very difficult exercise at that.

Government Orders

As the hon. member will know, the constraints imposed upon members at report stage are very stringent. As a consequence, the only way that we could bring this problem to the attention of Parliament was to ask that clause 3 be deleted.

We would of course wish that the bill could be redrafted to deal with the very practical problems that my friend raised, and I hope we can go ahead and do that in this chamber.

The fundamental point remains that clause 3 contains the essence of Parliament's proposed response to the Carter case and that response is simply inadequate, and with great respect, unconstitutional.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hard work on the bill all along, including coming to my constituency and sharing his knowledge from his experience on the special committee and on the justice committee.

One of the big concerns in my constituency has been the inability to give a direction in advance. Could the member speak to the fact that the bill would not allow for giving directions in advance so when one became incapable of doing that, one's wishes would be fulfilled?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to be in the riding of my colleague and friend from Edmonton Strathcona to talk about this with hundreds of passionate Canadians who were, frankly, surprised there was no willingness on the part of the government to consider advance directives in Bill C-14.

Since I spoke in Edmonton, I ended up moving that there be amendments specifically to provide that kind of advance requests, as so many witnesses had proposed. However, every Liberal on the committee voted against that change.

I think Canadians are demanding it. I get more letters and calls about this issue than any other deficiency in the bill. I hope that the review that is proposed in the legislation will eventually take us there, because I know Canadians are demanding it.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is one principle in which my colleague and I fundamentally disagree, and that is on the issue of safeguards for vulnerable people.

I have had the privilege of working on behalf of many vulnerable groups over the last 10 years, as I am sure my colleague has. However, for my colleague to suggest that other jurisdictions have not had a problem with vulnerable persons being at risk to the physician-assisted suicide regime is simply untrue.

The committee heard from witnesses from other jurisdictions and, in fact, from people who had been part of administrations where the physician-assisted suicide situation had been implemented. They clearly warned us about the slippery slope that would happen when this door was open.

I would like my colleague to confirm that many witnesses did warn the committee about the fact that other jurisdictions had faced a problem in this area.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, that was exactly the evidence that the Supreme Court heard. The trial court heard

voluminous testimony about that and concluded that safeguards were to be properly built-in within their judgment.

In addition to that, Bill C-14 lists many additional safeguards that are provided, and I am comfortable with the result that has been achieved. However, I am not comfortable that we are taking away the rights of so many Canadians, which were achieved at great expense and difficulty in the Supreme Court decision in Carter.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: That Bill C-16, an act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code, be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, reported to the House without amendment, concurred in at report stage, read a third time, and passed.

• (1555)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Since there is no consent, the motion is deemed negatived.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise on this very important subject.

In a fairly limited way but nonetheless to some extent, we have had the chance to debate the larger philosophical questions in the legislation. However, I want to be very surgical in my comments today, no pun intended.

We have some important amendments before us that reflect good-faith efforts by opposition members to try to improve legislation. Whether we agree with it, there are some important steps we can take to substantially improve the legislation to try to make it better.

We had amendments come forward at committee. I had the pleasure of getting three of my proposed amendments passed, but on relatively limited aspects of the legislation. Therefore, I am moving today what I think are four substantive and important amendments that would improve the legislation. They are amendments that members should be able to agree on, regardless—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind hon. members that pictures are not to be taken in the House. If the member took pictures, I will recommend that the member delete them immediately and abide by the rules of the House, which is that no photos are to be taken in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it has been quite the day on the procedural front, but I appreciate the opportunity to get back to a subject that is too important to be waylaid by these sorts of things. I mentioned four substantive amendments that I proposed. These are amendments that I think all members should be able to take a serious look at, and hopefully many on the government side will even agree with them.

I will say very clearly the purpose of these amendments. These amendments would not restrict access to something which the Supreme Court has deemed that we must give access to. Indeed, these amendments would provide greater shape and substance to the value of autonomy, which is supposed to be the basis of this legislation. They would give meaning and effect to that. I will mention that three out of four of these amendments would not even change the eligibility criteria.

What do I mean when I say that they would give added substance to autonomy? For an individual to have autonomy and effectively express that autonomy, the individual needs to have information about the choices he or she is making. How can people make autonomous choices if they do not have information about which they are supposed to be making the choice? That needs to include information about the impacts of a choice, as well as the alternatives that are available. Autonomy also requires some opportunity or space for meaningful deliberation based on that information.

What I am asking for in three out of the four amendments would not even require a change to the eligibility criteria. It is simply protection of the value of autonomy, assurance that individuals get the information they need, assurance that people who do not consent do not get pushed into this, and assurance that people who do not meet the criteria will not have their lives taken. The court asked us to develop a system of safeguards that would ensure that people who are vulnerable are not put at risk, that people who do not consent do not lose their lives in a medical environment, that people still feel safe in a medical environment, that they do not have to worry about going to a hospital and losing their lives without consenting to it.

We need these safeguards in place, and these amendments would do the job that the court asked us to do. They would provide the safeguards and protect the autonomy of individuals involved. I hope that members will take a serious look at all four of these amendments.

The first one, Motion No. 3 on the Order Paper, says that prior to making the request, someone must have consulted a medical practitioner specifically regarding palliative care options and be informed of a full range of options. Now, this can be part of the pre-existing consultation with a physician. There is no need for this to require additional time. This consultation, as I mentioned in committee, could happen with someone over the phone. There is not even a need for a requirement for an in-person consultation.

I see this amendment as the minimum of the minimum, but it would require that people get information about palliative care options before they take part in euthanasia or assisted suicide, and that people who express interest in euthanasia or assisted suicide at least first have someone say, "There is an alternative. This is what the alternative looks like. This is what is available in your area. Now you can choose between that robust, well-explained alternative of

palliative care or the option of physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia."

I do not see why members would have any objection to this amendment. It would not add any hoops to jump through. It is simply an assurance that patients would receive information about their alternatives. Indeed, it cuts to the core of what autonomy is supposed to be about: people having the information to make meaningful, understood choices between different alternatives.

It is interesting to hear members talk about their personal experiences on this issue. People talk about pain having been totally unmanageable in a particular case. In fact, the pain may have actually been manageable, but the person did not get good information and did not have access to the palliative care or pain management they needed. It is always unfortunate when I hear that said, because this speaks to people not getting the information they need about palliative care and pain management.

Let us do the minimum with that amendment. Let us make sure that people get information about palliative care options. I do not think that is too much to ask, and it would show the goodwill of the House to look at an amendment like that in a serious way.

My second amendment, Motion No. 7 on the Order Paper, would add a requirement of imminent natural death. This is the only one of my four amendments that would inform the eligibility criteria, but it is an important change. The phrase "reasonably foreseeable" is, of course, very ambiguous language. The use of the word "terminal" provides some greater degree of clarity.

•(1600)

This is very much constitutional. We have the right as Parliament to define the contours of an exception to the Criminal Code. As the justice minister herself has said, identifying the purpose of the law can alter the charter interpretation, and courts have said they would show deference. There is a need to proceed conservatively at the outset on an issue like this, and there is always the opportunity to study going further.

Most Canadians, when they think about this issue, are thinking in terms of terminal. This is consistent with the Quebec experience. There were seven years of study and a great deal of deliberation in the Quebec context. The conclusion, after much debate there, was that "terminal" was the best way to go. We would be unwise in a few months to rush to a very different conclusion than Quebec made after years and years of deliberation, or at least to go in a further direction than it did, because it had much more time to think about it.

Describing this legislation in a clearly terminal context provides greater protection from the concerns that the member for Winnipeg Centre and others have raised about this leading to some degree of suicide contagion. If we clearly define the legislation as applying to a limited population in a limited situation, we would have to worry relatively less so about how this may lead to some degree of suicide contagion in the rest of society.

I hope members will take a good look at that amendment as well.

Government Orders

The third amendment I am proposing is on the Order Paper as No. 12. It is a requirement for self-administration in cases where an individual is able to self-administer. This means that assisted suicide would be the default, as opposed to euthanasia, in the event that an individual is able.

This does not limit anyone's access to euthanasia or assisted suicide. Everyone who had access before the amendment would have access after it. However it ensures contemporaneous consent. It means that an individual who is seeking this service is consenting at the moment that they do it, and that there is no better way of doing it. This, again, adds substance to the idea of autonomy. It makes for good individual rationality in terms of the individual making the decision and doing it to themselves right at that moment.

This is a good safeguard in terms of ensuring contemporaneous consent, but it also has other benefits. It has the potential to help address the access issue. Doctors, in some cases, may be more comfortable assisting than they would be in actually providing. That is a safeguard that provides some additional benefits as well. There are no negative access implications. There is no harm in that provision.

The final amendment that I proposed is around advance review. The bottom line is that the so-called safeguards in the legislation are no good unless someone is checking. We have a requirement for two doctors and two witnesses, but a person could shop around. These four people could be anyone. They could be the same four people approving it for different Canadians across the country.

Therefore, I have put forward a proposal for a relatively minimal advance review process. It would be up to the provinces to designate that process. They could simply say that a lawyer has to sign off that the legal criteria were met, or they could have a judge do it. There are provisions for the provinces to have a choice within that context. However, there has to be an advance review. There has to be someone checking. If no one is checking, what good are the safeguards? What is the point of having any requirement at all if we do not have someone with the legal competency to understand what those safeguards are and to compare those safeguards to a situation? This is a complex legal situation. It requires some kind of competent legal authority.

The four amendments are modest amendments. They are surgical. They protect the value of autonomy. I hope all members, including members of the government, will take a serious look at them and give their support to them.

● (1605)

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my friend. I know that at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, of which I am a member, we heard the same arguments. Obviously in the debate we are having with the competing motions before the House to amend the bill, we know there are some who suggest that the bill goes too far and some who suggest it does not go far enough. We are hearing that over and over.

One of the things that I would like to ask the hon. member is with regard to his change in Motion No. 7, which would basically change the words to “imminent natural death” being required. He says it is clearly constitutional, that the wording would be acceptable by the

court, because Parliament has the ability to do that. Of course, we have a Charter of Rights in our country, and Parliament is subject to the rights as enunciated by the court. What I am wondering about is the word “imminent”. Does he believe that the appellants, who were the subject of the appeal in Carter, Kay Carter and Gloria Taylor, would have been able to get medical assistance in dying using the word “imminent”?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, let me address a number of the different comments that the member made. I appreciated his contribution at the justice committee, although I did not always agree with the things he said there.

With respect to some members wanting to go further, some members thinking that this would not go far enough, some wanting it to pull back, I will just say this. I think that there are some ways that we can improve the legislation that would add clarity, that would add safeguards, that should have a substantial degree of consensus. The amendments that I proposed are not in the main about limiting eligibility. They are about providing safeguards to ensure a more robust and protected concept of autonomy.

The amendment he referred to about “terminal” is an exception to that, and it is one that I think is still important. However, the other three are very much focused on providing safeguards to ensure that those who receive this service have properly consented and have understood exactly what their options are in the context of that.

Now, the question—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague about the importance of palliative care. Having spent much of my life working in social services and on behalf of people in difficulty, everything affecting vulnerable people is really important to me.

However, and my colleague knows this because we sat on the same committee, a number of witnesses told us that we should not consider all ill or disabled people as being vulnerable. I believe that by doing so we are treating them like children. Many of them can give free and informed consent.

I would like my colleague to explain his views to me because listening to him, I sometimes have the impression that all sick or disabled people are vulnerable.

● (1610)

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I certainly have never said, or certainly did not mean to imply, that every individual who may have a disability is vulnerable, and certainly would not be vulnerable in the same sense. There could be different degrees of vulnerability that could affect us all.

Government Orders

However, what I am trying to do with these amendments is to simply protect autonomy, ensure that everybody has the information they need about the alternatives. Some people may have that information already, but some people may not. That is why we need these safeguards.

If I have time, I want to briefly go back to comment to the previous questions because I did not get to answer the second part of it.

The member argued that an imminent requirement might not be constitutional. I will just say this. The Quebec bill has a requirement of imminence, and the Supreme Court, in its extension, said that the new provisions they were putting in place with respect to the extension do not apply to Quebec because Quebec already has a law in place. I think that would strongly suggest that in the view of the court, the Quebec model, which has a requirement for imminence, is constitutional. It would allow us to follow that model.

What I am suggesting in this amendment is to simply to a greater extent align the federal legislation with the Quebec legislation, which we already have a sense is constitutional.

However, I think there are some other points that could be made in defence of that; namely, that the court said in its decision that it would show a substantial degree of deference toward Parliament.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to speak to Bill C-14 at report stage.

I have brought forward three amendments, two of which are related. Motions Nos. 4 and 9 on the Order Paper relate to requiring someone with an underlying mental health condition to undertake a psychiatric assessment to determine capacity to consent. Motion No. 14 on the Order Paper deals with conscience protections, ensuring that the conscience rights of health professionals and health care institutions are respected. I will get into a little more detail momentarily with regard to those amendments.

Let me just say at the outset that however short or long my parliamentary tenure proves to be, Bill C-14, I have little doubt, will be one of the most important votes that I cast. I believe that is true for all hon. members in this House, because we are talking about a bill that will impact the lives of Canadians not just for years to come, but likely decades to come.

Having regard for the gravity of the decision before us, I have spent a lot of time reflecting on what is the right thing to do. At the present time, I am still reflecting.

One of the shortcomings of Bill C-14 at second reading was the absence of conscience protections. I am pleased that now that the legislation has gone through committee, there has been movement in the right direction when it comes to protecting conscience rights of health care professionals. More specifically, Bill C-14 provides that no individual is obliged to provide, or assist in providing, physician-assisted dying. In addition to that, the preamble has been amended to expressly recognize section 2, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience under the charter.

I want to thank the hon. member for Victoria for his leadership in moving those amendments at committee in close co-operation with me, as well as the hon. member for West Nova. I would be remiss if I

did not acknowledge the hon. member for Mount Royal for his hard work and the collaborative approach he took as chair of the justice committee, which resulted in an important improvement in the legislation.

With respect, I believe there is still work to do when it comes to conscience protections. I believe it is important that not only health care professionals but also health care institutions have their charter rights and appropriate conscience protections in place. That is what my amendment would seek to do to ensure that everyone's charter rights are respected.

I would note that Madam Justice McLachlin and Mr. Justice Moldaver at paragraph 94 of the *Loyola* decision recognized that the individual and collective aspects of section 2 charter rights are intertwined.

With respect to the other two amendments I have brought forward, one of the concerns I have is the fact that in the legislation any two physicians or any two nurse practitioners can determine whether or not a patient satisfies the criteria for physician-assisted dying.

The problem with that is that not every physician and not every nurse practitioner has the training and experience to determine capacity to consent when an underlying mental health challenge is present in a patient.

The clear evidence before the special joint committee of which I was a vice-chair, as well as the justice committee of which I am a member, was that someone with more specialized training, namely a psychiatrist, is required to undertake what is, quite frankly, a complex analysis in many cases.

