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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 21, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: It being 11:05 a.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 14, the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.) moved:

That, in light of the death of over 1000 Canadians each year, including the tragic loss of the Honourable Mauril Bélanger, former MP for Ottawa—Vanier on August 16, 2016, as a consequence of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), the House: (a) reiterate its desire and commitment to, in collaboration with provincial and territorial stakeholders, combat ALS via research and awareness; and (b) call upon the government to increase funding for ALS research, and to substantially increase national efforts to develop and launch a comprehensive strategy to assist with the eradication of ALS at the earliest opportunity.

She said: Mr. Speaker, to paraphrase the great Lou Gehrig, today I feel like the luckiest person in the world. I say this because for the first time in my 18-year federal legislative career, I am rising to debate a private member's motion in my own name. It took a long time to get here, and I am excited by the opportunity to use this legislative tool to shine a light on something as important as ALS, often referred to as Lou Gehrig's disease.

It is with humility and honour that I rise to launch the debate on Motion No. 105. In doing so, it is my hope that all members in this place will stand together and pass Motion No. 105 without delay. I appreciate that the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has seconded this motion, and I am hopeful that members in all parties will support the motion as a way of standing with all those suffering with ALS.

We see more than 1,000 Canadians die each year because of ALS. All are robbed of their freedom, while being slowly trapped within their own bodies. Their physical decline is dramatic, and their families can do little but sit back and wait for the end.

Certainly, members in the House have known many with ALS, and we have watched as these brave men and women have done battle with a relentless foe.

It was less than a year ago that the hon. Mauril Bélanger, suffering the effects of ALS, presided over this House as an honorary Speaker. He had been diagnosed with ALS in the fall of 2015. What should have been a time of celebration for him and his family turned out to be a sombre realization that his world was about to change profoundly and that his time was running out. Worse yet, his wife Catherine and their children were forced to sit back and watch as Mauril first lost his voice, then his strength, and eventually his fight against ALS.

Mauril was not alone. Many of us in this place will remember Richard Wackid, Brian Parsons, and even our former clerk, William Corbett. Each of these people contributed so much to this place and to Canada, yet they were struck down without warning or reason and without mercy.

In the wake of these tragic losses, and hundreds of others, colleagues, such as the member for Dufferin—Caledon, the member for Cape Breton—Canso, and even the Prime Minister, have made emotional statements in the House in support of the fight against ALS. I can even confirm that our Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the NDP, the MP for Portage—Lisgar, the President of the Treasury Board, and many more accepted the ALS ice bucket challenge and took the plunge against ALS. Together we helped raise more than \$19 million for ALS research, a significant accomplishment, but we need to think longer term.

Put another way, our parliamentary family has been deeply touched by ALS, and all members and all parties in the House have responded by raising awareness and money. Motion No. 105 is the next step in our fight against ALS.

We know that ALS is an unforgiving and brutal disease that gradually paralyses the body. Someone in otherwise good health will gradually lose the ability to talk, to move, to eat, to swallow, and eventually to breathe. Right now there are approximately 3,000 Canadians living with ALS, and the reason that number is not bigger is because 80% of the people with ALS die within two to five years of diagnosis. As we saw in Mauril's case, sometimes it is significantly less than that.

Let us talk about Mauril for a moment. Mauril's journey with ALS was highly visible due to his role as a member of Parliament, but it shone a light on not only what it looks like to have the disease but on the circle of family members, friends, and colleagues affected when someone is diagnosed with ALS.

Private Members' Business

•(1110)

The mobility and communication needs of someone diagnosed with ALS are great and are a tremendous financial burden on everyone involved. It is estimated that ALS has a minimum cost, for families, of somewhere between \$150,000 and \$250,000. This does not include the loss of salary that often comes about when a family member leaves a job to care for a loved one full time, which is usually required.

Families faced with an ALS diagnosis must make difficult decisions in the attempt to balance the desire for a good quality of life with the cost of achieving it. For example, many people diagnosed with ALS prefer to live at home rather than in a care facility. However, staying at home frequently requires modifications to accommodate wheelchairs, bathroom aids, lifts, and beds, not to mention the nursing care required for someone who is increasingly paralyzed. For a family whose loved one has ALS, these decisions have financial and emotional implications that last long after ALS has taken that person's life.

While there are about 3,000 Canadians living with ALS at any one time, the broader circle of people affected is much larger. It is fair to say that in each of our ridings, people are dying of ALS, and their family members' lives are changed forever, because ALS has a lasting financial and emotional impact.

ALS kills nearly 1,000 Canadians each year, and a similar number are diagnosed with ALS each year. This creates a revolving door of people who have a disease with no cure and no effective treatment, a disease that limits their remaining days in more ways than one. Not only have their lives been significantly shortened, they have been changed by a host of new needs as mobility has declined and the ability to communicate has lessened.

Canadians with ALS have said that their experience with the disease is like being buried alive or dying in slow motion. It is hard to believe that today, in 2017, there is still no cure. There are also no effective treatments, and the causes of the disease are unknown.

Fewer than 10% of ALS cases are inherited from a family member, meaning that at least nine out of 10 people diagnosed with ALS develop it seemingly at random. Each one of us in this room has a one-in-400 chance of being diagnosed with ALS over the course of our lives, which brings me to why research is so important. It is one of the few things people and families affected by ALS can be hopeful about. Research may not change their own path, but they fervently hope that it will change the path for others who will be diagnosed in the future.

Globally there has been more progress in ALS research in the last five years than in the last 100 years. Most leading researchers and clinicians in the field believe that we have the tools today to at least understand how ALS is caused. This means that there is tremendous potential for the development of effective treatments for the first time ever. The limitation in developing these treatments, of course, is resources, resources in the form of research investment.

Historically, in Canada, ALS research has been funded at approximately \$1.5 million to \$2 million per year through the ALS Society of Canada. There are no other significant Canadian funding mechanisms that focus exclusively on ALS research.

As I have already mentioned, the ice bucket challenge was a huge success, but without an ongoing and sustainable funding mechanism, Canada's ALS research efforts will soon return to traditional funding levels. That means that we are at risk of losing the research momentum at a time when ALS research holds more promise than ever before. Many members participated in that challenge, and in doing so, were part of a tremendous movement that is helping to advance ALS research and provide support and care to people living with the disease.

Motion No. 105, as I said earlier, is the next step.

On the day Mauril presided over this House, our Prime Minister and the other party leaders all encouraged Canadians to support the organizations that are working to find a cure for ALS. Since then, an all-party ALS caucus has been created to better understand the care and research challenges ALS presents, as well as opportunities to address them.

•(1115)

Today I am calling on all members to live up to that promise. The first part of my motion asks that the House continue its commitment to ALS research and awareness, working with stakeholders in our provinces and territories. Besides being the only significant funding mechanism dedicated to ALS research across Canada, ALS Society of Canada is part of a network of ALS societies with a provincial presence. I support the government's ongoing work with ALS societies across Canada, especially as it strives to maximize our impact toward making ALS a treatable, non-terminal disease.

So often things that we debate here in this place are divisive. Motion No. 105, of course, is not divisive. It is not complex. It does not place one party over another. Imagine the ability for Canadians to be part of a global legacy that could change the meaning of an ALS diagnosis. By investing in ALS research, we could help make that change happen. Families coping with an ALS diagnosis deserve so much more and so much better than the reality that they are currently facing. As Canadians, we simply cannot afford to lose any momentum for ALS research.

I urge every member of this House to give this motion their full support. Members' commitment to ALS awareness, research funding, and a comprehensive strategy for the disease will give hope to many people in all of our constituencies. We are so very close to treatment breakthroughs for ALS. I ask members to help Canada be a leader in changing the outcome of an ALS diagnosis from terminal to treatable.

Private Members' Business

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, I do not really have a question, but I want to congratulate the member for an excellent summary of the problems of people who have ALS. As the member may know, I have a private member's bill outstanding to make June amyotrophic lateral sclerosis month. If I ever get a chance, I hope to do that.

The member gave an excellent summary of the problems and how we have an obligation to make the public aware of this terrible disease. We saw Mauril and the problems he had. I have never seen the disease move so fast as it did with him. On the average, the disease takes about four years, but for him it seemed to just come out of nowhere.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I want to say for the member that if I can be of any help in somehow getting his bill moved up, it would be wonderful, as would anything we could do to designate June as ALS month, to try to bring awareness. That is what it is about. The \$19 million from the ice bucket challenge went a long way in helping research, in partnership with so many other places. Israel and the U.S. are making significant strides with this, but it needs more money, more help, and more leadership.

• (1120)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague on both a very important motion and a passionate and well-thought-out speech. My question, though, is going to focus on action that we can take.

In the 2017 pre-budget submission, ALS Society of Canada made some specific recommendations to the current government for the 2017 budget, which will be coming up in a matter of weeks. The society asked that the federal government invest \$25 million over five years to maintain the momentum built through the ice-budget challenge and partnership with Brain Canada and the Canada brain research fund. The society also asked the federal government to invest \$10 million to allow every Canadian currently living with ALS, which is about 3,000 Canadians, and every stored sample from those who have passed, to have an opportunity to contribute the samples to project MinE, which is an independent large-scale genome research project. It hopes to find the genetic mutations linked to ALS and identify possible treatments.

Can my hon. colleague tell me whether she is confident that her Liberal government will actually make these recommendations and that we will see those commitments in this budget coming up, so that we can back these words with action?

Hon. Judy A. Sgro: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his commitment to issues like this, which I know he cares very much about.

There has been more progress made in the last five years than in the last 100 years; this has come as a result of exactly what we have done in the House, raising awareness, things like the ice bucket challenge, personal support and donations made in our ridings to ALS societies, and the continued focus on finding a cure. I am confident that, as we continue to work together on this, we will move forward.

This is an important issue that has affected some of us specifically. Mauril was my seat mate and colleague for many years. The disease

attacked him, as my colleague said previously, with a devastating timeline. We saw him deteriorate in the House to an enormous degree, very quickly, and I doubt that any of us will ever forget that. I hope all of us will keep that in mind as we move forward.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start off my comments today by thanking not only the member for Humber River—Black Creek for bringing this issue forward but also my colleague from Dufferin—Caledon for raising awareness.

This is a devastating disease, affecting approximately 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians over the age of 18 who are currently living with ALS, and more than 200,000 individuals worldwide. These individuals experience a loss of mobility, a decline in breathing, difficulty eating and drinking, and slurred speech or sometimes even the complete loss of speech. While some suffering with this incurable disease may live longer than others, ALS is usually fatal within two to five years after diagnosis.