● (1615)

My amendment would simply provide that anyone who has an underlying mental health challenge be referred to a psychiatrist for a psychiatric assessment to determine his or her capacity to consent. It is a simple amendment. It is a straightforward amendment. It is a much-needed amendment. We simply cannot allow people with mental illness to fall through the cracks. We cannot allow that to happen as parliamentarians. One way we can mitigate that from happening is to pass this very important amendment.

When I look at Bill C-14 in its totality, I see a bill that contains many important safeguards. Those safeguards ought not to be minimized or dismissed. They are there; they are real, and they are serious. At the same time, the bill falls short when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, namely, people with mental illness. I see a bill that moves in the right direction when it comes to protecting conscience rights of health professionals, but still falls short when it comes to health care institutions.

Bill C-14 is an imperfect bill. It is not a bad bill, but it is a bill that I believe can be improved upon. As I reflect, I must ask myself whether I support an imperfect bill or do I vote against an imperfect bill having regard for the consequences that would follow in the absence of legislation being cast when the expiration of the declaration on the stay of constitutional invalidity is June 6.

Government Orders

In closing, I will continue to reflect. I am hopeful that some of the gaps in Bill C-14 can be closed. I am hopeful that all hon. members on all sides of the House can work together collaboratively and in a spirit of good faith to try to do the best we can to make this bill the best that it can possibly be in the circumstances. We owe it to patients. We owe it to physicians and health professionals. We owe it to the vulnerable. Most importantly, we owe it to Canadians.

• (1620)

Mr. Tom Kniec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to get assurance from my colleague from Halifax that he has erased the photo that he had taken in the House. As we all know, taking photos in the chamber is not allowed unless authorized and any unauthorized photography amounts to a breach of members' privilege. If he cannot assure you, Madam Speaker, that he has erased the photo, I will be prepared to return to the House with further comments on the matter.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, it was a number of months ago when I stood on a similar point of order when a picture was taken of the opposition from the government benches. At the time, it was advised that the member did not take pictures and it was taken at that person's word.

The member in question indicated that he was going to delete the picture in question. Out of respect for the member's integrity, I think we accept that as being done and we leave it at that. Members, especially new members, might not necessarily be familiar with the rule and by your raising it, Madam Speaker, and it being talked about earlier, it should be put to rest at that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I really appreciate the input that has been provided to me. Follow-up is being done. As I have indicated, and as the parliamentary secretary indicated, I did ask the member to delete the photos. No pictures are to be taken in the House of Commons while the House is sitting. We generally take members at their word to act on the direction that has been provided to them.

On that note, as I said, other follow-up is being done with the member from Halifax, and should it be required, I will get back to the member for Calgary Shepard with a further response.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Charlottetown.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for his thoughtful contribution to the debate and also for the substantial work that he has done both on the special joint committee and on the justice committee. He is a standing example that while we may disagree, we need not be disagreeable.

The member finished his speech with an indication that he is reflecting and struggling a bit with how he is going to vote on this. He is struggling with the possibility of there being no law if those who are like him are wavering as to whether or not to pass what they see as an imperfect law.

Given the member's substantial experience in the debate here on the floor and before both committees, I would invite him to elaborate on the consequences of this law being defeated and our having no law on June 6.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I believe it is important that Parliament respond legislatively by the June 6 deadline. If legislation is not passed, there will be a vacuum. As a result of that vacuum, there will be no certainty for patients, no certainty for physicians, and no protections for the vulnerable. What we would likely have would be the colleges, for example, stepping in, but we would have a patchwork across Canada. What we need is consistency.

If the legislation cannot be passed before June 6, I think it also is incumbent upon the Minister of Justice, if necessary, to take the step of applying to the Supreme Court and asking for a further extension so that we can get a law passed. It is absolutely essential, absolutely imperative, that there not be a legislative vacuum.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for a very thoughtful presentation, and for the spirit of good faith and collaboration that he spoke about. He demonstrated that in the committees, on which I had the pleasure to serve with him, and he demonstrated that in his speech today.

My question is about the amendment dealing with conscience protection.

The member spoke of the need for institutional conscience protection. We differ on whether bricks and mortar really do have a conscience. However, the question is on the changes that were made in committee, namely, the clarification that nothing in this law would compel an individual to provide or assist in providing medical assistance in dying, and the reference in the preamble to the protection under the charter of conscience and religious rights. Would the member be satisfied with the conscience protections regime that we have crafted, subject of course to that one issue of institutional protection?

• (1625)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I believe that the amendments that were passed at committee go a long way in the right direction toward protecting the conscience rights of health care professionals. At the same time, I believe that the amendment that I am proposing in some respects tightens that up a little and then extends, of course, to protecting health care institutions. I think that it adds to the amendment that was passed at committee.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his hard work on both the joint committee and on the justice committee. There is no question that he has a grasp of this topic, which is probably beyond most of us in the House.

I would ask the member again to comment on the issue of standing up for specific protection for those who might have underlying psychiatric issues.

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I would reiterate that perhaps there is no one group that is more vulnerable than people with mental illness. We need to be certain that those who have mental illness who may seek physician-assisted dying because they have an underlying physical condition that is grievous and irremediable have the capacity to consent. One of the clear parameters set out by the Supreme Court is that an individual must clearly give his or her consent.

Government Orders

We need to make sure that we have the appropriate safeguards for those people who are particularly vulnerable, and I think that my amendment does just that.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 Saskatoon West, housing; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Canada Border Services Agency; and the hon. member for Burnaby South, Statistics Canada.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, first of all, as I have done in the past, I would like to thank everyone taking part in this debate, as they are clearly demonstrating great compassion for persons with disabilities, diseases, or grievous and irremediable medical conditions.

However, as I have already said, just because we are compassionate does not mean that we are helpful. We are not being helpful when we affect a person's autonomy and thus the principle of self-determination. That is the basis for the amendments we are moving.

By deleting paragraph 241.2(2)(d), after all the discussions we have had about the “reasonably foreseeable natural death” criterion, we are complying with the ruling in Carter. As soon as a person has a grievous and irremediable disease or disability that causes them enduring suffering that is intolerable and that cannot be relieved under conditions that they consider acceptable, which is the purpose of our second amendment, we cannot claim that we are not affecting their self-determination.

Earlier I heard my Conservative Party colleagues talking about harmonizing this bill with Quebec's legislation. What they failed to mention is that the Quebec law was not intended to cover something made necessary by the Carter decision, namely assisted suicide.

It is important to distinguish terminal illness from the end-of-life stage, which Quebec's legislation placed within a continuum of palliative care. A person may very well be receiving good palliative care, yet still request death. They are at the end-of-life stage, when the dying process has already begun and is irreversible.

The question in the Carter decision is the following: What do we do with people who are terminally ill but not yet at the end-of-life stage? That is the question we needed to answer. By insisting on keeping the “reasonably foreseeable natural death” criterion in its bill, the government is going against the Carter decision.

I am not the only one to say so. The Barreau du Québec said so. The lawyer who argued the case before the Supreme Court said so. They won. The Carter family's lawyer said so. Kay Carter would not have had access to medical assistance in dying under the “reasonably foreseeable natural death” criterion unless, as some have been forced to do recently, she had gone on a hunger strike. In that case, natural death is reasonably foreseeable. That is totally inhumane.

Her other option would have been to argue her case right up to the Supreme Court. That is the road the government is currently going down. It says it is going to leave those who are suffering from a

grievous irremediable illness with the burden of going to the Supreme Court to win their case. It is perfectly clear that this bill, as worded, flies in the face of what the Supreme Court said in its decision.

According to the Supreme Court, section 7 of the charter includes three rights, the right to life, liberty, and security of the person, and these three rights are affected by the total prohibition and the “reasonably foreseeable natural death” criterion. The Supreme Court indicated that the right to life is being undermined because some individuals are being forced to take their own lives prematurely rather than wait until their suffering and their lives have become intolerable. This bill does not address that issue.

• (1630)

That is why this bill will be ruled out of order and unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Many people are certain of that. Why then is the government insisting on making this compromise?

That is what legislators did with regard to abortion in the 1970s. What the Supreme Court said in 1988 in the Morgentaler case is exactly what is happening with this bill.

When a law sets out exceptional and exculpatory measures in an attempt to respect rights and fundamental values, those measures have to be real. People have to be able to access them. We cannot take away a person's ability to decide for themselves. No one can make that decision for them. No one here should compare one life to another. It is not about that. No one here should get to decide for a patient what his or her quality of life is.

However, this bill attempts to do so because, to a certain extent, it attempts to qualify a person's death based on a foreseeability criterion. Unless her age was a factor, Kay Carter was not facing a natural, reasonably foreseeable death. That is the danger with this bill. The danger is that someone will either have to go on a hunger strike, which is inhumane, or else we will have to take their age into account. However, spinal stenosis, for example, can be just as intolerable at 42, 62, or 52 years of age.

What does this bill do about all the people who have degenerative diseases and do not want to die? People are not living with a disease that makes them suicidal. They are living with the disease. What they do not want is for someone to decide what is right for them.

Throughout our lives, we have the right to self-determination, meaning that no one can undermine our integrity. In the case of an emergency at the hospital, patients have to give their free and informed consent before they receive any treatment.

Why, then, at the most intimate moment of a human being's life, that person's own death, would anyone presume to do such a thing? On what basis would it be done? On the basis of the common good? Would a neighbour agree to die in that person's stead?

Some would presume to tell a person what to do and take away the right to self-determination when that person is most fragile and vulnerable. That is what the Liberal Party is condoning because it lacks the political courage to do what the Carter ruling asked it to do. It lacks the political courage to make a decision.

Government Orders

We may soon end up with a judicial democracy, but it is not up to the Supreme Court to legislate. That is a job for legislators, and each one of my colleagues opposite is responsible for shaping laws in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

I repeat, according to the principle of fundamental justice, found in section 7 of the law, exculpatory measures must be real; they must be genuinely available.

Anyone who wants to vote against these two amendments needs to prove to me that the bill, as currently written, will fulfill the requirements I just discussed.

• (1635)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Even though he is not a member of the committee, I appreciated his presence and his contribution.

The hon. member said on several occasions that the proposed bill does not meet the requirements set out in the Carter ruling. However, he was often at committee meetings when many witnesses, including medical and legal experts, said the opposite. We understand that any law could be found unconstitutional by a court. However, I believe that this legislation is constitutional and complies with the charter and the Carter ruling.

Will my hon. colleague acknowledge that many legal experts appeared before the committee, including the Canadian Medical Association representative, who said that he was in favour of the condition of reasonably foreseeable natural death?

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, when witnesses appeared before the committee, I heard people who were confusing the Quebec law with what the Supreme Court asked us to do. My Conservative colleagues, with their notion of imminent death, are creating this confusion. I mentioned this earlier.

That is also the case for the Canadian Medical Association. Everyone thinks that the Quebec law has struck the proper balance. In terms of end-of-life care, it is good legislation and there has been a consensus about that for almost six years. However, that legislation does not resolve the problem of assisted suicide.

This bill and this law do not currently apply to Kay Carter's situation. We must comply with the Supreme Court ruling, which contains criteria that differ from those found in the bill. It is too restrictive.

• (1640)

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. It is clear that he has a lot of expertise on this complex and sensitive issue.

When the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights was examining this bill, a Liberal government representative said that the clause on natural death was deliberately vague so that more members would vote to pass this bill. However, the argument has often been raised that there is a legal void.

Does the member think that it is better to have a vague law or no law at all? I would also like him to talk about what the Collège des médecins du Québec had to say about this clause.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, a bad law leads to a plethora of court challenges. That is what is going to happen with this bill if this vague concept is not clarified.

The worst thing about this sensitive issue is that patients will have to set the precedent. Vulnerable patients with grievous and irremediable conditions are going to have to shoulder the burden of going before the Supreme Court to make their voices heard. The Supreme Court is going to end up doing the work that the Liberal government should have done with us.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier today the House voted on a motion regarding physicians' freedom of conscience, and I did not take notice as to how my colleague voted, so I would ask him this question.

In the context of Bill C-14 at report stage, Motion No. 14 calls for clear definitions of freedom of conscience. Would my colleague support those?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, this bill does not compromise freedom of conscience.

However, even if the House were to pass a bill like the one we want, a bill that complies with Carter, health care workers who care for people who are terminally ill do not just materialize out of thin air. Palliative care is now a reality in end-of-life care. There have always been doctors who think that their patients can recover and who cling to that idea when they should be ensuring that those patients receive end-of-life care.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be able to rise at report stage. I appreciate the decision of the Speaker to recognize that, if there was ever a time for exceptional circumstances and exceptions under our Standing Order 76.1(5), this is such an occasion.

The use of the exceptional circumstances here is to allow a real opportunity at report stage to improve the bill. This is not a fake debate about amendments that have no hope. It is my profound hope that the amendments before the House now as we debate this at report stage, with a free vote, with every member allowed to weigh in, can yet improve this legislation to the point where the vast majority of us will be comfortable voting for it with amendments. As it is right now, I do not know if this bill could pass this House in its current state.

Let me just go back for a moment, for context. I do think context and empathy are important on all sides of the House. Bill C-14 is the direct result of the Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous decision in February 2015 to accept that certain provisions of the Criminal Code violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms insofar as they affect people who are suffering from grievous and irremediable medical conditions, and wish to have the right to choose their own time and way of dying. As the court wrote at the time, "an individual's choice about the end of her life is entitled to respect".

Government Orders

In my time in Parliament, there has not been a bill that is more difficult to talk about, that touches more on aspects of our own personal principles, faith, beliefs, rights, and politics, all wrapped up in a charter decision. It has been difficult to talk about, but I think it has been approached on all sides with appropriate respect. As my colleague just mentioned, the chair of the justice committee, the hon. member for Mount Royal, did an exceptional job in steering through the many amendments that were reviewed in committee. However, not enough of those amendments were accepted to make the bill acceptable.

Let me go through why I do not think I can vote for the bill without amendments. It is not about what I think; it is not about whether I think the bill is satisfactory. I think everyone on all sides of the House, including government members, admit that it is flawed. It is not quite what one would want, compared to, for instance, the exceptional report of the committee that guided the government, the joint committee report of the House and Senate on how to respond to the Carter decision. This bill falls short.

That is not the basis on which I cannot vote for it now. It is not my opinions. Our challenge as parliamentarians is to ensure that whatever we pass meets the standard set out for us by the Supreme Court of Canada in assessing what it was about the status quo that made the situation for Kay Carter one that was not merely unfair but a violation of her charter rights.

That is the key question here. There is a level of provision for medically assisted dying below which government legislation cannot sink. That bar, that line, is charter rights, as set out by the Supreme Court of Canada.

I wanted to comment and focus a bit on this question, as set by the court, of an individual's choice about the end of her life being entitled to respect. I suppose we could wish that the court now used the female pronoun and intended it generically, as we have heard the male pronoun used generically throughout our lives.

However, I think it can be inferred that the Supreme Court of Canada, using the female pronoun, is talking about the plaintiff before them. It is talking about Kay Carter. Would Kay Carter have access, under Bill C-14, to medically assisted dying? Most observers whom I have heard at this point, knowledgeable observers, do not believe she would.