There is still so much work and research to be done to help reverse this disease. Ultimately, what we would all like to see is that a cure is found. I think I speak for most people when I say that the ALS ice bucket challenge in 2014 played a massive role in raising awareness about the disease. As a chiropractor, my first experience with ALS was in the early 1990s. I served with a friend at the St. Mary's Knights of Columbus. We shared an Irish background, so we had some good fellowship over the years. He married late in life, so he had a young family and a wife. When I heard about his being diagnosed with ALS, it really brought it home. We hear about Lou Gehrig's disease, but to see it first hand, and personally see how fast, how real, and how devastating the condition is, and the real effect it has on family and community, really brings it home.

Public awareness from the ice bucket challenge campaign went viral on social media, with celebrities, athletes, politicians, and all of our friends and neighbours taking part. I bring this up because prior to the 2014 ALS ice bucket challenge, the awareness of ALS really was quite limited. Those who did know about the disease referred to it as Lou Gehrig's disease, named after the famous New York Yankees player who came out publicly with his battle in 1939. The importance of raising awareness through social media proved effective because, following the ice bucket challenge, the ALS Association raised an additional \$100 million, and the ALS Society of Canada raised an additional \$26 million. This additional research funding has led to some extremely valuable research. As my colleague said, in the last five years it has been really accelerated. Recently, a third gene has been identified as a cause for the disease, which goes to show that, by raising public awareness and ensuring that funding is made available to researchers, progress can be made to find a cure.

In 2013, project MinE was initiated by two ALS patients. It is a research project that aims to map the full DNA profiles of approximately 15,000 individuals with ALS and 7,500 control subjects, with the hopes of identifying genes that are associated with ALS, ultimately leading to the development of a treatment. This large-scale genetic research is unprecedented and will require both public awareness and, of course, important funding. On January 10, 2017, Canada became the 17th country to join this research project.

Private Members' Business

The ALS Society of Canada is leading fundraising efforts and seeking to sequence up to 1,000 genomes, with four of Canada's leading ALS geneticists coming together in their first ever cross-country collaboration. Four other Canadian ALS clinics have also come together to collect and store blood samples being used for research, including the G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre's ALS centre in Vancouver, the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre ALS clinic in Toronto, the ALS program at the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital, and the ALS clinic at the CHU de Québec.

As of today, 7% of Canada's goal has been reached. While 62 DNA profiles are good for a month's work, it is vital that this important research initiative be discussed publicly so that more people, especially Canadians, can participate or donate. As for the status of the project as a whole, 7,963 DNA profiles have been collected so far, with the goal of collecting 22,500 DNA profiles.

There is still a lot of work to be done. However, as we can all see, countries around the world are coming together to find a cure.

• (1125)

I am happy to support Motion No. 105. I believe that we should be using our resources to help advance research for diseases such as ALS.

Our Conservative Party has always been a strong advocate for neurological research, and we have always supported the need for more ALS research. In 2011, Brain Canada was created, with the previous Conservative government investing \$100 million over seven years. This includes \$10 million to the ALS Society of Canada through Brain Canada to stimulate research relevant to ALS. I was so happy to see the Minister of Finance invest up to \$20 million in additional matching funds to Brain Canada in budget 2016. I hope that it will continue to be a national non-profit organization that the government invests in.

We parliamentarians saw how rapidly this disease can progress. Our colleague, the late member for Ottawa—Vanier, was diagnosed with ALS in November 2015. We saw his courage. We saw him try to persevere and remain in the House of Commons as much as he could to represent his constituents. We saw him live out a day as Speaker of the House, a moment which I think brought us all closer. We saw this awful disease rapidly take over his body and his speech. I do not think there is a member in the House who would not agree that action needs to be taken to ensure that a cure for ALS is found.

There is hope. Living with ALS should not be the end. We know that progress has been made and is still being made every single day.

There are 400,000 people around the world who are affected by the disease, with more than 100,000 dying every single year. We need to understand that while millions have been raised for ALS, portions of these funds are allocated to help patients and their families who typically spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to care for a loved one, and this is a struggle for families. ALS Canada's provincial chapters use a portion of donations to help these families access care in their community and provide specialized equipment to ALS patients.

We must all remember that ALS does not just affect the individuals, but it affects the families and friends as well. There is nothing worse than watching a person one loves and cares about

progressively get weaker, lose his or her speech, and eventually become immobilized.

Unfortunately, unlike many other diseases, there is no survivorship. There are currently no anniversaries to celebrate the day that an individual beats ALS. As Dr. Lorne Zinman, a neurologist who is the head of the ALS clinic at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto, stated:

...there are so many smart people working on this disease now and it has the necessary attention, and all the community is really excited about a breakthrough in the hopefully not too distant future.

The day for a cure is not an impossible expectation. We have seen breakthroughs with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and many other once-fatal diseases. These diseases have become manageable thanks to research, commitment, and government investment. I believe that researchers are on the right path. If we as a country continue to support projects, such as project MinE, and continue to support our researchers, I believe that ALS will be a disease of the past.

• (1130)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today as health critic for the New Democratic Party and on behalf of all my New Democrat colleagues to stand in support of Motion No. 105 and to speak to the importance of addressing amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease or ALS.

I also want to express again my congratulations and thanks to the member for Humber River—Black Creek for her support in this area and her hard work in bringing this important issue before the House.

ALS has devastating effects on the many individuals it affects directly, on their families and caregivers, and on our entire public health care system. It is a disease that does not discriminate. In its most common form, it arrives unexpectedly and can affect anyone, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or age.

Its impacts are keenly felt by all Canadian communities, including our very own here on Parliament Hill. All of us remember our colleague Mauril Bélanger's courageous public struggle with ALS. Mr. Bélanger was diagnosed with ALS following the 2015 federal election, and it was especially difficult to know that at the very moment he hoped to live out his dream of being elected Speaker of this chamber, he was struggling to find his voice.

He sent a note to his colleagues announcing he had been diagnosed in the fall of 2015, and he passed away last August. This shows how sudden and rapid the pathology of this disease can be. However, Mr. Bélanger did not go quickly, in terms of the impact he made, nor was he silenced.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Bélanger was the first MP to use a voice generator on the job. He took advantage of the tool in January 2016 to introduce a private member's bill to make the English lyrics to *O Canada* gender neutral. He also used the computerized voice from his iPad in March 2016 to carry his remarks when he served as honorary Speaker of the House. By that time, Mr. Bélanger needed assistance to walk. He thanked his colleagues for the great privilege before he was helped out of the Speaker's chair. My colleague, the member for Outremont, called this "a rare moment of grace in our parliamentary institutions."

Let us seize this moment to commemorate Mr. Bélanger's passionate voice and to work together towards finding a cure for this deadly disease. Let us honour our colleague and ensure that all Canadians have access to high-quality, compassionate, and effective care.

This motion calls on the House to reiterate its commitment to combat ALS, to increase funding for medical research and awareness campaigns, and to develop a comprehensive national strategy to assist with the eradication of this disease.

New Democrats support this motion. We have a long, proud tradition of advocating for federal leadership on health care issues. Indeed, among our party's foundational pillars stands a commitment to expanding health care and ensuring that all Canadians have access to treatments and medicines they need, when they need them, no matter where they live, no matter their economic circumstance, and no matter their background.

ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease which destroys nerve cells that control muscles, leading to disability. The living wires which connect the brain to the patient's muscles degenerate leading to a loss of mobility, speech, and to the gradual paralysis of the muscles of the throat and diaphragm as the patient loses the ability to swallow, cough, and breathe.

ALS is a terminal disease. It does not have a cure nor an effective treatment. Currently, approximately 3,000 Canadians are living with ALS. Every year, 1,000 will succumb to the disease and 1,000 will be newly diagnosed. The lifespan after diagnosis is, on average, two to five years.

ALS is inherited in 5% to 10% of cases. In most people with familial ALS, their children have a fifty-fifty chance of developing the disease. In its most common form, there is no known cause. ALS can affect anyone, with many people being struck down by the disease in the prime of their life. However, the risk increases as individuals grow older.

As Canada's population ages, it is becoming increasingly more important that we prepare our health care system and our communities for the inevitable rise in the number of Canadians suffering from ALS and other age-related illnesses. Some of the early signs and symptoms of ALS include: difficulty walking or doing normal activities; weakness in legs, feet, ankles, and hands; trouble swallowing and eating; muscle cramps and twitching in arms, shoulders, and tongue.

• (1135)

Most people with ALS will also develop trouble speaking over time. This usually starts as occasional mild slurring of words but

progresses to become more severe. Speech eventually becomes more difficult for others to understand and people with ALS must rely on other communication technologies to communicate. For many with the disease, losing their voice is closely connected with the loss of autonomy and self-identity.

Most of us will recall the 2014 ice bucket challenge co-funded by Pete Frates in part to raise awareness of these impacts. Through broad public initiatives such as that, Canadians came together in an unprecedented way to support ALS research and care, resulting in \$17 million being raised. Of those funds, \$11.5 million were dedicated to research and then matched with \$10 million by Brain Canada, a conduit of the federal government's Canada brain research fund.

Due to a Canada brain research fund allocation deadline of March 2017, the funds from the current ALS Canada partnership will be fully invested by 2016 and the momentum that we have created will become difficult to maintain. Continuing these programs is critical to creating a world where ALS is a treatable disease, perhaps even prevented. The programs currently operating this partnership with Brain Canada consist of Hudson grants, discovery grants, and career transition awards.

In its submission to the 2017 pre-budget consultations, the ALS Society of Canada recommended to the government some concrete action it would like to see taken.

First, it asked that the federal government invest \$25 million over five years, which is \$5 million per year, to maintain the momentum built through the ice bucket challenge and partnership with Brain Canada and the Canada brain research fund.

Second, the ALS Society of Canada asked the federal government to invest \$10 million to allow every Canadian living with ALS an opportunity to contribute a sample, and to allow the contribution of every stored sample from those who have passed, to project MinE, an independent large-scale whole genome research project.

A prominent Canadian-backed initiative, project MinE plans to map the complete DNA profiles of 15,000 people with ALS along with 7,500 people who do not have ALS, being a control group, to create a database of genetic information on the disease. They will then compare that data from the ALS participants and the non-ALS participants and hopefully find the genetic mutations linked to ALS. Once they find those, hopefully we can find possible treatments.

Private Members' Business

The Canadian component of project MinE brings together four of Canada's leading ALS geneticists from Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Quebec City for their first ever cross-country collaboration. Each has led or been a part of international consortia that have resulted in some of the most important genetic discoveries in the field. They also represent a geographical balance that provides a collaborative set of Canadian samples representative of ALS cases across the country. Dr. Nicholas Dupré, Dr. Ian Mackenzie, Dr. Ekaterina Rogaeva, and Dr. Guy Rouleau are leading this research.

Other collaborators in Canada's project MinE effort are the ALS clinics that will collect and in some cases store the blood samples being used for the initiative. Potential ALS clinic partners that have been identified to date are the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre's ALS centre in Vancouver, the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre ALS clinic in Toronto, the ALS program at the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital, and the ALS clinic at CHU de Québec.

In essence, ALS research has come further in the last five to seven years than in the previous century, and researchers are hopeful for a continued acceleration of knowledge leading to an effective treatment. As of 2017, most of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field believe they now have the tools required to understand how ALS is caused, which will ultimately lead to treatments for this fatal disease. They are waiting for the Liberal government to help them by committing those funds in the budget.

We have to do more. Just as Mr. Bélanger's work in this Parliament continues to this day, we must commit ourselves to working together to find a cure for this deadly disease.

Finally, for those who have lost a loved one to ALS, we grieve with them. We remain steadfast in our commitment to ending ALS. We pledge to support those supporting a loved one living with ALS. For those living with ALS, we are with them. We will not give up until we find an effective treatment and make ALS a disease of the past. New Democrats will do everything we can to make these three objectives a reality.

• (1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House this morning to discuss the motion moved by my colleague, the member for Humber River—Black Creek. The purpose of the motion is to cast light on a terrible disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. All of us here in the House have witnessed what this disease can do to human beings because we all saw what it did to our former colleague, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger.

I will always remember the meetings we had during the election campaign at Mauril's place every Monday at 9 p.m. Mauril made sure to feed us because he knew we had spent long days knocking on doors. Those who knew him know that Mauril was not afraid to speak his mind. Back at the beginning, he was the Mauril we had always known, with his powerful, authoritative voice. Towards the end, Mauril spoke less and less. His voice was no longer as powerful or as authoritative. I told myself that a 78-day campaign takes its toll, even on veterans of the campaign trail.

After the campaign, I saw Maurice at an event. He had completely lost his voice, and I told myself that he had been losing his voice towards the end of the campaign and probably lost it entirely because he must have made a lot of noise the night of the 19th. I found 1,001 excuses to believe that nothing was seriously wrong with Mauril.

We all know how the story ended, but it was because of him that I witnessed what ALS can do to human beings.

[*English*]

Before Mauril had the courage to share his journey with all of us in the chamber, I did not know much about this disease, except that Professor Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with ALS and somehow managed to survive. Sadly, this was the only exposure to ALS I had much of my life. Then a few years back, the ice bucket challenge happened. We participated, gave money, and then the ALS issue faded.

We have an all-party ALS caucus, which I proudly chair. I was interested in this issue because I witnessed what happened to our friend and thought I needed to make a difference. I was even more determined when ALS Society of Canada informed me that its community was always 3,000 individuals diagnosed with ALS. Nearly 1,000 die each year in Canada. This fact makes it hard for ALS Society of Canada to raise funds and cultivate champions within its community as they will most likely die of the disease within two to five years. Unlike cancer, there are no survivors.

Speaking of champions, I want to acknowledge Mrs. Carol Skinner, who was at our first ALS meeting. I want to thank her for sharing her story with us and for not giving up. I also want to acknowledge her husband and the 2,999 other families out there that are supporting their loved ones. We know that 80% of the burden of care is shouldered by a family member. The cost on families can range from \$150,000 to \$250,000, and that is not counting the loss of revenues should the diagnoses result in a loss of employment.

We know that 80% of those diagnosed with ALS will die within two to five years. I now know that Stephen Hawking is part of the lucky 10% who get to survive 10 years or longer. We also know that only 10% of those diagnosed with ALS is attributed to family genes. Sadly, that is all we know about the cause of ALS. Doctors can determine the cause of ALS for only 5% to 10% of patients. The rest we do not know, for now.

Research is the most significant lever we have to give a chance for those who are diagnosed with ALS to survive. That is why I support the motion. Research is the only way to increase the likelihood of finding a cure and increasing survival rates. We know this is true. For example, cancer survival rates for all cancers went up from 53% to 60% in approximately 15 years, and that is not factoring in all the progress that has been made over the past century. That is all because of research.

Furthermore, the leading experts and clinicians believe they have the tools required to effectively understand how ALS is caused because of the research done in the past five years. That is more research combined in the last 100 years. However, more needs to be done. For example, project MinE, which aims to profile 15,000 individuals with ALS and 7,500 control subjects worldwide, will provide targets to researchers. Essentially, it will allow researchers to adapt a ready, aim, fire strategy as opposed to a ready, fire strategy. If we do not know the cause, it is extremely hard to identify the cure or provide targeted medicine.

● (1145)

Most ALS researchers believe that limitation to developing treatments is resources in the form of research investments. Of the 30-plus genes known to play a role in the development of ALS, very few have been examined in detail by more than one research facility in the world.

Leading experts in ALS research know there are multiple genetic factors that contribute to people developing ALS, and it is often a combination of these factors that leads to the diagnosis. They also know it is possible for the genetic mutations to show up in healthy individuals, but they never lead to developing ALS. It is for this reason that project MinE will look into the genetic profiles of 15,000 ALS patients worldwide. This would allow us to get a better understanding of the genetic difference in mutations that have a strong causal effect on individuals developing ALS, therefore increasing the chance of identifying the specific cause and eventually a cure.

I want to applaud the ALS Society of Canada for taking part in this study. It is a global effort and I am glad to see that Canada will be participating. Our diversity in Canada will provide better sampling in this global initiative. The project in Canada is currently funded at 36%. All the funding comes from grassroots fund raising campaigns. I hope governments will come to the table to at least bring the total project cost to 50%. This would greatly accelerate Canada's participation. The project worldwide was officially launched in 2013. It is up to us to decide how quickly we get this done in Canada.

I want to take this opportunity to elaborate on a subject that members of Parliament have been lobbied on for quite some months now in regard to ALS. and that is the right to try legislation.

I want to thank the member of Parliament for Humber River—Black Creek for not including this in her motion as this would have caused me to rethink my support. I agree with the objectives in the proposed bill we have seen. Essentially, we need to find a better way to get pharmaceutical research to market to ensure that patients can benefit from it. However, the no liability clause in the proposed bill, which would effectively remove all responsibility from the sponsor of the drug, is certainly not the proper way to move forward on this. The sponsor must continue to bear responsibility. There is a better path forward and that path involves more dollars for research. That is the reason why I support the motion.

I know it can be easy for me to say as I do not face a terminal illness. In fact, if I were in that position, I would try every avenue to find a cure. However, I am also cognizant of the fact that many terminally ill patients have been taken advantage of in the past. In

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many cases, it killed them before their time or caused even more illness. Furthermore, some of the false hopes that are given to certain communities because of the so-called miracle treatment are despicable. We only have to think of the recent example with those diagnosed with MS and CCSVI treatment.

Having said this, I want to applaud the work Jeff Perrault of Adaptive Canuck ALS Foundation has done and his determination to advocate for the rest of his life for what he believes is right. He is, in my mind, a great advocate for those who have been diagnosed with ALS. I do recognize that we need to find a better way to access innovative medicine wherever it may become available in the world. We just need to ensure the patient is always front and centre in these decisions.

We are close to finding a positive path for those who are diagnosed with ALS. For this to happen, we need to continue to advocate for more research investment dollars, raise awareness and provide a leadership role in Canada. We need a coordinated approach in Canada that rewards horizontal information sharing.

Once again, I want to thank my hon. colleague for bringing this important motion forward. This is our ice bucket challenge and I encourage and challenge all members of the House to support the motion.

● (1150)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in support of the motion by the member for Humber River—Black Creek, Motion No. 105, which calls on the House to not only reiterate support for ALS research and awareness, but also for the government to increase funding for ALS research and develop a national strategy for the eradication of ALS.

We all know someone who has been struck by this disease. In the House, we watched ALS take one of our, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger, just last year. I would be remiss if I did not take time in this debate to send our thoughts and prayers to Mr. Bélanger's family and our colleagues across the way. I still look back at Mr. Bélanger's day as Speaker as one of the more memorable moments I have spent in the House, with the cheers from all sides of the House and, of course, the pride Mr. Bélanger displayed as he took his place in the Speaker's chair.

A dear friend of mine lost her father to ALS years back. He was a justice of the peace in Edmonton and served his community without fail in that role. Despite running across a rogue's gallery of Edmontonians appearing before him for bail hearings every day, he never had a bad word to say about his service to the city. In the early 1990s, when I left Edmonton to hunt for work, he helped take care of my home in my absence, mowing the lawn and taking care my dog without any expectation of a favour in return. After the disease had taken its toll and he knew it was his time, his final request was simply to be brought back to his home to pass surrounded by family.

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Debilitating diseases like ALS affect our communities in various ways. Health care is always a hot button issue, particularly health transfers. As we know, they have been at the forefront of political discussions in the last few months. From accessibility to community support to program funding and resources, we hear from people at all levels. I know my office, no doubt like many other MPs here, work with constituents who need access to caregiving and are seeking help to find regional resources, and, as is often the case, are looking for more support from a system that may not be best equipped to handle changing demographics and demand.

Discussions like the one we are having today are essential for establishing an action plan for community organizations that serve those who live with debilitating conditions. Approximately 3,000 Canadians live with ALS, a disease with no known cause, no genetic predispositions, and, upon diagnosis, gives a sufferer an average life expectancy of just two to five years. ALS can hit anyone at any time in his or her life. While the average onset is 40 to 60 years, there are people under the age of 20 being diagnosed.

It is important that we ensure organizations serving the communities we represent have the best information, the right experts, and the appropriate tools to help the people who rely on them for their help. Despite knowing what we do about the disease, there is still much to learn. There is no way to detect the disease early, no treatment to delay the development of the disease, and while new drugs emerge constantly, there is no cure.

Further research into neurological disorders, brain injuries, and general brain sciences may open new doors to how we approach ALS treatment and maybe even detection. A report done a few years ago out of Boston University noted a potential connection between brain injury and ALS. It was found that some former athletes all shared an abnormal protein in their brains and spinal cords, all had a history of repeated brain trauma, and several had been diagnosed with ALS before death.

When I read of this study, I could not help but think of a friend and former work colleague of mine who we lost to ALS. He had played college football at Brigham Young University with future NFL star Steve Young as his teammate. My friend was always quick to point out he was a third stringer and that Steve Young was too busy with the attention of fans and young women, which came with being a starting quarterback, to even talk to my friend.

Upon diagnosis, my colleague decided to live out his years to the fullest. He remarried, attended several, and I note several, Super Bowls, and travelled the world to golf. He never let his condition change him or get him down, ensuring his golfing buddies still razzed him when he made a bad swing or fell over in a sand trap. I am always left to wonder if his years of college football played a part in the disease that took him.