That, to me, is the crux of the debate, which means that her charter rights would still be infringed, even after we passed Bill C-14 as it is currently written.

●(1645)

This is why. Kay Carter was not about to die from her illness. She had a spinal stenosis that would not kill her. I want to refer to specifically the way Jocelyn Downie, professor of both law and medicine at Dalhousie University, described it that in her view Bill C-14 is unconstitutional. I want to read an excerpt from Professor Downie:

There was no evidence on the record before the court that Kay Carter's death was reasonably foreseeable in any temporally proximate way. In fact, it was just the opposite.

To pick one of many possible examples from the evidence before the court, as Kay Carter wrote in her letter to the Dignitas clinic in Forch, Switzerland:

The neurologist, Dr. Cameron of North Vancouver, assessed me and I had a CAT scan and MRI done. From these tests he told me that I had an ongoing, slow deterioration of the nerves that would never kill me but eventually would reduce me to lie flat in a bed and never move.

In other words, Kay Carter would not fit the definition within the bill that the requirement to be grievous and irremediably affected in a condition that would allow medically assisted death would be a death that was reasonably foreseeable. That clearly suggests, although the language is somewhat vague, that Bill C-14 requires that a person, to be grievous and irremediably within the meaning of the act to access medically assisted dying, has to be in a terminal state.

The court in its unanimous decision may have left some ambiguity for those who were hoping to find a loophole, but I do not think it is there, with the facts of the case right in front of them, Kay Carter, who was not in a terminal state. Beyond that—and this is where I have sympathies for the current government—the Supreme Court gave a year from the day of the decision in February 2015, but the Minister of Justice was not sworn in until November 4. The Prime Minister was not sworn in until November 4. The time limits imposed on the new Liberal government are not of its making, and I am clearly sympathetic.

I opposed at the time going to the court to ask for an extension because deadlines such as this, given the effect of the court's decision rendering those Criminal Code sections unconstitutional, will not create chaos or a situation that cannot be managed.

However, to go back to that moment when the Government of Canada went to the Supreme Court to obtain an extension, in this excerpt Madam Justice Karakatsanis says clearly in questioning one of the counsel: "I'm thinking particularly about somebody has to be a *la fin de vie* whereas in Carter we rejected terminally ill".

Let me put it again clearly. A Supreme Court of Canada justice says that in Carter we rejected terminally ill. That is clearly the standard for ensuring that rights are protected: that we must not ensure that in order to access medically assisted death the person be on the verge of death, that their death be reasonably foreseeable, even if we take reasonably foreseeable back to a year or two years. Kay Carter did not have that circumstance.

Another medical expert who has written about Bill C-14 since it came forward, Professor Jesse Pewarchuk, who is a clinical assistant professor of medicine at the University of British Columbia, wrote:

Worse, the wording of the proposed law introduces significant doubt as to whether an Alzheimer's patient who has yet to lose capacity (yet is certain to) would even be eligible, since death can take years, even from the point of entering long-term nursing care.

"Foreseeable death" and "advanced state of decline in capability" are loaded, ambiguous clauses that seem to eliminate the Charter rights of dementia patients... and to put any physician carrying out their wishes in considerable legal peril.

Government Orders

Without these amendments passing at report stage, I cannot vote for Bill C-14. In an ideal world, I would rather there were a framework of laws for doctors to follow, for nurse practitioners to follow—a framework, consent, reforms, and the witnesses and the independence and the elements of law. However, if these amendments are not passed, I cannot vote for a law that falls below the bar of what the Supreme Court says constitutes protection of charter rights.

• (1650)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her incredible contribution to our justice committee. Even though she is not a member, we welcomed her with open arms and she made a really great contribution. I want to thank her for that.

I understand her position related to the constitutionality of the legislation. I do not agree.

I would like to read from this article by criminal law professor Hamish Stewart, from the Faculty of Law at the University of Toronto, and get the hon. member's comments.

Professor Stewart says that, in his opinion, Bill C-14 in its current form is a constitutionally permissible response to the flaws of section 241(b) identified in Carter. It is, in his view, unlikely that a court would find the medically assisted dying regime created by Bill C-14 to be over-broad in section 7 terms. However, even if Bill C-14 is over-broad, it is likely justified under section 1.

Given the court's response in Carter and the court's careful examination of section 1 in Carter, which it previously has not done with section 7 cases, I would like to get the hon. member's feedback on that.

• (1655)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, if I were standing alone, saying that I thought it was unconstitutional, I would be arrogant, at the least. However, Joe Arvay, who was the counsel for Kay Carter, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, the co-plaintiff in the case with Kay Carter, and so many of those who have studied this might rely on section 1, but I think that is a faint hope.

The Supreme Court, in making the decision it made, that there was a violation of Kay Carter's charter rights, took into account her entire condition.

There will be a challenge to Bill C-14. It will very likely be found to not be charter-compliant, and it falls far short of the expectations of Canadians.

I did not have time in my 10-minute speech to speak to something I spoke to at second reading, which is another disappointment that I have with the bill; that is, the failure to allow for advance directives.

Patients across Canada, people who are suffering, have a right to expect that this Parliament will, at least, reflect what the Supreme Court did in its decision.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague indicated at the beginning of her speech that this is probably one of the most fundamental issues that this Parliament or any of us, as parliamentarians, will deal with,

especially as it relates to the shifting moral ground upon which we stand.

I asked my colleague a question at second reading regarding the risk to patient-doctor relationship, as one of the concerns I have is that the risk to the trust level between patients and doctors may be affected.

I wonder if my colleague would care to respond to that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, my friend, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga, and I have had occasion to speak outside the chamber about this matter. I have met with a very impressive doctor of palliative medicine who raised the issue that there could be an interference, which I had not understood.

I am comfortable to support Bill C-14, with the amendments, so I need to bracket my comment this way. I do think it is important that no patient fear going to a doctor, for a misplaced fear. It is not something that the bill brings forward, but the palliative care doctor said that, from his point of view, he did not want his facility to provide this service for fear that those who went through those doors might have any concern that they might be medically assisted in something to which they did not consent.

I see, under this law and under our society, no prospect of that ever happening, because the sanctions would be severe. However, I do understand the issue, now, which I had not when he first put the question to me.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her very eloquent speech and her comments on the bill. I appreciated all the speeches today. I am glad we are finally talking about the legal and charter aspects, rather than the emotional ones.

I wonder if the member could follow up on the question by the Conservative member. What I think is wrong to say is that this bill or the Supreme Court decision represents a shift in moral ground. Neither this bill nor the decision of the Supreme Court in any way imposes any moral decision upon anyone. It simply recognizes and upholds charter rights. I think that is a very important difference.

I wonder if the member would like to speak to that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, this is a difficult moral question, but it is a difficult moral question for the individual who makes the decision. Therefore, the question is this. Does our society recognize that individuals have the right to make their own decisions, being adults, fully competent, capable of consenting, and fully aware of their options? It will be very important that people know about and have access to palliative care if that is an option that eases their end-of-life decisions. However, this is not losing Canada's moral courage; in fact, this is an act of moral courage.

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to voice my support for Bill C-14, significant legislation that would become Canada's first national medical assistance in dying regime, and would provide a thoughtful and well-considered response to the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in Carter.

Government Orders

I would first like to acknowledge the remarkable work of the members of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights who studied Bill C-14 under some very tight time constraints and who nonetheless were able to significantly enrich our reflection and debate on this highly complex and personal issue. This is certainly a matter on which everyone's point of view deserves the utmost respect and consideration. All justice committee members have unquestionably demonstrated these qualities in the course of their work.

Allow me to highlight some areas where the work of the justice committee has been particularly helpful.

Many stakeholders who appeared before the committee, in particular organizations representing medical professionals, expressed a great deal of concern about conscience protections for medical providers. Bill C-14, as a criminal law measure, would create exemptions from conduct that would otherwise be criminal and therefore would not compel anyone to provide medical assistance in dying in any way. However, some stakeholders urged the committee to add a specific clause that would clearly reflect, for greater certainty, their conscience rights as protected under the charter.

On the other hand, other stakeholders such as the Barreau du Québec and Quebec health lawyer Jean-Pierre Ménard affirmed the position previously expressed by the Minister of Justice that the conscience rights of health care providers were matters that fall under the purview of the provinces and territories as well as under the responsibility of medical regulatory bodies, which themselves are provincially regulated.

I am pleased to say that the justice committee carefully listened to submissions from all sides of the debate and that a motion was tabled to address this significant concern within the limits of our constitutional framework. Bill C-14 was amended in order to give a greater sense of comfort to medical professionals that nothing in Bill C-14 would compel individuals to act against their deeply held beliefs.

The justice committee should also be commended for working in a non-partisan way to make improvements to the proposed legislation. For instance, the committee amended the bill to clarify that where persons signed a written request on behalf of a patient who cannot write, they could only do so at the patient's express direction. The committee members also amended the bill to clarify that for the sake of professionals who provided counselling services, giving someone information about medical assistance in dying would not be criminally prohibited.

Although these amendments and several others do not fundamentally change the scope of Bill C-14, they should increase the level of comfort for Canadians, including health care providers and other professionals who may be involved. I applaud the committee for all of its efforts.

We have heard countless times how challenging the issue of medical assistance in dying is and how Canadians and organizations hold divergent views that are informed by strongly held beliefs. I think we can all agree that this tension was most apparent during the

debate over who should be eligible for medical assistance in dying in our country.

Just as it was the case before the Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying, the justice committee also heard a wide range of views on eligibility and on what was required to respond to the Carter ruling.

At one end of the spectrum, some stakeholders continue to oppose legalization of any form of medical assistance in dying, as is still the case in most countries around the world, or they propose that it be significantly narrowed.

At the other end of the spectrum, some argue that Bill C-14 does not go far enough and urge Parliament to adopt one of the broadest regimes in the world, similar to ones that exist in only three European countries. They maintain that the eligibility criteria in Bill C-14 are too narrow and they should also include mature minors, people suffering solely from a mental illness, and those who have lost their capacity to consent to die, but who have made an advance request for medical assistance in dying.

Somewhere in the middle of that spectrum, though, lies a group of stakeholders who have expressed strong support for Bill C-14 and who recognize that the bill's cautious and balanced approach is imminently justifiable, including the commitment to explore broader eligibility issues in the near future.

● (1700)

Among that group is the Canadian Medical Association, which speaks on behalf of 83,000 physicians across Canada and which supports the adoption of Bill C-14 as it was drafted, and without amendments.

In contrast with those who argue that the Supreme Court's language of grievous and irremediable medical condition is clear and preferable, the Canadian Medical Association takes quite a different position. It says that the criteria in Bill C-14, including the requirement that death be reasonably foreseeable, provides sufficient direction to physicians and is a great improvement from the court's language, which it considers to be vague and unworkable from a medical standpoint.

Similarly, the Canadian Nurses Association, a federation of 11 provincial and territorial nursing associations and colleges, representing nearly 139,000 registered nurses across Canada, has said publicly that its priority is having the bill passed before the June 6 deadline expires. Further, its CEO, Anne Sutherland Boal, stated just yesterday that the successful passing of the bill would be both compassionate and protective to patients, families, and care providers, while emphasizing that the legislative safeguards in the bill would work to protect the most vulnerable Canadians.

Although lawyers and legal academics continue to argue with each other over whether or not the court's language, or the language in Bill C-14, provides sufficient clarity, how can we as parliamentarians discount the views of medical practitioners? The Supreme Court expressed confidence in Canada's physicians to respond to Canadians who wished to access medical assistance in dying, and that confidence is well-placed.

Government Orders

We as parliamentarians must also have confidence in medical practitioners. They will be the ones facing these difficult life and death decisions with their patients and assessing their eligibility. For them, it is not a philosophical or theoretical exercise. They will be applying the very measures in Bill C-14 in their daily practice. Their views must be given significant weight.

National disability rights organizations and others have also supported the approach to eligibility proposed by Bill C-14 as a meaningful safeguard to protect individuals who might be vulnerable in the framework of a medical assistance in dying regime, as a result of societal discrimination, loneliness, or lack of social supports, for example.

On the question of safeguards, the same dynamic has been at play. Some stakeholders expressed support for the measures proposed in Bill C-14, while at the same time seeking to put in place additional safeguards to protect the vulnerable, such as prior judicial authorization. Others, wanting to facilitate broader access, have sought to remove some safeguards, such as the reflection period.

• (1705)

While we respect those who feel that the proposed safeguards are either inadequate or overly burdensome, I believe the safeguards in Bill C-14, taken together, are consistent with many of those found in regimes around the world. Just as the court in *Carter* was persuaded that the risks to vulnerable Canadians could be adequately managed under a regime with robust safeguards, I am confident the safeguards in Bill C-14 would guard against abuse and error.

Last, I would like to remind all members that Bill C-14, or the provision of medically assisted dying, is not intended to be, or to become, the response to all forms of intolerable suffering. The bill is a thoughtful response to *Carter*, which recognized the autonomy of those suffering on a path toward death to die peacefully at the time of their choosing and therefore to avoid a prolonged, painful, and undignified death, or one that is inconsistent with their values. Bill C-14 acknowledges the autonomy of such persons to make important end-of-life health care decisions, while also balancing the equally important societal objectives of affirming the value of the lives of all Canadians, preventing suicide, and protecting the most vulnerable in our society.

I believe this legislation respects all interests at stake, and is one of which Canadians can be proud. For all these reasons, I urge all members of the House to support Bill C-14.

• (1710)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague made the statement that there were very few countries in the world that had access to physician-assisted suicide. If we were to study this, we would find that less than 3% of the world's population currently lives in jurisdictions that have access to physician-assisted suicide. It is important that Canadians understand that. We are among a very small group of countries that are giving access to it.

I want to ask my colleague a question related to a question I posed to the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands earlier and her comments with respect to the possible rupture in the patient-doctor trust relationship. It is important that institutions, should they wish not to

participate, have that freedom, if for no other reason than to give patients entering those institutions the assurance that they will not be vulnerable.

I wonder if my colleague would comment on the need to have clear conscience protections for institutions that are providing health care.

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, I have two responses.

The first is that this is legislation to amend the Criminal Code. There is absolutely nothing in the legislation that compels any institution or any individual to do anything.

Also, the regulation of health care institutions and the delivery of health care is one that is squarely within the domain of the provinces. We heard this in testimony. The federal government is quite prepared to show leadership in dealing with the provinces. The matter of conscience rights is now contained in the bill and the preamble in an appropriate way.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of debate about the position of various doctors in the country. It has come to my attention that Dr. Peter Zalan, president of medical staff at Health Sciences North in northern Ontario, has stated that he is very disappointed with the bill. He has said:

For me, Bill C-14 is a disappointment. It proposes to keep illegal the resolution of intolerable suffering that is not at the end of life. It will make it impossible to deal with dementia when the afflicted person is still competent. If ever there is a need for Medical Assistance in Dying, it is for conditions like dementia and intolerable suffering when the end of life is not in sight.

I wonder if the member could speak to the fact that, like Dr. Zalan, a number of medical practitioners are saying that the way the bill is being presented, which lacks the clarity in the ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada, will make life more difficult for physicians when making determinations of when to assist their patients.