More research in these areas may help us determine what lifestyle factors, if any, contribute to a higher risk of developing this disease. In 2013, our previous government launched funding for concussion and brain injury research. This is a good start, and it is my hope the current government continues on this path for the sake of our kids, our friends, even my friends across the aisle, who still play contact sports.

This kind of research also helps organizations like the ALS Society of Canada determine what areas they need to focus on for the people who look to them for help. For parents, spouses, and family members who are living with and/or supporting someone with ALS, it can be a struggle to find the resources and community support they need to help their loved ones.

• (1155)

Caregivers can be struck with various challenges when caring for someone who needs full-time support. These challenges include stress, social withdrawal, depression, high blood pressure, sleep deprivation, as well as financial strain and job insecurity. Caregivers are expected to power through some of the most emotionally and physically exhausting situations, all while making sure they are giving a high standard of care to the person they love.

ALS comes with many challenges, one being the family caregivers, who are often young themselves, being forced to take a leave of absence or quit their jobs to care for a loved one. Without the appropriate resources, or at least without knowing where to get those resources, the financial burden on a family caregiver can rapidly increase.

The ALS Society of Alberta notes that, "A person with ALS can require equipment and care valued at more than \$240,000". For someone who is overwhelmed with these new care responsibilities, the new financial realities for health equipment and nursing and the question of how they will be able to pay day-to-day expenses, like rent, mortgages, and bills, can be devastating.

It can be argued that these issues are the jurisdiction of provincial health policy, but we still have a duty to help our constituents when they come to our office, looking for help, to bring these concerns forward and, hopefully, develop evidence-based policies as a response to the needs of the people we hear it from.

Private members' business is an essential part of our parliamentary process, which is why, historically, votes on matters like this motion before us today are free votes left to the discretion of the individual member, regardless of political stripe.

It is here within this legislative and procedural framework that we can seek and find support for issues like this in a non-partisan and supportive manner. It allows for co-operation. It lets us, as individual members, branch off beyond our respective parties' interests and serve the interests of the people who elected us.

We have numerous motions, like Motion No. 105, that are before us in the House right now. One motion, in particular, from the member for Niagara Falls, who is working in partnership with the member for Don Valley West, calls for developing a national Alzheimer's and dementia strategy.

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We had one introduced by the member for Edmonton Manning that, unfortunately, did not pass for what I can only imagine were political reasons, given the bill would have helped thousands, if not millions, of Canadians present and future in accessing safe and efficient organ donation. The member for Edmonton Manning has himself saved a life by donating an organ, so he knows what a national donor registry could have meant for those in need. He had the support of many national organizations, but his worthy bill was voted down in a whipped vote.

Just last week, the government voted down a private member's bill put forward by a member for the NDP. The bill would have allowed small business owners passing down the business to family to be treated the same tax-wise as if they had sold to a complete stranger. It was a worthy bill that would have supported small family farms and businesses that had the support of the Conservatives, the NDP, and the Bloc, yet was voted down.

I hope members on the government side will take note of the support given by members of both the Conservative and the NDP opposition to Motion No. 105 and other worthy private members' business and, in the future, vote for what is right and not for what is just politically expedient.

I know constituents in my riding agree with enhancing research and awareness for ALS and other debilitating conditions.

The ice bucket challenge, perhaps of the first viral fundraising campaigns of its kind, raised enough money to fund numerous ALS studies. One of those studies managed to uncover a gene present in both inherited and sporadic forms of ALS. This is one example of how community-based campaigns can fund and drive research. If the ice bucket challenge is any indication, we have hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are ready to get involved and help eradicate ALS.

I want to thank the member for Humber River—Black Creek for introducing the motion that I know most, if not all, members of the House can get behind.

Hopefully, during this session, we can strive to achieve the same level of respect and understanding from each other on this government member's motion as we do for other members' private members' business moving forward.

• (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first, I applaud my colleague from Humber River—Black Creek, who has done a phenomenal job not only on issues such as this, but many others. I often reflect on her efforts in terms of Canadian seniors. I believe she approaches the issue with a caring heart. Once again we have a motion before us dealing with ALS, a brutal disease that affects in a dramatic way many Canadians in all regions of our country. I acknowledge the fact that once again, the member has her heart in the right place as we try to move forward on dealing with another very important issue to Canadians.

We are wearing blue cornflowers today as a symbol of support. We need to recognize that there are hundreds if not thousands of people in our communities who are directly or indirectly affected. As

has been pointed out, we all know some individuals who have been impacted after being diagnosed with ALS.

One of the most visible ones for us recently was the late Mauril Bélanger, a man who after the federal election in my discussions with him talked about running for the position of Speaker of this chamber and how quickly things deteriorated. I was absolutely shocked, as all of us in the chamber were. The previous speaker made reference to the late Mauril sitting in the chair as an honorary Speaker for the day and the impact that had, or the private member's bill. It is a sad story. Unfortunately, there are too many sad stories.

The good news is that we have a community and a support system with different organizations and stakeholders that are there to support individuals who have been diagnosed with ALS and their families. We recognize the challenges in health care today. What role should the national government play in dealing with this? I have often taken the approach when I was the health care critic in the province of Manitoba that we need to do more in terms of spending on research.

There are many different diseases and disorders and the government needs to be more proactive in looking at ways in which we can have a tangible impact, save lives, and be there for families. That is one of the reasons we are supportive in terms of acknowledging, and in certain areas providing funding for, organizations that help in the long term to look for cures and support research, studies and so forth.

As the national government we can provide national leadership. It is important that we recognize who does what in our health care system. As I said, there are great organizations that have led the fight, especially in the areas of research, public awareness, and so forth. Provincial governments are the administrators of health care. I would suggest that through the national government we need national leadership to ensure what is happening in one province is being spread out, that good things that take place in one region of the country are being shared in all regions of the country. I believe all members want to look at ways in which we can have a more tangible impact and want to see a national government that has a perspective, that is going to look at the different stakeholders including provinces and others.

• (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have five and a half minutes to complete his speech the next time that this issue is before the House.

[*Translation*]

The time 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.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT**

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak once again to the Rouge park bill. When I say, “once again”, it is probably my fourth, fifth, or even sixth time speaking about this national enterprise, the Rouge park. I have spoken on this side of the House about the park, I have spoken on that side of the House about the park, and I am somewhat pleased that we are finally inching our way toward a conclusion of speaking about the park. I remember as clearly as today standing on that side of the House and saying for the member for Wellington—Halton Hills that we could solve this dispute over ecological integrity in a heartbeat simply by the insertion of a minor amendment, and then we could unanimously support the creation of the park. But for reasons best known to that member's party, rather than that member, the Conservatives decided that clause would not be inserted. The consequence was that the members from the environment community and the members from the farm community could not see their way clear to be jointly supportive. Thankfully, that roadblock has been cleared up. I and the member for Davenport, with whom I will be splitting my time, will elucidate somewhat on the significance of the insertion of an ecological integrity clause, the main effect of which is to bring all of the players into the tent, in order to have a truly national park.

The last time I spoke about this park was shortly after Thanksgiving, and I described to the chamber that my family and I, along with our kids and grandkids and respective spouses, etc., had taken a post-Thanksgiving walk in the park on a glorious fall day. I have to recognize the way in which my wife will make sure that we are all out the door enjoying the beauty of this park. It really is a magnificent asset for the eastern GTA, for Ontario, and indeed nationally.

I also feel that we should recognize the Herculean efforts of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and her staff for worrying this file along, making sure that it does not simply fall off the legislative agenda. I want to publicly thank the minister for her efforts in making sure this file continues to move. I also think that Minister Duguid in the provincial legislature needs to be recognized once again for his willingness and his efforts in bringing again all the parties together: the environmentalists, the community leaders, and the farmers. Finally, the Minister of Health needs to be recognized, again for her conciliation efforts among all of the various parties. I also need to recognize the committee that dealt with the file expeditiously after second reading and submitted a unanimous report, which I think is close to where we are in this chamber at this time. I am rather hoping that once this chamber deals with this bill, the Senate in turn will deal with it expeditiously. It is after all the year 2017, our sesquicentennial, and it is a glorious way that we can celebrate the great natural but also aboriginal heritage that we have in this part of the eastern GTA.

As members know, if we do not preserve this it just simply disappears. It is not as if there are not enormous pressures on this part of this land mass to have it just simply disappear because of the population pressures in the Toronto areas, the ever-escalating land prices, and also the transportation corridors, etc. If we do not preserve the space it will be lost, and with it our heritage will be lost.

• (1210)

Sir John A. Macdonald, in 1885, designated Banff a reserve. It was the initial effort on his part to start the national parks system, which formally commenced in 1917. It was 100 years ago that we started the national parks system, with Fort Anne in Annapolis Royal, in Nova Scotia. We now have a network of 46 parks and 171 national historic sites.

It is our heritage, and it is something the government has recognized by making access to our national parks free to all Canadians for the year 2017. I am hoping that Canadians take advantage of this. It is, after all, their heritage.

In this particular area, something in the order of five to seven million people have, within an hour or an hour and a half, access to the park.

Because we have prioritized ecological integrity, there is a real chance that we could be world leaders in reconciling the natural heritage, the aboriginal heritage, the pressures of a modern economy, and the pressures of an expansionary real estate market and the 1,700 species of animals and plants that are in this park as we speak.

The Rouge National Urban Park features an incredible array of plants and animals. It is one of the most biologically diverse places in Canada. Within an area with five to seven million people, we have one of the most biologically diverse places in Canada.

The park also features ecosystems that are increasingly rare, namely Carolinian forests, along with wetlands, meadows, and marshes. In addition to its compelling natural heritage, Rouge National Urban Park is also incredibly rich in its cultural and agricultural heritage. For millennia, indigenous peoples gathered, farmed, and traded on lands that now lie within the boundaries of the Rouge. The region includes some of the busiest and most important indigenous sites in North America. Centuries ago, European settlers and their descendants began to farm here, and many parts of the park have been farmed continuously ever since.

As the greater Toronto area grew during the last century, the Rouge came to attract people eager to escape the city to hike, canoe, camp, and swim. I would put myself and my family among those people.

We are in the process of celebrating 150 years of our Confederation and 100 years since designating our first national heritage site. Both anniversaries are very much worth celebrating, because they help us understand how far Canada has come and what our country can achieve.

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By supporting the efforts of Parks Canada to protect and present our treasured places, Bill C-18 would increase public understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of this country's heritage. I am hoping that hon. colleagues will join me in supporting this bill, and I am hoping for unanimous support so that it will go to the Senate with a forceful message that all members indeed support this bill.

● (1215)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am thankful that this bill has been put forward, and we will support it at third reading.