Mr. Sean Casey: Madam Speaker, there is no question that not all individual members in the Canadian Medical Association are of one voice. The voice of the medical profession has spoken clearly and loudly in support of the legislation. Indeed, there are individual members and groups of doctors who do not feel the same way, one of whom was referred to by the hon. member.

The other point that I would add is this. If we are left without legislation on June 6, it is doctors like the one the hon. member quoted who will be left without a law, without eligibility criteria, and without the present system of applying to a court for an exemption, something that will only exist until June 6. There will be a great deal of uncertainty if no law is passed. That I think will leave doctors in a situation where they will be extremely reluctant to accede to a patient's request for medical assistance in dying without the certainty that is provided in Bill C-14, as flawed as it may be.

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to join the debate today on Bill C-14, which addresses medical assistance in dying. I would like to acknowledge the incredible respect and thoughtfulness expressed by members in this very delicate debate.

Government Orders

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the advice and insights I received from a former colleague, Dr. Lorne Martin, chief of staff at Halton Healthcare, on the medical ethics and physician perspectives that would be created by the legislation.

The bill has generated significant debate and feedback from my riding of Oakville, both from people who wrote or contacted me on their own initiative, as well as those who responded to the forums that were created to solicit feedback through local media and my interactive website, johnoliver.mp. I have read and carefully considered the many views and concerns that came from residents of Oakville and I would like to address those that are relevant to the act and the amendments proposed.

The community responses can be grouped into five categories. The first is from those who are opposed to any form of medically assisted death and want the law to respect and protect every human life from conception to natural death. These are individuals who put forward the principle that we must not take another's life. There were many submissions of this nature.

For people who hold these values, I believe it is important, once again, at this stage, to understand that the Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous decision in the Carter case was a declaration that the Criminal Code prohibitions on assisted dying were not in accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Effective June 6, 2016, medically assisted death is legal in Canada whether the bill is passed or not.

Therefore, the issue before this legislature is not whether medically assisted death will be allowed. Rather, the issue is whether medically assisted death will be permitted in accordance with the parameters set out by the Carter ruling or under a legislative framework established by elected representatives. Accordingly, our decisions are how to safely implement this new practice, who should be eligible, what safeguards are needed to protect vulnerable individuals, what are the roles and responsibilities of medical professionals, and how do we create a monitoring regime to ensure accountability, transparency, and improvement in this area as we go forward.

The second category of responses from my community were in reaction to the special joint committee recommendations. Many Oakville residents wrote to me expressing their concern that the rights of vulnerable Canadians may be infringed upon as we protect the rights of those seeking autonomy in their end-of-life decisions. Specific concerns were raised in relation to including Canadians with psychiatric conditions, psychological suffering, and minors.

Bill C-14 and the proposed amendments are more restrictive than both the Carter decision and the committee recommendations, in part, for the reasons raised by these constituents. To protect the rights of the more vulnerable, the bill has not included these broader situations or circumstances in the eligibility criteria, thereby addressing the concerns raised by these residents.

The third category of responses were diametrically opposed to those previously stated. These residents spoke in favour of the Supreme Court decision and about their belief that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms should allow autonomy to the individual in end-of-life decisions. Several accompanied their statements with

personal stories of difficult end-of-life experiences for loved ones or worries about their own unique circumstances.

They also expressed concerns that Bill C-14 is too restrictive and does not address all the circumstances that should be considered eligible under the act. In particular, the clause requiring that natural death be reasonably foreseeable was felt to exclude many Canadians that they felt should be allowed.

In addition, there were concerns raised about denying advance directives. Denying advance directives puts people who suffer from degenerative illnesses that will eventually affect their competency in the position of having to exercise their right to an end-of-life decision in advance of losing competency.

The fourth category of concerns surrounded the rights of medical practitioners and institutions to ensure that they would be able to have freedom of conscience and religion to decide whether to participate in a medically assisted death. Bill C-14 would not compel participation by health care providers and I feel it is sufficient.

The final category of responses were fewer in number, but supported the position put forward by Bill C-14 as a reasonable starting point to address the complex and competing values and rights created by the Carter decision.

● (1715)

Having now spent considerable time in understanding and researching the issues raised by my constituents, and after careful consideration and personal reflection, I will be supporting Bill C-14 as reported by the committee for the following reasons.

I committed upon entering the past election and during my campaign to uphold the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Supreme Court ruling clearly found that the existing laws were not compliant with charter rights and freedoms and denied autonomy to a person seeking to end his or her life who clearly consents to the termination of life, and has a grievous and irremediable medical condition that causes enduring suffering that is intolerable to the individual. It is therefore morally incumbent, I believe, on this legislature to put legislation in place to protect this right and freedom, and I support that direction as carried out in the act.

We face, as a legislative body, the difficult task of balancing the competing social and moral values and interests surrounding this direction. For me, the protection of the vulnerable who may be individually or collectively disrespected or coerced to choose a premature death in the face of a too-permissive regime of assistance in dying must be balanced against those suffering from grievous and irremediable conditions.

As a first step in understanding the competing social and moral issues and the charter rights and freedoms of different groups, I believe Bill C-14, while not perfect, is an acceptable starting position for Canadians.

Government Orders

I would have preferred that Bill C-14 was more permissive for those where death is not reasonably foreseeable, and instead, built in protections for those who are vulnerable to the too-permissive language. While the bill's language is open to reasonable interpretation of foreseeable death, it does leave complex legal and ethical decisions with families and medical practitioners that will be open to court challenges and future charter appeals. This will add further stress and suffering to already untenable situations for many.

I do take some comfort from provisions within Bill C-14 to conduct further reviews after five years of eligibility criteria, and from the amendments coming back from the committee to review, after 180 days, other initiatives such as advance directives.

Another factor in my decision to support Bill C-14 is my belief that with properly offered health services, such as palliative care, most Canadians will not opt to use its provisions. Research from other countries suggests that most people prefer to enter into a palliative care program and experience natural death. While palliative care is not always a substitute for medically assisted death, it would be unacceptable to have people choosing medically assisted death as a result of inadequate palliative care services. I believe we can do more to ensure that palliative care programs are available and accessible across Canada, as proposed in some of the amendments.

The work of the Minister of Health in negotiating a new health accord agreement with the provinces and territories is fundamental to achieving these services, and I fully support her diligent efforts to achieve a new accord and ensure that all Canadians have access to high-quality sustainable care.

In discussion with doctors and other health care workers, there is general support and agreement with the bill, particularly the freedom given to caregivers to choose to participate in assisted death based on their own conscience and religious beliefs. I support the freedom that is put forward in the bill and do not feel an amendment is required.

Physicians today are already involved in substantive decisions regarding end of life, working with families or in accordance with advance directives. They often provide key clinical advice in the decision to end life support or to apply do not resuscitate orders. However, asking physicians to interpret and execute advance directives to end a life is ethically more challenging and places significant onus on them as individuals, particularly in hospital environments where they do not know the person or where there is not a family to consult.

Finally, my decision to support the bill arises from personal experiences and the loss of a loved family member who, as she requested, passed away at home in the presence of family. The final days of her life were marked with pain and suffering, which we were able to somewhat alleviate through oral morphine.

However it is allowed, appropriate care at the end of life needs to be available to people when required. I want my family members, fellow Oakvillians, and fellow Canadians to have autonomy in making end-of-life decisions as they have enjoyed autonomy in all of the major decisions in their lives.

I will be supporting Bill C-14, and I urge all members of the House to support this important bill.

• (1720)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the following motion, which I will read slowly so that colleagues understand exactly what I am proposing, that notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the House shall continue to sit beyond the hour of daily adjournment for the purpose of considering Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying), at report stage, and when no member rises to speak or at midnight on that sitting day, whichever is earlier, the debate shall be deemed adjourned and the House deemed adjourned until the next sitting day.

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no unanimous consent. Therefore, the motion is deemed rejected.

The government House leader is rising on another point of order.

BILL C-14—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to advise that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the report stage and third reading stage of Bill C-14, an act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other acts (medical assistance in dying).

Therefore, under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of the proceedings at those stages.

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying), as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noted that my colleague spoke many times about palliative care, which I was very encouraged to hear. I know that it was not within the context of the budget, but the Minister of Health made mention of \$3.4 million to be implemented into palliative care. I wonder if there is going to be an assessment and a benchmark as to what we have right now and where the gaps are in how we need to fulfill that.

Government Orders

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to state again that palliative care is not a substitute in all cases for end-of-life decisions as contemplated by Bill C-14. However, it is important that there is an effective health accord that is negotiated with the provinces and territories by the Minister of Health, which will take some time to ensure that there is consistent and uniform high-quality services available across Canada. I think those are the first initiatives that need to take place. However, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the palliative care programs can come as we begin to get them in place.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I, too, really appreciate the depth of the discussion that we have had around Bill C-14.

The recommendations that came from the original interparliamentary committee, I thought, were excellent, and I was very supportive of the potential bill at that point. However, I have some real issues with the way the bill currently sits, and I want to focus on two.

Do advance directives not give people more choice in that they at least have the opportunity to do an advance directive rather than wait until they are no longer in a state where they could make a decision at all? Does it not provide more choice to have advance directives?

Secondly, intolerable pain and suffering was a really important part of the Carter decision, and I think should be an important part of the bill. Again, I know personally that if I had a choice later on in life, if I was struggling with intolerable pain and suffering, I would really like to go with a needle in my hand in the arms of somebody who loves me rather than just put it to chance.

Those two provisions are missing from the bill and I would appreciate the member's perspective on why.

• (1730)

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, in terms of advance directives, it is my understanding that only one other jurisdiction offers advance directives. There is still a lot to understand. There are a lot of nuances, and before they can be built into an act, there needs to be a better understanding of it. Therefore, I support the recommendation as it has come back from the committee, that within 180 days of the bill being put into place, we begin to look again at what additional elements need to be brought to bear, including advance directives.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over 40 years ago, palliative care was identified as the only way for people to die with dignity.

My colleague opposite is assuming that if someone requests assistance in dying during palliative care, it means that palliative care has failed.

Why should comprehensive palliative care that includes assistance in dying from specialized staff be considered a failure when an individual decides he or she is ready to go peacefully? How is that a failure on the part of palliative care?

[*English*]

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, I never once suggested that it would be reflective of a failure of the palliative care system. In

meeting the needs of Canadians at the end of life, an array of services and professional support are required. Palliative care is part of that, as are the provisions of Bill C-14, in an act of end of life if required.

With respect to natural death and palliative care, people are supported through it. Generally, pain is well managed, and many people opt for natural death, particularly when properly supported with palliative care. However, there will be circumstances where pain cannot be managed or where the loss of autonomy is so dramatic that the palliative care model is insufficient. We need to have the provisions of Bill C-14 available to assist people who wish to end their life as they approach the end of their life.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise to speak at report stage of Bill C-14.

As I stated earlier in this House, it is unfortunate that the Supreme Court of Canada has taken it upon itself to force legislation to be written, which overturns thousands of years of our understanding of the intrinsic value and dignity of every human life.

The Supreme Court has done this, completely rejecting the fact that elected members of this House have rejected initiatives to legalize physician-assisted suicide on at least 15 occasions since 1991. Most recently, a bill to allow physician-assisted suicide was rejected in 2010 by a vote of 59 to 226.

It is not only that nine unelected judges have inserted themselves into a national conversation that should be initiated in this House of Commons, they have even lamented the fact that an extension was sought to give parliamentarians more time to properly study, discuss, and debate this issue of exceptional importance.

In their judgment of January 15, 2016, in granting an extension, the Supreme Court stated, "That the legislative process needs more time is regrettable, but it does not undermine the point that it is the best way to address this issue."

Really? It is regrettable? It is regrettable to take more time to think soberly through this complex issue, to implement such momentous change, to destroy the very foundations of medicine, to turn upside down the time-honoured belief that it is fundamentally wrong to kill another human being, and all in the name of compassion?

In regard to the impatience on the part of the Supreme Court, Warren Perley wrote, in Beststory:

Common sense dictates that such momentous changes to the law governing assisted suicide should be based on the compass rather than the clock. Until this point, Canadians have never had access to legally assisted suicide. Instead they have relied on doctors and nurses to administer palliative care, which must include adequate pain management and, in rare cases, palliative sedation. Pro-euthanasia advocates argue this is euthanasia, but they are in error.

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Changing laws in matters of such substantive and exceptional significance as assisted suicide should be made by the compass. I could not agree more. Unfortunately, we have thrown away our compass. We no longer need a compass. We now just pool our collective ignorance and decide on the basis of popular opinion to sail off in any direction that suits the winds of the day, rudderless.

One of Canada's indigenous leaders, Mr. Francois Paulette, a Dene leader and chair of Yellowknife's Stanton Territorial Health Authority states that indigenous people are bound by spiritual law, not man-made law. He goes on to state, "We don't play God.... God is responsible for bringing us into this world, and taking our life. It is pretty straightforward."

Whether as a member of the indigenous community or not, for all Canadians, the crux of the issue before us today, and the source of the conflict and confusion, is the fact that the preamble of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms on one hand, and Bill C-14 on the other, are built on two opposite pillars: one made of gold, and the other of styrofoam.

The preamble of the charter states, "recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law". Yes, there is a compass. Yes, there is a North Star. Even our Canadian charter states that in Canada we do recognize this North Star, the supremacy of God.

Yet if we look at the very first paragraph of Bill C-14, we see a totally opposite starting point. Rather than the "supremacy of God", we see "autonomy of persons".

My contention is that these two opposite philosophies cannot coexist at the same time, if we are to continue to have true freedom and trust in our society. We may deny God, and man as his image bearer. We can try to kill both God, and man as man. We may press forward in a suicidal course, but it always ends in pure vanity, for we are surrounded inside and out by the reality of God and his order in every sphere of life.

We all know that there are necessary limits placed on the autonomy of humans. Yet on an issue as monumental as the issue of life and death, we are considering extending autonomy without stopping to think what such autonomy might do to our understanding of the value of human life.

Does this autonomy serve well those among us who, for dozens of reasons, find themselves vulnerable, voiceless, and open to abuse in the most extreme and final way possible, an unwanted hastened death?

The very fact that I can drive from my riding of Kitchener—Conestoga to Ottawa each Sunday evening is because the autonomy of all drivers is limited. Drivers heading to Kitchener occupy the north side of the 401 highway as they travel west, so I am free to travel unimpeded on my easterly journey in the southern lanes.

• (1735)

To allow autonomy in many situations in life is foolhardy, to say the least. Our freedom and trust is enhanced by strict limits on personal autonomy for the greater good of community. We could list many such restrictions on personal autonomy: quarantines for highly infectious diseases, such as ebola; prohibition of using highly toxic chemicals and pesticides on private property; the limitation on

raising farm animals in the residential area of a city. In these cases and dozens of others, we recognize that the greater community good supersedes individual autonomy.

To retain limits on personal autonomy in the case of physician-assisted suicide is for the greater good of society. To remove the restriction on personal autonomy could very well lead to the crumbling boundaries that our Liberal colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, referenced a few weeks ago in the Chamber when he said, "We are in a sorry state. We have truly entered a new age, one of the throwaway culture where all boundaries are starting to crumble".

I fear for the kind of Canada I will leave for my children and grandchildren if we rush blindly ahead with an endorsement of physician-assisted suicide. The risk to society is too great. The dangers are far too real.

There is no doubt that in spite of our best efforts to place so-called safeguards to protect the vulnerable among us, there will be situations where innocent Canadians will be killed without their expressed consent. There is no doubt in my mind that in spite of our best efforts to spin the difference between suicide and what we are now calling medical assistance in dying, there would be a correlating increase in suicide rates in Canada.

Aaron Kheriaty, associate professor of psychiatry, and director of the medical ethics program at the University of California at Irvine School of Medicine states:

The debate over doctor-assisted suicide is often framed as a personal issue of autonomy and privacy. Proponents argue that assisted suicide should be legalized because it affects only those individuals who—assuming they are of sound mind—are making a rational and deliberate choice to end their lives. But presenting the issue in this way ignores the wider social consequences.

What if it turns out that individuals who make this choice in fact are influencing the actions of those who follow?

He goes on to report that in states where physician-assisted suicide has been legalized, there has been an increase in suicide of 6.3% overall, but among those over 65, an increase of 14.5%.

He continues:

The results should not surprise anyone familiar with the literature on the social contagion effects of suicidal behavior. You don't discourage suicide by assisting suicide.

Aside from publicized cases, there is evidence that suicidal behavior tends to spread person to person through social networks, up to three "degrees of separation" away. So my decision to take my own life would affect not just my friends' risk of doing the same, but even my friends' friends' friends. No person is an island.

Finally, it is widely acknowledged that the law is a teacher. Laws shape the ethos of a culture by affecting cultural attitudes toward certain behaviors and influencing moral norms. Laws permitting physician-assisted suicide send a message that, under especially difficult circumstances, some lives are not worth living – and that suicide is a reasonable or appropriate way out. This is a message that will be heard not just by those with a terminal illness but also by anyone tempted to think he or she cannot go on any longer.

Debates about physician-assisted suicide raise broad questions about societal attitudes toward suicide. Recent research findings on suicide rates press the question: What sort of society do we want to become? Suicide is already a public health crisis. Do we want to legalize a practice that will worsen this crisis?

I believe that life is always to be chosen over what some would call death with dignity. There is nothing dignified about deciding to end someone's life that is not worth living. If the patient has a need, let us address the need. Our goal should be to eliminate the problem, not the patient.

We need to be doing far more to address the needs of vulnerable Canadians. To that end, I have five proposed changes that need to be included in Bill C-14. Four of these have been accepted as amendments by others in the House.

• (1740)

First, the preamble should contain a statement indicating that suicide prevention is an important public policy goal, recognizing the sanctity of life as a societal principle.

Mr. Speaker, I see that I am out of time, so I will try to get my other points in when responding to questions.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my friend's comments. I understand he disagrees with the Supreme Court. He disagrees with its protection of individual liberty. He disagrees with its protection of security to the person.

If the member disagrees with the Supreme Court's decision, is he calling on this government to exercise the notwithstanding clause?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, that certainly raises a good possibility. To invoke the notwithstanding clause would in fact give Parliament the kind of time that we need to study this important issue.

The rush with which the government has moved forward on an issue of such intense, immense significance is really inappropriate. We saw in the joint committee a lack of ability to get many witnesses in. We saw the same thing in the justice committee. Today we have seen a number of examples where we wasted hours on quickly moving other bills forward on the agenda when we, as members, were informed that today, beginning at 10 o'clock this morning, we would begin to discuss Bill C-14.

We have not had enough time to discuss this issue and it is of too great a significance for us to allow this to proceed in its current form.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the hon. member did run out of time, but I actually started to take note of some of the changes that he was proposing. He started in the preamble. I would like to ask the hon. member what other changes he is proposing to the legislation.

• (1745)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for this opportunity.

Second, I believe it is important to ensure that a palliative care consultation must be done to inform patients of the full range of available treatments and support services that are available and actually ensure that they are available.

We also need to insist on a prior review by a judge or a panel to ensure that no coercion exists and that all of the criteria are met.

We need to protect the conscience rights of health care professionals and institutions. I think we heard earlier the fear that

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if institutions are not protected in terms of their conscience related to this, patients may actually fear going to those institutions.

Finally, if physically able, the patient must self-administer the lethal substance, rather than having a doctor administer that substance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague seems to be mixing things up and is creating confusion in the debate.

I wonder if he could clearly and succinctly tell us the difference between a compassionate crime, assisted suicide, euthanasia, and suicide.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I think I clearly indicated the differences on this in the speech I made at second reading.

Members will know that over the last eight to 10 years, I have devoted a lot of energy to the issue of mental health and suicide prevention.

Here we are talking about so-called compassion, and I do not see anything compassionate about ending someone's life prematurely. The very word "compassion" means to "suffer with". We cannot suffer with someone whose life we have simply terminated.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this issue has been before the House about 11 times since 1991. I know that my colleague was present for the special joint committee, but they also had an external report and a provincial and territorial report. The special joint committee, in fact, heard from more than 60 witnesses and read more than 100 submissions. Also, my understanding is that even today there was an offer to extend the time for debate, which I believe my colleague and his friends did not approve.

My question for him is, how much more debate, particularly in light of very big similarities between his two speeches, do we really need on this point?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to mention again that we lost hours and hours of debate time this morning when we could have been debating this. More important than debate in this House is that we did not take the time, either in the joint committee or in the justice committee, to hear from groups across Canada who wanted to appear before those committees to share their concerns about this proposed law. Had we taken more time to listen to those Canadians, I am sure we would have a different result moving forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, I will let the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources know that we only have about a minute and a half to two minutes left in the time remaining.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while my time for debate is short, I look forward to continuing it tomorrow.

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As members know, the issue of conscience objection has been a topic of considerable discussion in relation to medical assistance in dying. Fundamentally, this debate highlights the need to achieve an appropriate balance in respecting the rights of physicians, nurse practitioners, and other health care providers to abstain from providing medical assistance in dying while supporting the rights of eligible patients to access such services.

It is evident that governments, national associations, and also members of the public recognize the moral and ethical struggle that health care providers could experience regarding medical assistance in dying. Most provincial medical regulatory bodies have already provided professional guidance around safeguarding the conscience rights of physicians. Provinces, like Alberta and New Brunswick, say that their physicians are under no obligation to participate in assistance in dying. However, they recognize that continuity of care, especially at this most critical time in a person's life, also cannot be neglected. Patients cannot be abandoned.

● (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Northumberland—Peterborough South will have eight and a half minutes remaining for her remarks when the House next resumes debate on the question.
[*Translation*]

It being 5:49 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

NATIONAL MATERNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STRATEGY ACT

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.) moved that Bill C-243, An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act. I would also like to thank the 12 hon. members of the House who have supported this legislation by officially seconding Bill C-243.

Finally, I want to thank the people of Kingston and the Islands for placing their confidence in me to be their voice in the House.

In particular, I want to recognize the individual whose story inspired me to pursue this legislation: Melodie Ballard. I am proud and deeply humbled to begin my remarks today by sharing Melodie's compelling story with members.

Melodie is a welder in my community. In 2014, she became pregnant, and like many expecting mothers, she consulted with her medical practitioner to ensure that she was taking all the necessary steps to have a healthy pregnancy. Upon describing the hazardous

nature of her work environment, Melodie was told that she could no longer continue welding during her pregnancy as the function of her job would be unsafe and would pose a significant risk to her future child.

She reached out to her employer, which is a well-established and highly reputable shipbuilding firm in Kingston, but unfortunately, it was unable to provide reassignment or modify her duties in a way that would mitigate the risk. Forced to stop working, Melodie applied for and was granted EI sickness benefits.

There are a couple of problems with this, the first being that Melodie was pregnant, not sick. The second problem is that the 15 weeks of benefits ran out long before Melodie was eligible to officially begin her maternity leave. For two and a half months, Melodie waited to receive the maternity benefits she was entitled to. This income gap led to serious financial hardship and ultimately resulted in the loss of her home and significant personal distress.

Frustrated with the shortcomings of the system, Melodie did her own research, expecting to find that some program would be of help to her and any person in her circumstances. She discovered that outside of the province of Quebec, which has a program known as the preventive withdrawal program, there was virtually no form of financial assistance that would compensate in situations such as these.

What frustrates me most about Melodie's story was that she did everything right, but the current system was simply not prepared to handle her situation. She took every reasonable action that one would expect from someone with a legitimate concern for the health of herself and her future child. She consulted with a midwife for medical advice. She reached out to her employer. She spoke with Service Canada on countless occasions. She did her own research, and she wrote to anybody she could think of. Melodie did everything right, but our EI system failed her when she needed it.

When Melodie approached my office in early 2016, we researched the issue and found that the primary source of the problem was a rule under section 22 of the EI Act, which requires that a woman, regardless of her circumstances, must wait until eight weeks before her expected due date before she can start receiving maternity benefits. For women like Melodie who are employed in occupations where it is unsafe to work at early stages of pregnancy, this restriction can lead to long periods with absolutely no income.

Melodie's story is why I am putting forward this legislation today. The core purpose and effect of Bill C-243 is to remove barriers to women's full and equal participation in all sectors of the workforce, including jobs which are potentially hazardous. Bill C-243 would do this in two parts.

In the short term, my bill seeks to improve the flexibility of EI benefits to better reflect the changing labour market of today. In particular, my bill proposes an amendment to the Employment Insurance Act which would allow women like Melodie who work in dangerous jobs to begin their 15 weeks of EI maternity benefits as early as 15 weeks prior to their due dates. This is seven weeks earlier than the current rules permit.

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Allowing women to start collecting EI up to seven weeks early would provide more timely financial assistance and greater flexibility to expecting mothers who are unable to work at early stages of pregnancy. This enhanced flexibility would simply mean that women could access the benefits they are entitled to sooner if the nature of their job prevents them from continuing to do their work during their pregnancy.

● (1755)

For many of the women working in skilled trades, construction, and other potential hazardous fields, the option for an earlier start to maternity leave would empower them to choose the maternity leave that would be best for them and their families.

The bill also outlines two basic conditions that must be met in order to be eligible for this exemption. First, the woman must provide a medical certificate attesting that she cannot perform her current duties because it may pose a risk to her health or that of her unborn child. Second, the employer must be unable to provide accommodations or reassignment that would mitigate this risk.

I have heard from many members of the skilled trades and construction community and the consensus is that the government policies and programs ought to keep pace with the changes in the skilled trades community, in particular, the growing interest among women to become part of it.

For example, the organization Women in Work Boots has said that these changes to how women can access leave while pregnant could lead to greater safety and security and a stress-free pregnancy and leave.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum has endorsed Bill C-243 because it thinks it reflects Canadian values when it comes to supporting women who wish to make their careers and support their families working in the skilled trades.

The Office to Advance Women Apprentices views this as being another stepping stone for the advancement of women in trades careers.

It is important to note that the scope of Bill C-243 extends beyond skilled trades and construction. I am proud that my bill has also been endorsed by Women in Science and Engineering, the Atlantic region, Mount Saint Vincent University, the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia, Engineers Nova Scotia, and Engineers Canada, which stated that Bill C-243 would be invaluable for engineers who were women, for their families and for their employers.

These changes are just a first step and only a partial solution to what I see as a much larger overall problem. Recognizing this, the second part of my bill calls on the Minister of Employment to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that pregnancy is not a barrier to a woman's full and equal participation in all aspects of the labour force. This part requires that the minister of employment and social development, in collaboration with other federal ministers, representatives of the provincial and territorial governments, and other relevant stakeholders, to conduct consultations on the prospect of developing a national maternity assistance program to support women who are unable to work due to pregnancy.

My bill also includes accountability and transparency measures to ensure that the results of the consultation are accessible and presented in a timely manner. I would add that we do not have to look far to get a sense of what a national maternity assistance program might look like. Since 1981, the province of Quebec has offered the option of preventative withdrawal as part of the safe maternity assistance program.

Under this program, the employer may opt to eliminate the hazard represented by an employee's work or assign her to other tasks. If neither of these alternatives are doable, employees are entitled to benefit from the preventative withdrawal and receive a compensation in the amount of 90% of their average pay.

Furthermore, many advanced industrial countries have recognized the importance of maternal care and taken action to ensure that women in all professions receive adequate support throughout pregnancy and child care. In Finland, for example, there is a class of special maternity benefits that are provided when conditions may cause a particular risk to a woman's pregnancy and the hazard cannot be eliminated by the employer.

In Australia, if there is no appropriate safe job available, employees are entitled to take paid no safe job leave for their risk period. Similar programs that protect expecting mothers exist in France, Hungary, Denmark, and elsewhere. The underlying principle of my bill is that of gender equality, which demands that both women and men have an equal opportunity to participate and become fully integrated into all sectors of the labour force.

I am proud that my bill is supported by several women's advocacy organizations, each of which has done a great deal to advance equality and empower women through progressive public policies. These include the National Council of Women, the Canadian Federation of University Women, and the Canadian Women's Foundation, which called Bill C-243 a positive step to improve gender equality in Canada.

● (1800)

My bill is resonating with stakeholder groups and ordinary Canadians across the country as they recognize that the principle of gender equality must also extend to women entering so-called non-traditional occupations.

Many of the discussions about equality have focused on including more women as doctors, lawyers, business leaders, and politicians. While well-intentioned, I think these conversations often neglect the fact that many women, like Melodie, want to be construction workers, electricians, mechanics, masons, carpenters, machinists, boilermakers, pipe-layers, heavy equipment operators, or even welders.

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The data on this is clear that while overall labour participation among women has increased from 37% in 1976 to 47% in 2014, women remain drastically under-represented within many traditional male occupations. For example, in 2012, women represented only 4% of those working in construction. While some incredible work is being undertaken by the private and not-for-profit sector to encourage more women to enter the trades, I believe government also must do its part to create a positive environment to encourage more women to enter the workforce in these traditionally male-dominated occupations.

The evidence is clear that improving the representation of women can support an organization's overall competitiveness and ability to thrive in a global market. Gender balance and diversity will make Canada's economy stronger and more competitive, but we have a long way to go before achieving this goal.

To conclude, as previously stated, I believe the current system provides a disincentive for women to enter certain types of work, forcing them to choose between having a family and pursuing their dream job. No woman should have to choose between being a mother and a welder, a mother and a construction worker, a mother and an engineer, or a mother and any profession for that matter.

These are the objects of the bill that I am asking all members of the House to support at second reading. I am asking for their support to make a small but significant change that will improve the flexibility of EI maternity benefits and to call on the minister to show federal leadership by developing a long-term, comprehensive national maternity assistance strategy.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend from Kingston for his excellent speech and his inspired bill. I think that all of us on this side are very interested in advancing the cause of women in the workplace, particularly in non-traditional professions.