The current Rouge Park area has long been protected, first and foremost by community groups keeping an eye on it and by the provincial government under its legislation. As part of the land transfer agreement with the Government of Ontario, the federal government has committed to meeting or exceeding the ecological protections that have been in place in the past. How will the government ensure that this commitment is met in this legislation and ultimately in the parks management plan?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I know that my hon. colleague sits on the environment committee and has made significant contributions.

The issue of support for this bill has come up because of the existence of the ecological integrity clause. The ecological integrity clause will enable the park management to make ecological integrity the priority in all its decisions. There will be decisions that will be very difficult, such as when there is a need to expand a highway. How will ecological integrity be handled when a highway is expanded, or some other commercial development of some kind or another?

The Government of Ontario is satisfied at this point that this clause, along with its contribution to the management plan, will enable the protection it is looking for so that those standards remain at the highest possible level.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the hon. member recalled how many times he has spoken on this issue. I started working on protecting the Rouge in 1986, and by 1989, the minister of state for the environment, Pauline Browes, was doing something about it.

This has taken a long time. We are almost there. However, with all due respect to the hon. member, does he not agree with the people from Friends of the Rouge, who have been fighting this battle for decades? This is not, strictly speaking, an urban park. It is near a city, but it is a wild area. It does need protection, building on existing agreements. They have been asking, even at this point, that we raise their concern that we should include a subsection that says that this entire bill “is intended to support and complement the implementation of the pre-existing Ontario Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, Rouge Park, and Watershed Conservation Plans.”

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her work on this park and for her obvious commitment to all things green. Indeed, this park would not exist without the organizational and motivational efforts of people like Friends of the Rouge and a whole bunch of others.

The issue here is to bring various communities of disparate interests into the same tent. With the commitment to ecological integrity, the Government of Ontario is satisfied that we will meet the highest possible standards of ecological integrity, notwithstanding the existence of various management plans that currently exist and that will, in fact, be referenced and incorporated in some manner into the overall park management plan.

Mr. Shaun Chen (Scarborough North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my friend and colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, for his advocacy.

This park, once established, will be within one hour's travel time for seven million Canadians. Can the member please describe how this will be a huge benefit for youth and students in the area?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, this will be an enormous benefit for all of us: youth, students, non-youth, and non-students.

It is a marvellous jewel that we will be able to preserve in the year 2017, after many years, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has described, of working on this. As I say, it is a real testament to advocacy on the part of civil society.

● (1220)

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to speak in support of Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

Parks are very important to the residents of my downtown Toronto riding of Davenport, because we are an inner city riding and green space is at a premium. We have a few small parks in our riding, such as Earls Court Park, Dufferin Grove Park, and even smaller ones, like McGregor Park and McCormick Park. We turn pretty much every green space into a parkette, because green space is so needed. We have places like the Bartlett Parkette, Chandos Park North, and the Beaver Lightbourn Parkette. Every piece of green space we can find we turn into some sort of parkette, because that is how much we love our green space in downtown Toronto. That is why the residents of Davenport are particularly excited about Rouge National Urban Park. It is a national park that is accessible to Davenport residents, and indeed seven million residents in the GTA, and everyone can get there by public transit. We are so excited.

The proposed legislation has been debated in the chamber and was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The standing committee heard the testimony of many witnesses, studied a number of briefs, and considered several proposed amendments. The committee concluded its work by endorsing the proposed legislation with no changes.

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The primary objective of Bill C-18 is to ensure that Parks Canada integrates the principle of ecological integrity in its management of Rouge National Urban Park. The introduction of ecological integrity as the first priority in park management is consistent with the way Parks Canada has been managing the park since it was officially established in 2015. I actually looked up the definition of “ecological integrity”, because I wanted to make sure I understood what that actually means. What it means is that the park is managed in a way that human activity does not impair the ecosystem of the park, that the natural ecological processes are intact and self-sustaining, and that the park is managed in a way that the ecosystem can continue to evolve naturally and have the capacity to renew itself so we can enjoy this national park not only today but for generations to come.

Parks Canada has had decades of experience applying ecological integrity in a variety of protected areas, each with its own unique needs and sets of circumstances. Rouge National Urban Park will be no different. Ecological integrity will be applied in respect of the park's urban setting and in support of its reason for establishment: to protect and present for current and future generations the natural and cultural heritage of the park and its diverse landscapes, to promote a vibrant farming community, and to encourage Canadians to discover and connect with their national protected heritage areas.

For more than a century, Canadians have entrusted the management of our cherished places to Parks Canada. The agency has responded by continually establishing and meeting the highest standards for conservation and restoration while balancing the delivery of internationally celebrated educational and visitor programs, without compromising the ecological integrity of the parks. Today Parks Canada manages 46 national parks, four national marine conservation areas, and 171 national historic sites. These are essential components of our heritage. They are places that define us, inspire us, and reinvigorate us.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-18 would support Parks Canada's plan to realize the full potential of Rouge National Urban Park. By amending the Rouge National Urban Park Act to add ecological integrity as the first priority in Parks Canada's management of Rouge National Urban Park, the government would not only be able to meet its mandate commitment in working with Ontario to enhance the country's first national urban park but would be able to protect this important ecosystem and provide greater certainty for park farmers, who will be able to continue carrying out agricultural activities within the park. I am convinced that this is particularly important for Rouge National Urban Park because of its composition and close proximity to Canada's largest city and metropolitan area.

Rouge National Urban Park comprises a rich assembly of natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes, with many remarkable features, including an abundance of flora and fauna. Indeed, with over 1,700 species of plants and animals, the park is one of the most biologically diverse places in Canada.

• (1225)

Managing and protecting such incredible natural heritage, when some six million people live within easy commuting distance, represents a formidable challenge.

For millennia, people have lived, hunted, fished, and farmed on the land that today forms Rouge National Urban Park. In the last

century, the Rouge became increasingly important to city dwellers eager to experience nature, to hike, to canoe, to camp, and to swim. The area has long inspired naturalists and even artists, like Group of Seven artist F.H. Varley, who painted scenes of the Rouge River late into his career.

Working farms are a unique feature of the Rouge National Urban Park, and their presence is essential to achieving the park vision, having been farmed continuously for centuries. In a day and age when many people, particularly those who live in the urban city, say that we are disconnected from nature, that we need to find ways to make sure we do not forget how food is made and the efforts that go into it, the Rouge National Urban Park allows not only the residents of Davenport but all of those in the surrounding areas to be able to find a place to see how food is made, and to help us make sure we continue to reconnect with nature, the green space, and the world around us.

Preserving all of these elements in such a populous area requires special care. The government understands what is at stake in Rouge National Urban Park, and Parks Canada has already completed several important conservation projects to support its ecological integrity. Many more projects are either under way or in the planning stage. For instance, Parks Canada is working on restoration projects with the municipalities, environmental groups, and local farmers by reintroducing threatened turtles, making it easier for wildlife to cross park roads, and enhancing the health of agricultural wetlands. Other projects aim to protect existing wildlife, control invasive species, and enhance visitor experiences. Parks Canada is also working to enhance farmland, promote a vibrant farming community, and ensure a long-term future of agriculture on the Rouge.

I want to add that I used to love taking my nephew to Riverdale Farm, which is also in downtown Toronto. I know that he would have loved to have known that a place like the Rouge National Urban Park existed, because it would have helped inspire his creativity and joy of learning about bird species and animals. He just loves green space in general. I think it will cause a lot of happiness for a lot of children in days to come.

Placing the first priority on ecological integrity entails a broad, holistic approach. It involves acknowledging that ecosystems change continuously due to complex interrelated processes. The landscapes that make up Rouge National Urban Park and the plants and animals that live there are in a constant state of flux. They are not the same as they were a century ago, and they will be different again in the future.

Parks Canada has the experience and expertise needed to fulfill the full potential of Rouge National Urban Park. Delivering a consistently excellent visitor experience is an important element of this. Research indicates that people who visit one member of Canada's family of protected areas are likely to visit others. This magnifies the importance of the excellent visitor programming at the Rouge National Urban Park.

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Among the many potential visitors who live nearby are large populations of newcomers to this country. Many of them are in my riding. Many of the people who come to the Rouge are visiting a nationally protected area for the very first time. Ensuring that they enjoy a rich, fulfilling experience is a powerful way to nurture and share Canada's heritage through the agency's excellent visitor programming. The learn to camp program is a prime example of this. Guided by Parks Canada staff and volunteers, program participants learn how to set up camp, roast the perfect marshmallow, and experience the many other joys of the great outdoors. This is just one of the many high-quality visitor programs that Parks Canada delivers in Rouge National Urban Park.

Visitor experiences at Canada's heritage places are designed to provide visitors with meaningful experiences while discovering Canada's natural and cultural heritage.

Bill C-18 also proposes to amend statutes not related to Rouge National Urban Park. One such amendment is that the government would be allowed to expand or complete existing protected heritage areas that have already obtained operational status. Therefore, one of—

• (1230)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry, but the member's time is up.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I myself have worked for probably over four decades trying to protect the North Saskatchewan River valley.

I absolutely give acclaim to the federal government, initially the Conservative government, for looking toward a new kind of park in Canada, national urban parks. Most of our population in this country are moving toward urban areas, and they need green spaces. They often tell my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure that infrastructure should also include our green spaces, and have asked what efforts the government is taking toward the protection of those areas.

Would the member support my recommendation that this should not be a one-off, that it is important that the current federal government put resources aside to establish similar parks across this country, so that those living in urban areas can also enjoy nature?

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I am sorry that I ran out of time.

I am a huge supporter of parks. I come from an inner city, so a park is my lifeline to connecting with nature and the world around us. I am very supportive of anything that would continue to support and enhance parks and connect Canadians with green space in Canada in general.

My colleague mentioned first nations and our parks. I did not get to mention in my comments that indigenous peoples do play a strong role in our national parks and our national marine conservation areas. In many cases they co-operatively manage these protected areas. We need to continue to promote and enhance that as we build that strong new nation-to-nation relationship moving forward.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, once the Rouge National Urban Park deficits are corrected from the first version of the bill, I wonder if government members would be willing to take another look at the Sable Island National Park Reserve. Seismic testing is allowed inside the park, as is directional drilling for oil and gas under the park. It really is an atrocity within the system of national parks in Canada to allow industrial activity, thereby violating the primary concepts and precepts of ecological integrity first and foremost.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's passion for parks and green spaces in Canada.

As I mentioned previously, I am a huge supporter of parks and of green space. I would welcome every opportunity moving forward to look at ways to continue to enhance our green space, to continue to protect and create new park spaces in Canada, and to continue to find ways for Canadians to enjoy the beautiful natural parks that we have in this blessed country that we are lucky to call our home.