I know my hon. colleague was a mayor. I was proud when we hired our first woman public works director in my city while I was mayor. I think that is an example that we are getting more and more women in professions that otherwise, when I was born, they would certainly never have considered joining.

Given the examples of all of the countries he cited around the world, does he believe that in Canada we should be joining the rest of the world in terms of allowing women to not have to choose between motherhood and their profession? What does he think about that?

• (1805)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The problem that we are facing right now is that the current system we have is actually providing a disincentive. Women, who are passionate about being a welder or a plumber or some other form of work but also think that they want to become pregnant and have a family one day, are being forced to choose between either having that family or that profession in many cases, or they run into the situation that Melodie did.

I think that, yes, we are behind the ball on this, so to speak. There are other countries that are leading the way. Even our neighbouring province, Quebec, as we sit here in Ontario, is leading the way on this. There is a lot we can do and I am really hopeful that the entire

House will support the bill so that we can start to move in the right direction.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the work he has done on this front. Obviously this is a major issue for many women, and for men, obviously as well, who are very concerned about the situation that many women face in the workplace.

I will be speaking to the bill, but I do want to ask the member if he is aware of the concerns put forward by CUPE Quebec and others as well that have made it clear that the bill does not tackle the same sort of proposed changes that exist in Quebec, particularly the program that is known as *Pour une maternité sans danger*, and that they are very concerned about the bill. I am wondering if he could speak to that discrepancy.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague is well aware, one of the challenging parts of putting forward a private member's bill is an inability to introduce new spending. I would have loved to shape this bill in such a way as to make it more like the model that exists in Quebec. However, because of that limitation, I was unable to do so.

That is why my bill and the EI part of it are just the first step to this. The second step is the bigger national dialogue about getting together with all stakeholders and having a discussion about this. That is where I am really trying to drive this with the second part of the bill, and that is what the strategy is about.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too, like my other colleague, would like to commend the member for what has been a very bold initiative. I will leave an open-ended question if there is anything further he would like to add to the importance of making changes of this nature that are very progressive in their thinking.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Mr. Speaker, all I want to add about this is that we have to remember this. Women who are seeking to get into these lines of work in these non-traditional jobs are already going out on a ledge or taking a step forward by trying to get into these professions. They are already facing obstacles by doing that alone. We as a government need to provide an incentive to make that easier for them so they do not have to be discouraged from getting into jobs they would traditionally not be seen to be in.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to say from the outset that we support this private member's bill. We think this bill is important. We certainly would not describe this bill as coming in by the back door. This bill was introduced by a member of Parliament who was duly elected by his constituents. He came in here through the front door. We are pleased to welcome this bill through the front door, even though it is a private member's bill. To us there is no distinction to be made, contrary to what other colleagues may have said in the past. Private members' bills are important, and I like to reiterate that every chance I get.

On those fine words, we are in favour of this bill. I want to acknowledge the very positive way in which it was introduced. We have here a newly elected member of Parliament, much like myself, who took over from his predecessor in Kingston and the Islands and was privy to a situation that a person shared with him in his riding office.

People watching us on television think that parliamentarians argue all day long. That is simply not true. What we do here in the House is just one part of our work as MPs, because we work a lot in our ridings. In fact we spend more than half our time there. When we meet with Canadians, talk to them, and listen to them, we grasp the essence of our work. That is exactly what happened to the member for Kingston and the Islands. He met in his office with a constituent who had a concern, then he presented the concern here in the House by the front door and not the back door, and that is a good thing.

What is the bill about? The bill would let a woman take preventive leave and receive maternity benefits if her job could have a negative impact on her pregnancy. We must understand that this type of situation is becoming increasingly common. When I say that, I am not being negative, but constructive. That is today's reality.

A few decades ago we could not imagine there would be female welders, such as our colleague's constituent, but today we know that there are no gender-specific jobs. Every job is open to everyone. Men and women alike can do any job there is. However, this leads to situations, in welding for example, where workers are exposed to chemicals or have to do physically demanding work where they have to stand up, bend, stoop, and do other things that might have an impact on a pregnancy. We do not need to be doctors to know that. It is obvious that this is a cause for concern. That is why we are in favour of this bill.

It should be noted that this type of approach, preventive withdrawal, has been around in Quebec for years. I know what I am talking about because my riding is in Quebec.

I would like to share our concerns in that regard. We agree with the principle. I cannot emphasize that enough. We are going to vote in favour of the bill. I just want to reassure everyone of that. However, this bill clearly opens a door that could have significant financial implications. Similar legislation in Quebec has had such implications. I tried to determine exactly how much it costs. That is very difficult because it changes a lot over time. In Quebec, we know that 20% of pregnant women take preventive leave. They may include women who work in hair salons with certain chemicals or nurses who come into contact with sick people, obviously, or chemicals or medical products. They may also include teachers who use chalkboards and other products. We need to be aware that this measure could cost a lot of money. We need to be aware of that. We are talking about 20%, which means that one in five pregnant women in Quebec takes this sort of leave.

Recently, we have been talking a lot about Bill C-14, which, as members know, follows on similar legislation in Quebec. I have been reminded of the Quebec model many times in the past few hours.

To get back to the topic at hand, if the government were to model this system after Quebec's and one out of every five women were to take medical leave, that means 75,000 women would have access to

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this type of leave. We are not opposed to that. We need to be aware of this reality. However, this could end up costing an additional \$245 million. We need to be aware of this. We need to take this into consideration. Either we believe in it or we do not. If we do, we need to do what is necessary.

• (1810)

Since this is a private member's bill that came through the front door, we need to recognize that it cannot have any financial implications. However, this bill could ultimately have some financial implications. We need to keep that in mind.

We completely agree with the other part of the bill, which proposes striking a committee and holding consultations with Canadians. Consultations seems to be a popular word these days. Consultations will help us get to the bottom of this issue, assess the situation, take a look at the Quebec experience, identify what works and what does not work, and learn from what is going on in Quebec, so that we can improve the approach.

I would remind members that we completely agree with the principle. We are cautious about the potential financial implications, and we are open to the discussions and conversations that we, as parliamentarians, need to have with all Canadians on this issue.

We believe in families and we believe that the government should assist families. We support that, but it needs to be done in a positive, constructive manner. We fully recognize that these days, there is no longer such a thing as men's work and women's work. All professions are open to everyone. This is what leads to improvements and enhancements to our laws, regulations and approaches regarding the maternity rights of all Canadian women.

Naturally, we want millions of children to be born here in this big, beautiful country.

• (1815)

[*English*]

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise in the House today to speak to the bill put forward by the member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands.

I want to begin by saying we appreciate the preamble of the bill, which praises Quebec's *Programme Pour une maternité sans danger*. We recognize that this program has successfully protected pregnant women in Quebec from workplace-related hazards and has been a step forward toward greater equality in the workplace.

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While looking further into the bill it has come to our attention that the predecessor of the member for Kingston and the Islands also had an interest in such a bill. He had petitioned the government in order to raise awareness of the issue and called on the government to accommodate women working in high-risk environments. Perhaps the current member for Kingston and the Islands would be interested to know that his party actually voted against allowing women to benefit from the *Programme Pour une maternité sans danger* at the national level, given the fact they voted against an NDP bill that proposed creating the exact same Quebec arrangement at the national level.

As of now, there is inequity in Quebec between workers, as the women working in workplaces in the federal jurisdiction may not benefit from the program that exists in Quebec. We are quite troubled by the fact that the Liberals voted against a bill that was put forward by my colleague, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie at the time in order to create such an important framework at the national level. I hope that this legislation is a first step toward correcting that mistake.

We support the principle of the bill, particularly the commitment to a national dialogue and a national strategy when it comes to ensuring that women can have safe pregnancies, no matter the work they do. However, we will be looking to committee, and we will certainly be working to propose much-needed key changes at the committee stage.

As encouraged as we are by the sentiment put forward by our colleague from Kingston and the Islands, we are also worried by several items that are in the legislation. It is our understanding that the member of Parliament views the legislative changes as a first step, and that he understands that more will be required as the government moves forward with the national strategy and consultations. However, these legislative changes unfortunately would not bring any new benefit for the women that would choose to leave the high-risk environment in which they work. The changes to the Employment Insurance Act would allow for some limited flexibility, but they would also force women to choose between eliminating risk in their pregnancy and spending time with their newborn. This is no leap forward for greater equality.

The major issue with the bill is that when it comes to risky work, the onus is put on the employee, in this case the pregnant woman, rather than on the employer. This could have an adverse effect as employers would not have any incentive in finding risk-free tasks for workers who are pregnant. Employers might find it simpler to encourage their workers to go on maternity leave earlier, as they might see it more economically viable than finding new tasks for them. Such a scenario would actually go against the intention of the bill, in our opinion.

In fact, if we look to the program in Quebec, *Pour une maternité sans danger*, it is actually clear that it is an occupational health and safety measure and not a parental leave one. In Quebec, it is the employer's responsibility to provide a safe work environment for their workers, pregnant women included. The Quebec program does not end up costing women at risk any time in terms of their parental leave and it does not cost them any significant portion of their salary, which is not the case for EI. The program even existed before the parental leave scheme that was implemented in Quebec, and it was

always seen as an occupational health and safety measure, funded through workers compensation.

The distinction here is important because there is a difference between being in an at-risk work environment and being on parental leave. This legislation does not seem to make that distinction.

The eligibility threshold to qualify for this measure in the bill is also disconcerting. As we all know, being eligible for EI in certain parts of the country can require a significant amount of time in the job market. This is particularly challenging for many women across Canada. This alone would disqualify many women from taking advantage of this measure.

Another question mark is that while women on parental leave are benefiting from EI, they are also depriving themselves from significant revenue.

• (1820)

We applaud the goals of the member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands with his private member's bill. We recognize that his goal is to enhance the services working women have access to when they are pregnant, and the fact that they deserve to work in a safe environment.

We are eager to bring this discussion to committee, and to improve the bill, with the insight witnesses will bring to the table. However, we would have wanted Quebec women working under federal jurisdiction to have access to the services other workers have.

We also hope that the national strategy will bind the government into enhancing the services women are expected to have when they are pregnant, and that it will help to relieve them of their obligation to work in high-risk environments. We will continue to raise our concerns on this matter.

We will work with those who have already made their concerns known, and we hope they will find an attentive ear on the other side.

[*Translation*]

I rise today to speak to Bill C-243, which creates a national strategy to help pregnant women who work in high-risk environments. The preamble of the bill applauds the positive impact of Quebec's safe maternity experience program, which has similar goals, but does not allow Quebec women to take part in it.

The member opposite had good intentions with this bill. Perhaps he will be surprised to learn that his party failed to pass a previous bill on the same issue. The Liberal Party sided with the Conservative Party to vote down a bill that would have allowed Quebec women who work in a high-risk environment under federal jurisdiction to benefit from Quebec's safe maternity experience program.

The Quebec National Assembly unanimously supported the NDP's position. The member recognizes that his bill does not do everything he would like it to do, but it is still being introduced by the same party that said no to the women of Quebec. His bill will create two classes of workers in Quebec, even though, at the end of the day, he is trying to achieve what we had proposed in the previous Parliament.

Private Members' Business

High barriers to employment insurance eligibility will also affect access to the program envisioned by the member for Kingston and the Islands. Many female Canadian workers are not eligible for employment insurance, so they would not be eligible for this program despite being eligible for the Quebec program.

Another difference between the Quebec program and the member's proposal is the lack of incentives to reassign a pregnant employee. The Quebec program is rooted in workplace health and safety and the premise that the employer is responsible for ensuring a safe work environment for female employees.

If the employer cannot reassign a female worker to a safe job, her income will be topped up by the employer-funded occupational health and safety coverage. Employers are motivated to reassign employees rather than put them on preventive leave because they are the ones who pay for the program. Under the proposal put forward by the member for Kingston and the Islands, workers would bear the burden of funding the program. Female workers in risky workplaces will end up footing the bill for their employers' inability to guarantee them a safe work environment.

In conclusion, we believe that the member for Kingston and the Islands has identified a problem we need to consider, but his approach to solving that problem is far from ideal. The long-term measures he would like the government to implement depend on the goodwill of the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour. The short-term measures he is proposing contain virtually nothing new for female workers in Canada. We hope that we will be able to do more. We will work with those who have already expressed their opposition, and we are eager to study and, of course, improve this bill in committee.

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to stand in the House and make a contribution to the debate on my colleague's private member's bill.

As has been said already in the House, my colleague and new best friend from Louis-Saint-Laurent has indicated that not all private members' bills are created equal or come from the same place. Over the 16 years I have been here, I have had an opportunity to speak to a fairly wide range of private members' bills, some which were somewhat suspect.

In the last Parliament, there was a trend of thought that ran from coast to coast that maybe Bill C-525 and Bill C-377 may have had the PMO fingerprints on it. I can neither confirm nor deny that, but I have heard that before.

I have had an opportunity stand to speak on a number of occasions on private members' bills that have been presented and have been born from that relationship between a member of Parliament and one of the constituents that he or she represents, and that was the genesis of that private member's bill.

It is said that if leaders are to be successful, they have to earn the trust of the people they want to lead. One thing we know is that if we want to earn that respect, people have to understand that we care.

People want to know how much we care before they care how much we know.

By taking an issue as important as the one addressed in this private member's bill, and investing the time and energy to develop private member's legislation around it, the member for Kingston and the Islands has to be commended. That happens in the House on occasion, and it is a great thing. All parties have members who have brought forward legislation that has come from the grassroots. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to commend the member for Kingston and the Islands for bringing this forward.

I have watched, with great nervousness and the collective knot we get in our stomach, what is going in Fort McMurray. I spent 10 years in Fort Mac. I worked at the GCOS, the Suncor plant on site for a number of years when I first went out there. Anybody who has ever had the opportunity to work in an industrial shop where welding is going on, where tradespeople are using cutting torches, or gouging torches or even just running a welding bead, has an appreciation for that whole environment.

There absolutely are labour laws around that, and about air quality, but people cannot help but know they are in a place where if they do not take precautions or if a piece of apparatus is not up to snuff, then it becomes a workplace of concern.

I have some comments specifically about the legislation before us today.

The health and safety of pregnant workers is an important issue with the government, and through Canada's employment insurance system, we continue to explore ways to support Canadians, including pregnant workers, when they need it most. Under the current EI Act, pregnant women are eligible for a total of 15 weeks of maternity benefits. Maternity benefits are specifically intended to support a woman's income when she is out of the workforce to recover from the physical or emotional effects of pregnancy or childbirth.

Maternity benefits can start as early as 8 weeks before the birth, and must end no later than 17 weeks after the child is born. Depending on what suits the mother's situation, benefits can be spread out before and after the child is born.

Outside of Quebec, which administers its own parental insurance plan, EI maternity benefits are a key policy and income support tool for mothers across Canada. In 2014-15, the EI program paid over \$1 billion in maternity benefits to nearly 170,000 claimants.

• (1830)

I should also point out that in addition to the EI maternity benefits that are available, only the federal jurisdiction and the Province of Quebec specifically offer preventative withdrawal job protection for pregnant and/or nursing women.