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was just so taken with the stories of the member for Davenport that I wonder if she would like to finish off her comments on her position on Scarborough Rouge park.

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for allowing me to do so. There is only one thing I would like to add. We talk a lot about the technical things that Bill C-18 would do in terms of amending three existing statutes, but what is really heartfelt and important for me in the end is that the residents of my riding of Davenport are so excited at the prospect of Rouge National Urban Park. I would urge my hon. colleagues, every single person in the House, to join me in strongly endorsing Bill C-18.

• (1235)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

When I last spoke to this legislation, I remarked that it was both a delight and a disappointment, and I must echo that same qualification today as I join this final debate on Bill C-18.

It is a delight because it offers a wonderful opportunity to celebrate again the magnificent accomplishments of Parks Canada and the agency's pioneering protection and innovative conservation of precious Canadian spaces for more than a century and a quarter.

It is a disappointment because the unnecessary and misapplied conservation principle imposed on Parks Canada contains a sad and unacceptable compromise of that great agency's conservation principles and practices, a compromise clearly intended by the Liberal government to provide federal political cover for the petty partisan obstructionism of the Ontario Liberal government in its refusal to transfer provincial lands to our Conservative government to complete the magnificent new Rouge National Urban Park. My disappointment is mitigated somewhat, because the Liberals have finally brought Bill C-18 to the point of passage.

Government Orders

I will speak first, again, to my delight. It was an honour to serve in a government that, in barely 10 years, increased Canada's protected areas by almost 60%, with new national parks, national park reserves, and marine protected areas. Many of these additions involved remote wilderness areas, such as Nahanni, Nááts'ihch'oh, and Sable Island, similar to Canada's original wilderness national park, Banff National Park.

Then came Canada's first national urban park, building on a decades-old dream of a broad range of passionate and dedicated conservation-minded citizens, community groups, and far-sighted local, provincial, and federal politicians. It is not quite in the centre, but it is certainly surrounded by the Canadian metropolis, the greater Toronto area.

In the 2011 Speech from the Throne and the 2012 budget, our Conservative government announced a commitment to work for the creation of a new national park in the Rouge Valley, and \$143.7 million were assigned to a 10-year plan to create the park, with the provision thereafter for \$7.6 million per year for continuing operations.

Parks Canada's unparalleled expertise and creative talents were brought to bear to meet the challenge of developing and delivering this entirely new park, and the challenges, as I am about to address, were considerable, unlike anything in Parks Canada history.

I had the pleasure of wandering one of the trails in the Rouge this past weekend, and I would recommend to colleagues in the House and to any Canadians or new Canadians watching our proceedings today on television to do the same at the first opportunity.

The Rouge Valley, from the shores of Lake Ontario to the Oak Ridges Moraine, more than 20 kilometres to the north, is a once-pristine natural area that has witnessed more than a century of intense human activity. There are ancient first nation sites, but also a former landfill site and an auto wrecker's yard. Surrounded by residential communities and businesses, the Rouge is criss-crossed by hydro transmission lines, railway lines, highways and secondary roads, and waste water sewers.

In the north, there are 7,500 acres of class A farmland worked by 700 farmers, who were uncertain of their future for decades, on lands expropriated more than 40 years ago by a Liberal government for an airport that was never built.

Despite all of these realities that are so unlike Canada's traditional wilderness parks, the Rouge is still home to marvellous biodiversity: rivers, streams, marshes, a Carolinian ecosystem, and evidence of some of this country's oldest indigenous sites, human history dating back more than 10,000 years.

When the Rouge National Urban Park is completed, it will provide exceptional protection for all of the approximately 1,700 species of plant, animal, and marine life of the Rouge. This includes full, uncompromised protection for all of the valley's threatened and endangered species. Unlike past well-intended but unfulfilled plans for the Rouge, species recovery plans will be mandatory and non-negotiable and under the strongest protection of Canada's Species at Risk Act.

● (1240)

Rouge National Urban Park will provide, for the first time in its history, year-round, dedicated law enforcement through Park Canada's storied park wardens. As with other of our national parks, they will have full powers to enforce a single set of park rules and regulations.

The uncertainty experienced for so long by farmers in the Rouge created by short-term one-year land leases will be eliminated. They will be able to invest in repairs to farm infrastructure, apply best farming practices, and continue to both contribute to the local economy and provide an enduring and productive farming presence in the rich portion of the Rouge for visitors from far and near to see.

Parks Canada's carefully developed plan for this first urban park is exactly what conservationists in the Rouge Park Alliance, the former provincially appointed managing authority of the lands, have requested for decades. The plan was the result of consultations with 150 stakeholder groups and 11,000 Canadians. It has the endorsement of all municipal and regional governments that have committed lands to the Rouge National Urban Park.

However, there was one notable foot-dragging exception. That was the Liberal government of Ontario. That government, through successive infrastructure ministers, and not one parks minister, refused to allow conservation experts at the Ontario Parks agency to evaluate and respond to the Parks Canada plan. I would remind the House again, as I have in the past, that at one point, one infrastructure minister even demanded of me what was effectively a ransom. These were lands, incidentally, that the province had been neglecting, trying to be rid of for years. The minister said that he would transfer the provincial lands to the national park for the payment of \$100 million. Of course, the Conservative government refused to pay.

There are other stories as well, but in the end, in the corridors of Queen's Park, the provincial Liberals said they would not transfer the land the province had been trying to get off its books for decades. They would not transfer the land until they could give it to fellow Liberals. With the outcome of the 2015 election, the Liberals paid back their provincial cousins, with the political cover that Bill C-18 so unfortunately provides.

Bill C-18 contains a bit of the sort of agency housekeeping that Parks Canada performs every year or so. Two of the amendments, as we have already heard today, are fairly routine: a slight change in the boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park, and changes in the Parks Canada Agency Act regarding property considerations and compensation in protected areas. However, the main amendment is an insult to Parks Canada's well-deserved international reputation. As I said at the outset, it is a sad and unacceptable compromise of Parks Canada's conservation principles and practices.

Government Orders

The Liberal government would add to the Rouge National Urban Park Act the condition that it be enforced under the principle of ecological integrity. Ecological integrity does not have a universal definition, but Parks Canada has long considered it applicable only to our wilderness parks largely untouched by civilization. For example, in Banff National Park, where barely 4% of its territory has been disrupted by the Trans-Canada Highway, town sites, and ski hills, ecological integrity means that forest fires or floods are allowed to occur naturally, except where communities or human life may be threatened.

No rational conservationist would allow fires and flooding in the Toronto, Markham, and Pickering urban environments. Alan Latourelle, Parks Canada's CEO for 13 years, from 2002 until his retirement two Augusts ago, after 32 years, was responsible for the Rouge-enabling legislation and he opposed very vigorously the injection of ecological integrity into the legislation.

I am delighted the legislation is now close at hand, which will see, finally, the much-delayed transfer of the Ontario provincial lands. The Rouge National Urban Park, when it is completed, will be at least 13 times the size of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 16 times larger than New York's Central Park, and 33 times larger than London's Hyde Park. Too much time has been wasted on petty political partisanship. It is time to make this park a reality. Although disappointed in the way that would happen under Bill C-18, I look forward to voting tomorrow for completion of this wonderful new national park.

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is encouraging to hear the member say that he looks forward to the vote and the implementation of the legislation.

It is important to recognize that different political governments over the years have built a very solid foundation of national parks. What truly makes this one so unique are the millions of Canadians who are literally a half hour or less away from one of Canada's greatest national parks. Winnipeg has national parks that are not too far from our city, and Canadians value that.

As a part of Canada's 150th birthday celebration, our national parks will be opened at no cost. Does the member have any thoughts on encouraging Canadians to get engaged to go and visit our national parks?

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, indeed, it was the thinking of all those over the decades who had argued, campaigned, and crusaded for the Rouge National Urban Park to make it a springboard for Canadians, old and new, to experience a wonderful natural space, and to also spark an interest in travelling to some of the more remote areas, some of the wilderness parks.

However, as I said, I was wandering one of the Rouge trails yesterday. I was in some of the provincial lands which have yet to be transferred and which have been neglected, unpoliced, unmonitored, and insecure for some time. I was relieved to know that with this law being passed, and the lands being transferred, we will not see the litter along the roadside, which has been allowed under the Ontario responsibility.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my hon. colleague on his speech. He is obviously very passionate about this park. We have some things in common. I too enjoy walking the trails of the well-known Michel-Chartrand park in Longueuil, where urban dwellers can enjoy the flora and sometimes the fauna.

I want to draw my colleague's attention to the magnitude of the existing problems, which are much less dogmatic when it comes to an urban park like the one in question, such as the challenges we experienced when his party was in power and the ones that he himself faced with environmentalists and farmers. These are complex issues.

I would like to ask him whether that is in fact not the nature of this type of park, where there is a need to curb these combined problems associated with the proximity of these other human and urban activities.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question.

[*English*]

In fact, there are many considerations. Over the past 20 to probably 40 years, a variety of conservationists and conservation groups have come together wanting to preserve some of the indigenous heritage locations. They also wanted to examine a park that had been interrupted by human activity, to look at landfill dumps that had been remediated, for example, and to consider the sewer lines that ran through it. Residential houses have property that back on some of the wonderful marshes of the Rouge, and the wildlife can be observed from those backyards. However, our considerations were to make it both accessible to those who lived close by but also to 20% of the country's population that lived within public transit accessibility to the Rouge National Urban Park.

• (1250)

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague from Thornhill for sharing his time with me today.

I am honoured to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act. The Rouge National Urban Park is the first of its kind in Canada. We live in a country that is culturally diverse, but it is environmentally diverse as well.

It is important that all Canadians have an opportunity to experience the beauty of our rich environment and everything it has to offer, which quite frankly, is why this park was established, to introduce more Canadians to nature, local culture, and agriculture.

I would like to start by talking about the history behind the Rouge National Urban Park because it is important for the context of Bill C-18.

Government Orders

As has already been discussed by my hon. colleague from York—Simcoe, the establishment of the Rouge National Urban Park can be traced back to the days of the Mulroney government when members of the House and members of the community recognized the unique environmental landscape of the Rouge Valley area and decided they wanted to protect it for the enjoyment of future generations. However, it was not until 2011, under the previous Conservative government, that concrete action started to take place to secure the formation of the new park.

In the 2011 Speech from the Throne, the previous Conservative government committed \$143.7 million over 10 years for the creation of Rouge National Urban Park. From there, legislation was drafted to ensure that the protection of the park was enshrined in law. In May 2015, the Conservatives passed Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park.

During that time, I frankly was shocked at the amount of opposition coming from my Liberal and NDP colleagues and the amount of political interference that came from the Ontario Liberal government at the expense of protecting the Rouge Valley area.