Federally regulated employees under the Canada Labour Code may request a reassignment based on medical advice. Once the request is made, the woman can take a leave with pay until the employer either accommodates her request for a reassignment or confirms that it would not be possible to do so. If a reassignment is not possible, the woman may take a leave of absence for the duration of the risk.

Private Members' Business

The Province of Quebec, as I indicated earlier, offers a similar provision for pregnant or nursing women, providing them the right to request reassignment to other duties, or if that is not possible, to take leave if their working conditions may be physically dangerous to their health or that of their unborn or nursing child.

Other provincial and territorial jurisdictions in Canada have workplace health and safety standards. However, the Canada Labour Code job protection for maternity leave varies across the country. The intent of the bill aligns well with our own intentions to make EI more flexible, and consequently more helpful to all workers who face a period of unemployment, for whatever reason.

The bill also brings forward several other issues that remain to be examined, issues such as health and safety and gender equality in the workforce, as well as the notion that a woman's pregnancy could act as a barrier to full participation in the workplace and an impediment to career development.

These are some of the issues we intend to discuss in our upcoming consultations with members of the House, provincial and territorial governments, and other stakeholders, with the primary intention of developing more flexible parental benefits to meet the unique needs of current Canadian families. It is important to note that amending the EI Act is a complex endeavour, and we want to ensure that we do it the proper way. Any changes to EI deserve the benefit of further study and consultations with key partners to ensure that the program better responds to the needs of hard-working Canadian families.

At the same time, this is also a government that wants to act as fast as possible to bring real change to Canadians, and a great deal of that work has already begun. For example, we have introduced the new Canada child benefit that will give Canadian families more money to help with the high cost of raising their children. With a maximum benefit of up to \$6,400 per child under the age of six and up to \$5,400 per child for those aged six through 17, it will be simpler, more generous, and better targeted to those who need the help. The child disability benefit is an additional \$2,730.

We have made changes to the EI system, going from a two-week waiting period to one week. We have made changes to the working-while-on-claim provisions within the EI system. We have enhanced the work-sharing agreements, doubling them to a maximum of 76 weeks, which most Canadians recognize as being very family friendly.

These are changes that we believe reflect the needs and demands of today's workforce and changes that Canadians have been asking for.

We have removed barriers to full gender equality in the workforce and have made progress in this regard. However, it is well-recognized that we have to do more. As announced yesterday, we will also amend the Canada Labour Code to allow men and women in the workplace to formally request flexible working arrangements.

I know that my time is running out. I would reiterate the fact that I am pleased to stand and speak to the bill today. I want to commend my colleague from Kingston for his work on this piece of legislation. We look forward to debating it further and working as a government to try to enhance the opportunity for all Canadians to play a fuller, richer, and more rewarding role in this country's workforce.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to participate in the debate on Bill C-243.

I want to begin by thanking the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands for bringing this important issue to the House of Commons for debate. It is these types of issues, as my colleagues have touched upon, that I think are so important for us to discuss and debate in this House of Commons and work together on a collaborative approach to bills such as this.

My wife, Justine, and I have a young daughter. She is about 22 months old. We are expecting our second child later this month, so we have some experience with the employment insurance program, particularly as it relates to parental and maternity benefits. My wife is a nurse. She did have some challenges with the EI program when she was expecting our first child. The changes proposed in the bill, I think, are certainly welcomed by a number of people in demanding professions and careers.

As members know, the employment insurance program does provide 15 weeks in maternity benefits to qualified people. However, it does not allow this to occur any more than eight weeks prior to the date of confinement, the date of the baby's proposed birth.

For some mothers, there is the opportunity for 15 weeks of sickness benefits. This does help to bridge the gap in certain situations. However, as the member for Kingston and the Islands does correctly point out, pregnancy is not an illness and it should not be considered as an illness.

There is an opportunity here, with this bill, to explore alternative ways to assist expectant mothers, especially those who work in demanding and challenging careers.

I certainly appreciate, also, that the bill would take into account the different working conditions experienced by women, and that it would consider how a woman in these industries may need a degree of flexibility from the programs that government offers.

At the same time, the bill, at least the first part of the bill, would not effectively raise the costs of the employment insurance program. That is something that we on this side of the House can appreciate when we are debating this particular issue.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

I think it is clear that many Canadian women have jobs in which their working conditions may have an impact on their own physical well-being or that of their unborn child.

Allowing expectant mothers to enjoy flexibility in the use of their 15 weeks of maternity benefits is an important recognition of the simple fact that not all working conditions are the same.

It further recognizes that the health and safety of expectant mothers and their unborn children is of paramount importance and that it is essential to protect them from harmful conditions caused by physical stress or exposure to harmful materials.

Private Members' Business

Many organizations have endorsed this bill, including Women Building Futures and the Office to Advance Women Apprentices. These organizations indicated that this bill would provide valuable support for women working in construction and the skilled trades.

Since my election as a member of this House, I have had many conversations with local labour market experts, employers, and skilled tradespeople about the shortage of skilled trades in our community and across the country. In particular, there is a shortage of women in the skilled trades. This shortage begins in high school and continues throughout the workforce.

This bill may not have a major effect on the long-term ability of the industry to attract women to the skilled trades, but it will not hurt. After all, in 2012, women held just 11.8% of construction jobs and only 19% of jobs in forestry, fishing, mining, oil, and gas. Anything we can do to encourage women to participate in “non-traditional” jobs is beneficial.

As it stands now, the employment insurance program effectively makes women working in physically demanding jobs choose between continuing to work under potentially unsafe working conditions, or go without pay for a period of eight weeks or more.

I think all hon. members would agree that this is a choice that no person should be forced to make and it is not fair to expectant mothers.

It is important to recognize that this bill, as written, does not increase the number weeks a woman can take of maternity leave.

It simply provides expectant mothers with the opportunity to choose when to begin their maternity benefits. It is worth noting as well that nothing in this bill prevents women from taking additional weeks of unpaid leave if they so choose.

I understand maternity benefits are an important aspect of supporting working women, but I also must be clear that, like all benefits, they must be affordable and they must be implemented in a sustainable way. That is why I encourage the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities to carefully examine this bill during its clause-by-clause examination to ensure that the costs of the EI maternity benefits program are not materially or substantially increased.

Finally, this bill compels the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour to conduct consultations on the development of a national maternity assistance program. The purpose of such a program would be to support women who are unable to work during pregnancy because of their working conditions and because their employer is unable to accommodate them or provide reassignment within the organization.

Again, I would encourage the minister to undertake this review with an understanding of the costs and long-term sustainability of the employment insurance program.

• (1840)

[English]

It is incredibly important that this House support all workers and, in this particular case, expectant mothers. It is important that women,

especially those in demanding careers and in the skilled trades, have the flexibility to make the employment insurance program work for them.

I will be supporting this bill at second reading. I encourage all members to support it at second reading, so it can go to committee where the members can continue to hear witnesses and explore this important measure.

Again, I want to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for his hard work on this bill and for bringing it forward to this House. I look forward to supporting it.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of Bill C-243, introduced by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

This bill is an important first step in addressing the needs of pregnant women who work in potentially hazardous environments. By allowing women working in dangerous jobs to begin using their maternity benefits earlier and by implementing a national maternity assistance program strategy, this bill will provide women with greater flexibility in the decision-making, and hopefully lead to implementation of an effective pan-Canadian strategy.

First, I would like to acknowledge the member opposite and his predecessor for listening to and being inspired to introduce this bill by their constituents. I know there will be important amendments made at the committee level, and I look forward to seeing them come to fruition.

Ms. Ballard, a resident of Kingston, Ontario, was forced to stop working early into her pregnancy because, as a welder, her work environment exposed her to potentially dangerous conditions. It is disappointing, but sadly not uncommon, to hear cases of expectant moms who are forced to take leave from their jobs without benefits because their workplaces are unable or unwilling to accommodate them.

Far too often women lose out on salary or benefits as a result of becoming pregnant, even after dedicating much of their time and hard work to their jobs. In most cases, it makes sense for an employer to accommodate a pregnant woman in this situation because doing so would allow her to work longer. An employer who is motivated to make accommodations and work together will likely have a positive impact on an employee's productivity.

Pregnancy is a special time in a woman's life. It is a time for planning, dreaming, and looking to the future, but it can be a time of worry and concern for the future: how to balance paying the bills while being on maternity or parental leave, or how she will take care of herself and her child during the pregnancy. It is no secret that some activities can indeed pose health and safety risks to pregnant women.

Private Members' Business

As outlined by Health Canada, activities that include standing for prolonged periods of time, lifting heavy loads, being exposed to certain chemicals, and being subject to loud noises or vibrations, to name a few, can negatively influence the health of a pregnant woman. However, it is important to remember that pregnancy does not make women unsuitable for the types of jobs where they will be exposed to these activities. In fact, the opposite is true.

There is a real shortage of women in many workplaces, especially in STEM careers, science, technology, engineering, and math-related occupations. More work needs to be done to ensure that these workplaces encourage greater gender diversity and equality. As the OECD explains, when women participate in the workforce, individual industries and the economy as a whole benefit. This is why groups such as Canada's Building Trades Unions and the National Council of Women of Canada are supporting this bill.

The bill is also supported by many other groups that recognize that pregnancy should never be a barrier for women in the workplace. In my riding of Essex, as in all ridings, this equality is especially important. The Conference Board of Canada, in its "Winter 2016 Metropolitan Outlook", highlighted the manufacturing and construction sectors as key sources of growth for the Windsor-Essex region. Manufacturing employment is expected to grow by about 3.1% annually for the next two years. Construction output is also expected to increase by 8.3%, as a result of the planned Gordie Howe international bridge. While there is plenty of new opportunity coming to my region in these two sectors, I hope that both men and women will benefit.

I know well how women feel. As a mother of two boys, now 13 and 15, I worked while pregnant in an auto assembly plant in Windsor, where I worked for 20 years. I remember working while pregnant with my first son, and another woman in the workplace was expecting too. We were working on an assembly line, and finding an accommodation when we needed to rest for a moment after hours of standing or go to the washroom at a moment's notice, not to mention the chemicals that we sometimes had to be around, was not always easy.

We advocated for each other and worked with management to find solutions. After all, we were not going to be pregnant forever. These solutions worked for us all.

It is important to understand that employers have an obligation to accommodate women when they are pregnant in the workplace. Unfortunately, I was not as lucky with my second pregnancy in only needing minimal accommodation. I had a riskier pregnancy that was landing me in the hospital weekly, and I was anxious and uncertain, not only about the health of my baby and myself, but also about my ability to work. I needed time off, and had a hard time finding accommodations that included being able to sit intermittently.

After another difficult hospital stay, I attempted to return to work again, only to find that my previous accommodations were not available to me. I was even more uncertain than ever about what to do. There were many anxious conversations at home and work about my health and ability to work in this environment with chemicals and a physically demanding job. I would go to work every day, uncertain about what job I could do, and would often push myself to try jobs I knew I could not perform, trying to be part of the solution,

trying to stay working and balancing my health. It was exhausting and stressful.

● (1845)

Thankfully, my co-workers were kind and understanding, and fortunately I was a member of a union that had negotiated a sick and accident benefit for all of us. My supervisor, union rep, and I met about this issue, and it was offered to me to spend the rest of my pregnancy on this benefit. How lucky I was. I accepted, and remember going home and crying with relief as my husband, young son, and I had the ability to focus on my health and not worry about how we would pay the bills or how I would do my job. For my particular situation, this was a resolution. Employers, however, have a fundamental obligation to provide accommodation that should always be the first remedy.

I spent the remaining months visiting the hospital many times, but ultimately we were very fortunate to welcome our second completely perfect son, Maliq. I began my maternity leave and still had my full year of maternity benefits.

All women should have this provision available to them. I cannot help but think how unfair it is for other working women who struggle, finding themselves in similar situations without the ability to rest and take care of themselves. No family should have to go through that stress let alone when one is expecting.

For women to be encouraged to enter male-dominated jobs, such as STEM jobs, they need to be confident that they will not be left without income in the case their pregnancy is no longer compatible with their work environment or job responsibilities. They need greater flexibility as they make decisions balancing their work and family needs.

Quebec understands this well, as evidenced by its safe maternity experience program, which the NDP wants to see expanded to Quebec women in federally regulated workplaces. My colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie has long been an advocate for this and put forward a private member's bill, which unfortunately was voted down in the previous Parliament.

The safe maternity experience program allows women the ability to request a temporary reassignment should their regular duties become a health risk due to a pregnancy. If reassignment is not possible, the women are able to preventively withdraw from work and receive 90% of the income they would have received. The Quebec program is an exceptional aid for women.

By removing the threat of losing income due to pregnancy, it helps break down barriers that women face when trying to become fully active members of the workforce. This program is more in line with how Canada should be addressing this issue. These maternity supports should be offered throughout workplace health and safety programs, and not through a parental leave program that compensates women through employment insurance benefits.

Bill C-243 would do little to address the gap between Canada's national program and what global leaders like France and Germany are doing. While extending the beginning eligibility date from which women working in a dangerous environment can begin maternity leave, the bill would leave the total amount of maternity leave unchanged. Both the percentage of income received and the total weeks that can be collected would remain the same. This simply changes the choices available to women about when to begin their leave. If a pregnant woman begins her leave early, it means she will have to go back to work early, and that could lead to costs and challenges of finding child care, especially for young infants where space is extremely limited.

In conclusion, I would like to restate my support for Bill C-243 with the amendments that will be welcomed at the committee level.

I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to support the immediate development and implementation of a national maternity assistance program that would better support women who are unable to work during their pregnancies.

• (1850)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[English]

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on March 11, in the wake of a horrifying incident where two homeless people from Saskatchewan were put on a bus to B.C., I asked the government to commit to a national housing strategy that would end homelessness in communities across Canada.

I was encouraged to see that the first Liberal budget has committed some much-needed funds to support the housing needs of first nation communities, victims of domestic violence, and young Canadians, and to create more affordable housing. Unfortunately, after decades of neglect and indifference, Canada's social housing infrastructure is in tatters and is woefully inadequate.

While the new money is certainly welcome and overdue, I think that the government recognizes that much more needs to be done. Housing is one of the most important social determinants of health. Without a secure roof over our heads, it is difficult, if not impossible, to work, study, raise children, or be healthy, and it costs all of us so much more in health care costs, lost potential, and human tragedy.

Too many Canadians are in precarious housing, or have no housing at all. Many more are paying too much for housing. This is a situation that must change.

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association estimates that roughly 140,000 families are waiting between five and 12 years for

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subsidized housing in Canada. According to a recent study, 40% of renters spend more than 30% of their household income on the cost of rent and utilities, the level at which many say housing costs become unaffordable. About 20% spend more than half their income, which housing advocates say puts them at high risk of becoming homeless.

My hon. colleague, the member for Hochelaga, has recently completed a report on homelessness in Canada after a three-year tour of more than 30 communities, and she found that the situation is devastating. She said:

Throughout Canada, I met tenants who had to choose between paying rent and buying groceries. In a country as wealthy as ours, this situation is unacceptable... Housing is a right for all of us and eliminating poverty starts with ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head.