This leads me naturally to a few concerns I still have with Bill C-18. In my opinion, and this is one many of my colleagues share, Bill C-18 is being used by the federal Liberals as political cover for the refusal by Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberals to transfer the provincial portion of the lands before the 2015 election.

The Liberals have consistently played political games with the Rouge National Urban Park. In fact, provincial infrastructure Minister Chiarelli, secretly demanded a \$100 million payment for the land transfer, which as one would expect, was rejected on principle by the previous Conservative government.

Following this, provincial Minister Duguid wrote a letter stating that the Ontario government would not transfer the lands until the Rouge National Urban Park Act was amended to “ensure that the first priority of park management was “ecological integrity”.

That leads me to my second concern, which is the use of the term “ecological integrity”. The true environmental definition of ecological integrity implies letting forests burn, letting floods run their courses, and allowing wildlife survival without human intervention.

The Rouge sits alongside residential neighbourhoods. It has highways, power lines, and a pipeline across various parts of it, with working farmlands, a former landfill dump site, and even an old wreckers yard within its borders. For these reasons, any attempt at calling our actions ecological integrity would frankly be in words only.

The term “ecological integrity” as the first priority of park management could also provide an opening for the interference or indeed even the removal of the farmers from the park.

•(1255)

Let us be clear, this park is unique in its composition. Everyone who has spoken to this bill has recognized that. There are no other parks like it in Canada. In fact, an important part of its makeup, in my opinion, is the inclusion of farmlands. Coming from the agriculturally diverse part of Canada, I think that it is extremely

important for all Canadians to understand the crucial role that farmers play in our daily lives.

Unfortunately, not everyone has the opportunity to walk out their door and see those farms in action. Having farmers as part of this park will expose many more Canadians to what they do and how they do it and, hopefully, garner more appreciation for the work they do for us.

Opening up the opportunity for farmers to be removed from Rouge National Urban Park would be a disservice to the park as a whole, and to those who visit it.

What is more, and perhaps most important, to protect the safety of Canadians living in close proximity to the park, ecological integrity cannot, and should not, be applied to an urban national park.

As I mentioned previously, part of the definition of “ecological integrity” allows for forest fires to burn and floods to flow freely. If this were to happen in this case, the lives of the people residing in the area could be placed in jeopardy. What exactly would that accomplish, at the expense of safety to Canadians?

Simply put, it is a designation that even Parks Canada has disagreed with, because it is an unrealistic approach to an urban park.

As members know, the safety of Canadians should be of utmost importance to any government. I am extremely disappointed to see this lack of respect for Canadians living in this area from the Liberal government.

Bill C-18, by the way, does not include the transfer of the parklands that were expropriated by the federal Liberals in the early 1970s for an airport that is yet to be built. Nor does it include the additional \$26.8 million over six years and \$3 million annually thereafter in funding that our previous government announced in 2015. I have to admit that I am very disappointed that the Liberals have not followed through on this either.

While Rouge National Urban Park is not particularly close to my riding of Haldimand—Norfolk, we in Haldimand—Norfolk are no strangers to wildlife or to environmental conservation. We are one of the first areas to develop ALUS, the alternative land use services incentive program, which just recently attained national certification, and our area is a biodiversity hotspot as part of the Carolinian life zone. This zone contains productive agricultural lands, forests, and wetlands, and provides habitat for nearly 25% of all of our species that are at risk. This part of our area is home to an extensive list of flora and fauna and, believe it or not, around 400 different species of birds.

In fact, UNESCO, in April 1986, designated the Long Point area as a world biosphere reserve, which was the third to be so designated in Canada, at the time. Today, it is one of 16 biosphere reserves in Canada and provides a great example of the Great Lakes coastal ecosystem and a unique blend of habitats.

Government Orders

I am proud of the hard work that residents in our area, and organizations like Bird Studies Canada, the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve, the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, and other agencies, do to promote the environmental sustainability of our area for people from across Canada and, indeed, from around the world, to enjoy.

These same principles and practices will be applied to Rouge National Urban Park, I hope.

To conclude, I would like to say that I support Rouge National Urban Park and I will be supporting this bill. However, as Her Majesty's official opposition, it is our duty to bring up these concerns. I hope that the Liberal government will not just consider them but take action on them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the fact that the Conservatives are putting some of their concerns on the record with regard to the bill, whether it is today or the other day. I am most encouraged by the fact that it would appear there is unanimous support, in terms of getting the bill through the House, recognizing just how critically important our national park is, not only to the people who live in Toronto, but the millions who will visit Toronto over the year.

I want to highlight something I said previously. Canada is celebrating its 150th birthday this year. As part of this celebration, the Government of Canada has made it very clear we want Canadians to get engaged and get involved in our national parks. This is one of the reasons why there will be free admission to our parks this year.

I wonder if the member would provide some of her thoughts or comments on the importance of celebrating Canada's 150th birthday by getting out there and enjoying some of our national parks.

● (1300)

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, one of my favourite childhood memories is the centennial of Canada in 1967. The whole country was excited about Canada's birthday. We hosted Expo 67, which was considered one of the best world expositions ever anywhere in the world, and the whole country was seized with Bobby Gimby's song, with the "Ontari-ari-ari-o" song, and with visiting every part of Canada. I know my family and I had the opportunity to travel to the east coast and back for the first time, and really took some time to do that. We also at the time visited some national parks along the way. As well, later we headed west. Canada's parks, national parks in particular, are truly a treasure and they are something that we really need to be supporting however we can, and encouraging people to visit.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the words offered by my colleague, but we have to go back and actually check out what was happening in 2012 and 2014.

A headline in 2012 said that "Parks Canada hit hardest by Harper Conservative budget cuts. Up to 1,600 positions are going to be eliminated". Another headline was on a 33% staffing cut in science in Parks Canada. In 2014, a backlog in deferred maintenance of almost \$3 billion made the headlines.

Therefore, I have to ask the hon. member this. Does she not believe that the way that the Conservative government of the day was treating Parks Canada may have had some influence on whether the Ontario government or the supporters of Rouge park wanted it transferred at that time?

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. member is dealing with some alternative facts. It was in fact our previous government that made Nahanni a national park. We expanded the protected areas in this country by almost 60%. That is a significant commitment to conservation right across Canada. That included not just inland parks with forests and those waterways, but also coastal areas that were at risk right across this country, from coast to coast to coast.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I recognize that the Conservatives have seen this as an occasion for a partisan discussion of the Ontario government. Even at this stage, should we not make sure that the existing watershed protection plans for the Rouge Valley are firmly entrenched in parks planning?

Hon. Diane Finley: Madam Speaker, I do not know what it is like in B.C., but in Ontario we have organizations called conservation authorities. I have worked very closely with the ones in southwestern Ontario. Their primary purpose is protection of the watershed areas. They determine who is allowed to build, how close to a flood plain, and indeed how they define the flood plains. They, in my experience, have done a very fine job of protecting and conserving our waterways and habitat in those areas right across Ontario for many years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Haldimand—Norfolk and inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Yellowhead.

I am pleased today to speak to Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act. As the official opposition deputy critic for the environment and climate change and also a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, these matters are important to me.

I am proud to live in a country that has many natural and historic treasures. I am also proud of the work done by Parks Canada, a world-renowned conservation agency that looks after and protects our treasures for current and future generations.

Government Orders

I would like to remind all of my colleagues and all Canadians that the picture the Liberals have been trying to paint of us, the Conservatives, for the past several years regarding the environment is false. They are saying that we are the bad guys and that we are just trying to score political points. However, many of our actions show that the opposite is true. I would like to remind the House that the current Liberal government stretched the truth and deceived environmental groups during the election campaign. Then, after winning the election and forming a majority government, the Liberals announced that the Harper government had done excellent work with public service scientists, that it had set very high and demanding targets, and that the Liberal government had a duty to recognize that. It would use the Conservative targets to actively participate in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gases in keeping with the Paris agreement.

Once again, we can see how dishonest this government is. It took advantage of the vote on the Paris agreement to hide within the wording of the motion that it was going to impose a carbon tax on Canadians. We completely disagree with that tax. The Conservatives voted against that unacceptable ploy, which will take money out of the pockets of Canadians.

We support the Paris agreement. We believe that every province should be responsible for implementing the measures necessary to meet the targets. This falls under their jurisdiction. Quebec did its homework. It does not need the federal government. Once again, the Liberal government of Canada is infringing on provincial jurisdiction.

As for Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, we, the Conservative Party of Canada, the official opposition that I am a member of, we support this park. I want to inform the government that we plan to support this bill because we are in favour of protecting the environment and in favour of providing the tools needed to develop and maintain these parks.

This support should come as no surprise, since it is the Conservative Party that can take credit for creating the Rouge National Urban Park, the country's first urban national park. I would remind the House that the park was created under Stephen Harper's government when, on May 15, 2015, Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park, was passed. That bill helped to position Canada at the forefront of the world's emerging urban protected areas movement.

We are talking about the Rouge National Urban Park. Here is a description to help Canadians and my colleagues really understand what an urban park is. Here is how it is described on the Parks Canada website:

A rich assembly of natural, cultural and agricultural landscapes, Rouge National Urban Park is home to amazing biodiversity, some of the last remaining working farms in the Greater Toronto Area, Carolinian ecosystems, Toronto's only campground, one of the region's largest marshes, unspoiled beaches, amazing hiking opportunities, and human history dating back over 10,000 years, including some of Canada's oldest known Indigenous sites.

What amazing diversity within a single park, and what a wonderful idea to protect this diversity by bringing it all together under the management of Parks Canada.

● (1305)

To that end, the agency worked with local farmers and conservation groups to restore those lands to their original state and improve the health of the park's ecosystems. The fight against invasive species will be intensified, which will contribute to the recovery of species at risk. Additional trails will be created to complete the park's trail system.

This bill seeks to include the notion of ecological integrity. Wow, what a great idea. First of all, no one can even clearly define this concept. When asked, most of the people who live in this environment every day indicated that it would be impossible to apply this concept and that it would lead to never-ending legal battles. The Liberals are once again trying to create the illusion that they are working hard for the environment. As I said, it is merely an illusion.

Almost all the stakeholders voiced their concerns about making ecological integrity one of the guiding principles for an urban park. Every one of the following people spoke out against this idea: Roger Anderson, regional chair of the Region of Durham Regional Council; Wayne Emmerson, chairman and CEO of the York Region; Frank Scarpitti, mayor of Markham; Jack Heath, deputy mayor of Markham; Dave Barrow, mayor of Richmond Hill; Dave Ryan, mayor of Pickering; Glenn De Baeremaeker, deputy mayor of Toronto; Ron Moeser, Toronto city councillor; Alan Wells, chair of the Rouge Park Alliance; Heather Moeser, former executive member of the Coalition of Scarborough Community Associations; Keith Laushway, chair of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust; the York Region Federation of Agriculture, an organization of the Regional Municipality of York; the Altona Forest Community Stewardship Committee; and the Toronto Zoo administration.