The current housing crisis is not new. It has been getting worse because of government inaction. A former Liberal government brought sweeping reforms to the National Housing Act in 1973, and the minister responsible for housing described adequate, affordable shelter as an "elemental human need".

How times have changed. The dark decades since have seen the abdication of leadership on the federal level by both the Liberal and Conservative governments, accompanied by diminishing investments and the devolving of responsibility to lower levels of government. We do not even have a minister of housing in the cabinet.

The Liberal government has a chance to turn the crisis around. The funds announced in the budget are a good first step, but there is so much more to do.

The member for Hochelaga's report, "A Roof, A Right", sets out a sensible approach to correcting the housing deficit in Canada, and I ask the government to act on the recommendations in this report. The member has also introduced two bills aimed at addressing the housing crisis in Canada, one that would include the right to housing in the Canadian Bill of Rights and a second that calls for the implementation of a national strategy for secure, adequate, accessible, and affordable housing.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has also expressed concern about the persistence of a housing crisis in Canada and has called on the government to bring in a national housing strategy that recognizes the right to housing.

Investing in housing is not an expense. It is an investment in individuals, communities, society, and the economy as a whole. Will the government commit to immediately implementing a national housing strategy?

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• (1855)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Saskatoon West for once again providing me with the opportunity to speak to the important issue of affordable housing. I also thank her for some of her positive comments on recent investments we have announced in the budget.

As hon. members will know, budget 2016 includes a clear commitment to re-establishing federal leadership in housing and to develop a national housing strategy. This should come as no surprise to her, since the creation of a national housing strategy was a key element of our plan during the last election.

Our government is committed to re-establishing federal leadership in affordable housing, and developing the country's first ever national housing strategy. The leadership that this government has shown in the area of housing does not imply that the federal government has all the answers. In fact, the opposite is true.

Rather than impose a strategy, we will consult widely on how housing outcomes can be improved for all Canadians. Why? Because we recognize that affordable housing is not an issue only for low-income Canadians. It is increasingly a challenge for middle-class households and those striving to join the middle class.

We also know that the best way to identify and implement effective new approaches in housing is by bringing together our key partners, the provinces and territories, as well as first nations, individual Canadians and the full range of housing stakeholders in a national dialogue. A comprehensive consultation plan is currently being developed, and I can assure the House there will be opportunities for Canadians to be heard and that consultations will include discussions on providing greater access to affordable housing for Canadians.

In the meantime, and as the hon. member knows, this government is proceeding with the largest investment in housing of the past 25 years. The budget's housing investments are key components of our planned investments in social infrastructure to help strengthen the middle class, promote inclusive growth and lift more Canadians out of poverty.

Over the next two years, our government will provide \$2.3 billion in new funding for affordable housing, a portion of which will be cost-matched by the provinces and territories. Much of this funding will be delivered through the existing agreements with provinces and territories. In fact, this government is already working with its partners to ensure that these funds flow as quickly as possible to communities that need it most.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation will directly deliver a portion of the funding that has been earmarked for federally administered housing, and we will work with first nations and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to deliver new housing investments on reserve.

The goal of these investments is to address urgent needs in the short term, while we take the time needed to develop innovative new approaches over the long term. I am confident that we can count on the support of the member for Saskatoon West as we start implementing the important housing measures from budget 2016,

and make our way to the national housing strategy about which I know she feels so deeply.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of things I would like to ask my hon. colleague to immediately start. I totally understand that housing is a partnership between the federal and provincial governments, and I welcome the consultations between those two levels.

I want to see the federal government stepping up and saying that housing is a right, providing a framework for those conversations and not just going into them with this wide open agenda.

Many provinces have huge debt and their ability to be a part of a joint framework, a joint funding arrangement may be at risk. Therefore, the federal government needs to step up and say that housing is a right and it needs to address the dire housing needs of thousands of Canadians immediately.

A great first step of part of a national housing strategy is recognizing that every Canadian deserves a home.

• (1900)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing from members of the House and other Canadians on what elements should be included in Canada's new national housing strategy.

The Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and I will announce details of the consultations as soon as they are available. I can assure the member for Saskatoon West that our goal is to consult widely and thoroughly so we can develop the best strategy to support the housing needs of Canadians.

This government recognizes that affordable housing is an issue of national importance. I hear the hon. member's passion. I hear her commitment to this cause, to which we are also committed.

It is a priority for this government. Therefore, we intend to move forward on a timely basis, beginning with the new investments announced in budget 2016.

[*Translation*]

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rose in the House on February 2 to ask the government if it would be reinvesting in the Canada Border Services Agency to make it more efficient. My colleague, the hon. minister, informed me at the time that an action plan would be implemented by the end of the year.

I rise here today because I must confess that I am concerned about the next few months. Between now and the end of the year, potentially illegal goods could leave the country due to a lack of resources. Immediate action is needed.

The Auditor General's February report highlighted some troubling facts. As we know, the Canada Border Services Agency plays an important role in protecting Canada's safety and security by overseeing the movement of people and goods in and out of the country.

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The CBSA administers more than 90 acts, regulations and international agreements on behalf of other federal departments and agencies, the provinces and the territories. It is therefore unacceptable for an organization of this magnitude to fail to deliver on its commitments and its mission. The Auditor General's February report showed that the agency does not have close to what it needs to act on its law enforcement priorities because of a lack of information and resources.

As a result, it is possible that goods that do not comply with Canada's export laws may have left the country. One in five high-risk shipments identified by the agency itself was not examined at the port of exit. The agency missed opportunities to prevent non-compliant shipments from leaving the country. Those targeted shipments were not examined because they had already been loaded on ships or had left Canada by the time the information was received. I repeat, the agency failed to inspect about one in five high-risk shipments. Is that not troubling?

We could have prevented more stolen vehicles from being removed from the country and illegal drugs from being exported from Canada. In short, we have some serious concerns about how the agency is being managed.

The inefficiencies are also the result of the agency being understaffed. In his report, the Auditor General pointed out how important it was for the Canada Border Services Agency to hire more staff, to ensure that high-risk shipments leaving the country are properly examined.

The Auditor General stated that staffing levels also explain the fact that some shipments targeted by the agency are not examined. For example, examinations decrease when employees are on vacation or sick leave.

Here is another example of the problems. At one port, no export control examinations were conducted when the assigned border services officer was on vacation. This is hard to believe, but it is the truth. There was no one to conduct inspections at this port because one officer was on vacation. We expect better, and now the agency needs to do better.

With the summer holidays approaching, this must not happen again. The agency needs proper resources so that it can improve its methods and fix its mistakes.

The Canada Border Services Agency is Canada's last line of defence against the export of goods that are in violation of Canada's export laws.

We do not want to become a sieve for illegal goods. I am calling on the government to take meaningful action to ensure that the agency does not violate its international commitments. We have international commitments and we must honour them.

The Conservatives gutted the Canada Border Services Agency, and now we are seeing the consequences of those cuts.

How much will the government invest in the Canada Border Services Agency, and when, to ensure that the agency can fulfill its mandate properly?

●(1905)

Mr. Michel Picard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raised an important issue arising from the Auditor General's recent report on the Canada Border Services Agency's export control program.

I would like to start by confirming that the government welcomes the Auditor General's report and agrees that the previous government did not provide the Canada Border Services Agency with the necessary tools to properly and effectively prevent the export of goods that contravene Canada's export laws. The audit report did recognize the agency's success in the areas of risk assessment, counter-proliferation, and seizure of property obtained through crime, such as stolen vehicles.

As the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness told the House on February 2, the Canada Border Services Agency accepted all of the Auditor General's recommendations. There is an action plan to implement them, and most of them will be implemented before the end of this year.

The Canada Border Services Agency will focus on implementing a consistent process to record export targets and examination results. It will also implement the necessary measures to fill gaps in front-line operations, and it will institute a standard procedure that will enable officers to identify and examine high-risk non-reported shipments. It will also upgrade the automated export declaration system.

[*English*]

It is the responsibility of the Canada Border Services Agency to facilitate the flow of goods on which our prosperity depends, while safeguarding Canada's security and the security of our trading partners.

As the Auditor General notes in his report, Canada exported \$529 billion worth of goods in 2014, a figure that represents 27% of our GDP. In 2014-15, the CBSA had 13,768 full-time equivalents, of which approximately 7,200 are uniformed CBSA officers. I am sure we all acknowledge and appreciate the challenging and indispensable work they do.

[*Translation*]

Canada Border Services Agency officers cleared approximately 15 million commercial imports and there were 900,000 export declarations in 2014-15.

CBSA personnel assess the risk of export shipments based on export declarations and intelligence. They work closely with their national and international law enforcement partners in order to facilitate the implementation of a safe and secure international trade system for exports.

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The CBSA performs vital duties on behalf of all Canadians and for all our clients around the world. The Auditor General's advice was well received by the government, and we will work with the Canada Border Services Agency to ensure that it has all the tools it needs to be a world-class organization that is able to protect Canadians and the countries receiving our exports, while ensuring the free and safe flow of goods, which is vital to an economy like ours.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the Auditor General's report was at least well received by the CBSA and the government. I also know that the Canada Border Services Agency is well aware of its mission, which involves risk assessment.

That being said, I just spoke about a lack of resources. I would like some information. What guarantees can we give Canadians that officers who are on vacation or other types of leave will be replaced? Can we reassure Canadians that there will definitely be someone working at every post where the risks posed by shipments are assessed?

The Auditor General mainly criticized the lack of resources at the CBSA. I would like to hear what the government has to say about that.

• (1910)

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to meeting its international obligations to prevent the export of goods that could pose a security threat.

In 2014-15, the Canada Border Services Agency conducted a review of its export program and worked to tighten controls through a framework that clarifies the program's mandate and places greater emphasis on risk mitigation strategies.

In response to the Auditor General's report, the Canada Border Services Agency came up with an action plan, and most of the recommendations should be implemented by December 2016. Once again, the government welcomes the Auditor General's report, and we agree with his findings and recommendations.

[*English*]

STATISTICS CANADA

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the time this evening to expand on my recent question to the government regarding Statistics Canada.

Every month, Statistics Canada keeps track of important issues, including how oil and liquid petroleum products flow back and forth across our country. These data are going to be directly impacted by any decisions we make regarding new pipelines. We have to make sure Statistics Canada has the funding needed to keep proper track of this information, but we should also be thinking about whether or not we are going to build new pipelines.

As members know, I am opposed to Kinder Morgan's plan to build a new export-only bitumen-based crude oil pipeline from Alberta to Burnaby. Texas-based Kinder Morgan wants to build this new pipeline through B.C. to export nearly one million barrels of diluted bitumen per day to China and other countries. If built, Kinder Morgan's project would see one supertanker per day passing through Vancouver harbour and a pipeline as big as the SkyTrain running

through densely packed residential neighbourhoods and the traditional territories of dozens of first nations.

The National Energy Board will table the official review of the new pipeline this Friday. The Liberals promised during the election that they would overhaul the NEB review process, but since then it has been nothing but business as usual from the Liberal government. In fact, the NEB is still using the Conservatives' unfair process and their hand-picked appointees to assess this pipeline.

Opposition to Kinder Morgan continues to grow across the province. Tens of thousands of those living in Metro Vancouver do not want to see their harbour turned into one of the world's largest oil exporting ports. With 40,000 barrels already having leaked from the Kinder Morgan pipeline, my constituents in Burnaby South are worried about the risk of another spill.

Premier Christy Clark, opposition leader John Horgan, first nations leaders such as Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson, Burnaby mayor Derek Corrigan, labour unions, and environmental organizations have all expressed opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. They oppose the project because it is a bad deal for B.C., because we face all of the risks but get none of the benefits, and because the pipeline will be built by temporary foreign workers. They oppose it to protect our environment, to protect their neighbourhoods, and to protect the integrity of indigenous lands.

In the end, it will be the cabinet that decides whether or not this new pipeline gets built. This cabinet is the one that will make the final decision on the pipeline.

We should not forget that, way back in January 2014, the Prime Minister said about Kinder Morgan, "I certainly hope that we're going to be able to get that pipeline approved". Unless we make things uncomfortable for the Prime Minister politically, I am sure he and his cabinet will force this pipeline through our communities against our will and against the public's will.

Therefore, I encourage all listening to this speech to visit www.nopublicpipeline.ca to get more information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Greg Fergus (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the comments made earlier by the hon. member for Burnaby South concerning the products eliminated by Statistics Canada between 2006 and 2015.

As we have mentioned before, our government shares the concerns of the hon. member with regard to a robust national statistical agency and has promised to make evidence-based decisions.

With respect to the more than 539 cancelled products that my hon. colleague referred to, it is important to note that this list includes all sorts of products. Some products were cancelled simply as part of the normal process of the statistics system, whereas others were not designed as a permanent part of the statistics system.

In any event, large cuts were made to Statistics Canada's budget between 2006 and 2015, which hurt the national statistical system. We must recognize that Statistics Canada carefully implemented these cuts with a view to minimizing the impact on essential statistics and that it avoided certain program reductions, in part with the additional support provided by other federal departments and organizations.

Statistics Canada has assured us that none of the programs essential to fiscal and monetary policy and none of the data required for the administration of important federal transfer payments were affected by the cuts.

I also want to point out that we share the member's desire to revive our national statistical system, and to do so, we will have to consider the needs of today and tomorrow. We are listening to Canadians, researchers, scientists, and decision-makers to understand and identify their information needs, and we will make sure that we meet those needs.

We want to ensure that they have the data required to make evidence-based decisions, and that this data is open, transparent, timely, and accessible.

We restored the mandatory long form census and we are committed to making Statistics Canada more independent.

Over the course of our term, we intend to breathe new life into Statistics Canada's programs and to restore their relevancy, in a thoughtful and enlightened way.

I hope that we will be able to count on the support of the hon. member and his party as we work on this.

● (1915)

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, what I am curious about is what was at the core of my speech, which is whether the Prime

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Minister and cabinet are going to vote for or against approving the Kinder Morgan pipeline. The Prime Minister has said in the past that he would approve it. Now he has appointed a new panel to oversee this.

I am wondering if the member can answer that question.

Mr. Greg Fergus: Mr. Speaker, in the notice for this late show, the question was about how Statistics Canada can play a role in allowing for the determination of these issues.

To add to the central question that the hon. member for Burnaby South has introduced, I would say that we would want to make sure that whatever decision is made will be made on scientific evidence. That is the reason there was that announcement today. We hope the panel will be able to use new criteria to establish and set forth the data and evidence that would be necessary. Part of that is using the information from Statistics Canada.

Certainly, I am confident of the work done by Statistics Canada. I am confident that in our efforts we will try to ensure that we are able to provide the information to those bodies, such as the new panel for the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and an all-of-government approach in terms of all of the evidence and all of the statistical analysis that we might need to address these questions.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank hon. members for putting up with the excess sound that we seem to have in the chamber tonight. I do not know what has caused the volume to almost double from the usual construction noise. Nonetheless, I appreciate their efforts in forging their way through it.

● (1920)

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:20 p.m.)

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