Why is the government not listening to these experts? Does it think that they know nothing? They deal with issues like this on a daily basis.

Alan Latourelle, a former director general at Parks Canada who recently retired, indicated that the ecological integrity objective could not be met. He said:

For example, in the Rouge national urban park, a significant component is the land that we've agreed on and are working productively with the farmers. That, for example, would not be able to achieve the ecological integrity objective within that context, but we can demonstrate environmental leadership by working collaboratively with them.

Why impose something unrealistic and unenforceable rather than working with stakeholders? That is what we would have done, and what we did in the past. Why are the Liberal not doing that? This is a good suggestion from someone with real-life experience managing a natural park. Why is the government being so stubborn?

This bill proves that the federal Liberal government is in bed with Premier Wynne and her Ontario Liberal government. They had a plan during the election campaign to make the Conservatives look bad. A minister in the Ontario cabinet, Mr. Chiarelli, secretly demanded a \$100 million payment for the transfer of the lands that belonged to the province. Of course we refused to pay. We manage public funds responsibly, and we want taxpayers to have more money in their pockets.

Government Orders

The current Liberal government, led by the best actor, or perhaps the worst manager, depending on your perspective, got down on its knees before its friends in the Ontario government. The rest is all just window dressing.

In closing, I would like to say that parliamentarians have other priorities besides voting for legislation that has no direct impact on people's daily lives, and more importantly, that cannot be enforced. However, we will not block the bill because we believe it is important to walk the talk, and we are in favour of protecting our lands and natural environment. In my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, which boasts beautiful lands and provincial parks, we work with a number of organizations to protect the environment and our green spaces.

• (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate some of the thoughts that the member across the way expressed.

We all recognize the importance of our national parks. In Manitoba, we are very proud of such parks and sites as the Riding Mountain National Park and Fort Garry, both of which many people visit. We have historical sites, such as The Forks, and so forth. These are all national treasures.

We are now passing legislation that would literally bring a national park within 30 minutes' to an hour's distance for millions of Canadians. It is important to recognize that this year is Canada's 150th birthday, and we encourage Canadians to get out and celebrate by visiting our urban and rural national parks. I wonder if the member might want to provide his thoughts on that.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manitoba for his intervention. Indeed, Canada has many very beautiful provincial, municipal, and federal parks.

I want to correct him on one thing, though: the bill does not create this park because this park already exists. We need to adopt the necessary measures to continue to protect this park. We agree with the Liberals on that.

Where we do not see eye to eye is on how to proceed and the government's insistence on including ecological integrity in the bill. That is the problem. I hope that answers my colleague's question.

[*English*]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to quote from some of the witnesses we heard regarding Bill C-18:

Ecological integrity, is it justified? Of course it is. This is one of the most biodiverse areas in all of Canada. Yes, there will be challenges. Yes, this is an aspirational goal, but we can do it.... The diversity is so great here and the potential is so high that we should choose no other goal....

That was Jim Robb, general manager of the Friends of the Rouge Watershed.

Dr. Stephen Woodley, who is with the IUCN, and is the vice-chair for science, said:

The term "ecological integrity" is used as a management end point by many protected areas agencies globally, and it's embedded in the IUCN guidance. It provides a well-understood and measurable system to understand the ecological condition.

Michael Whittamore, who is president of Whittamore's Farm, made this statement:

...we have complete confidence in [Parks Canada's] ability to execute a management plan that will meet the needs and expectations of all the stakeholders and reach a level of ecological integrity for an urban park in an urban setting....

What does the member have to say about these expert witnesses, who range from local to international, on ecological integrity?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

We do not understand this insistence on including ecological integrity. I am no expert. However, I think that the majority of the people here in the House want to ensure that this park is functional, used, open to the public, and that it protects nature.

However, we are not going to accomplish that with the phrase "ecological integrity". This is disputed among experts.

Can we not just trust the people on the ground who have hands-on experience, who are saying that this is unrealistic? We can achieve the same objectives, but let us not go down this road.

We are getting accustomed to the Liberals always blowing smoke in order to hoodwink people and please Liberal Party cronies.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague.

It is not true that we do not have a definition of ecological integrity. This concept has been well defined and understood for decades. A major commission chaired by Jacques G erin defined this concept.

Mr. Jo el Godin: Madam Speaker, I thank my Green Party colleague.

Once again, I repeat that I am not an expert. However, I have understood from her question that the member is working with the Liberals. Is the member in the Liberal camp? I do not understand her question. What is the member's position?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am glad to share this time with my hon. colleague, the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

As vice-chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I am pleased to stand in this House to speak to Bill C-18.

I was away last week, but last week in the House during debate on Bill C-18, there seemed to be some debate as to who had the most beautiful scenery in their riding. I am here to settle that. It is mine, Yellowhead, and the majestic Jasper National Park. Sorry, but those guys all lose.

Government Orders

Canadians and visitors to my riding of Yellowhead can experience nature and develop personal connections to the park. Jasper has something for everyone, whether a novice or an adventure enthusiast. In fact, there is Maligne Canyon, a stunning, deep limestone gorge full of waterfalls, fossils, and lush plant life. It can be explored from above in the summer and from below in the winter, where people can walk along the ice. It hosts over 400,000 visitors a year.

There are 75 kilometres of cross-country skiing and over 200 kilometres of official trails surrounding Jasper townsite, which are perfect for fat biking, winter walking, and snowshoeing during this time of year. For those who do not know what a fat bike is, it is that new modern bike that has tires close to four inches in size on wider rims. The bike is designed for low ground pressure, allowing for riding on soft, unstable terrain, such as snow, sand, bogs, and stuff like that. There are a lot of fat bikes around Jasper. There is one actually sitting outside the Justice Building right now.

Speaking of trails, as part of budget 2016, this government proposed a bike and walking trail along the Icefields Parkway from Jasper to the Columbia icefield. This trail would allow many visitors to experience the icefields more personally. I look forward to being informed of when the consultation will begin on that trail. From the paddle-in campground, to hang gliding, skiing on Marmot, or hiking in Maligne Canyon, Jasper National Park provides visitors with a variety of opportunities to connect with their national heritage places.

Setting up a national park is quite an experience. Parks Canada has done it 46 times. Rouge National Urban Park is unique. It is our first urban park.

Rouge National Urban Park was created in May 2015, when our previous Conservative government passed Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park. This was in keeping with the 2011 throne speech wherein the government committed \$143.7 million over 10 years for the creation of the park.

In this House in November last year, the hon. member for Thornhill, stated this about Rouge National Urban Park:

It is located amidst fully 20% of Canada's population. While it takes many hours and many thousands of dollars to reach some of our traditional national parks, the wonders of the Rouge are easily and inexpensively accessible by road, rail, and public transit. Visitor information centres, guided hikes, and kayak touring are available to schoolchildren and to Canadians, old and new.

Bill C-18 makes changes to the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act, and the Canada National Parks Act. This bill proposes to add "ecological integrity" as the primary factor to be considered under the Rouge National Urban Park Act, in addition to adding lands to the park.

Parks Canada originally disagreed with the "ecological integrity" designation because it is an unrealistic approach to an urban park, or any park. The true definition of "ecological integrity" would imply letting forest fires burn, floods to run their course, and wildlife survival without human intervention. This is problematic for Rouge National Urban Park because it sits alongside residential neighbourhoods, has highways, power lines, and a pipeline across various parts of it, with working farmland, a former landfill dump site, and an old auto wreckers yard within its borders. It is going to be a challenge.

Ecological integrity as the first priority of park management could be an opening to the interference with or even the removal of farmers from the park. I want to step away from Rouge park for a moment.

● (1320)

Back in my great riding of Yellowhead, there is a lot more to the riding of Yellowhead than just Jasper National Park. There are large vast forests with active pulp, paper, and lumber manufacturing. Agriculture comprises over half of my riding. We grow all the basics: grains, canola, industrial hemp; and, yes, we also grow medical hemp, or marijuana. There is probably some recreational weed being grown, but that's not legal right now. Yellowhead also has active mining, and it is an energy-producing region with oil, gas, and coal.

However, tourism is one of Yellowhead's economic drivers, because of Jasper National Park and other parks in the region. Therefore, I am concerned with the Liberal buzz phrase "ecological integrity". It bothers me. It has become an integral part of Parks Canada policy, not only in the Rouge National Urban Park, but in all national parks.

Just north of Jasper National Park lies Willmore Wilderness Park. Many of my friends run a foundation that looks after this pristine wilderness. Susan Feddema-Leonard and her husband Bazil are well known in the area for looking after this vast land, which is almost the size of Jasper National Park. Last year alone, Bazil spent something like 36 days on horseback travelling the trails to make sure they were clear of garbage, debris, fallen trees, and other things. They love to take people out on trail rides into the mountains and teach young people about living on the land, and protecting and preserving the land. Susan and Bazil are what I call true environmentalists, but they also use the land. They do not need ecological integrity. They use good common-sense practices, and because of this, Willmore Wilderness Park is flourishing.

I mentioned the bike trail proposal by the Liberal government. I agree that this would be good for tourism and good for local businesses inside and outside of Jasper National Park, but that buzz phrase "ecological integrity" may stop this development. Environmentalist groups are gathering in opposition at this time.

Even worse, Jasper National Park's power dam is failing. It does not get power from the grid; it makes its own power. We need to replace it, and a powerline has to be run from a grid outside of the park. Environmental groups are already opposing this as it does not meet ecological integrity as it is laid out in the books. I fear that the Liberal buzz phrase "ecological integrity" may hamper the development and operations of all of our national parks.

Canada's so-called environmentalists are so vocal: keep nature as it is, and no disturbances. They will use ecological integrity as a means to stop development in our parks. Where is our future within Parks Canada?

Government Orders

For the above reasons, any attempt at calling our actions “ecological integrity” would be in words only. The current protections provided to Rouge National Urban Park far exceed the protections provided by the Province of Ontario, specifically prohibiting mining, logging, and hunting, and applying the Species at Risk Act and year-round dedicated enforcement officers.

In general, I am pleased to see the government expanding on the work started by our previous Conservative government, despite this unnecessary and potentially problematic wording, “ecological integrity”.

In conclusion, we support Bill C-18 and the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park.

● (1325)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have to agree with the member that Jasper is quite spectacular.

I challenge you to come to my province of New Brunswick. My riding is Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, and just outside of my riding I have two beautiful national parks. I challenge you to come down and visit. We have Kouchibouguac National Park, which is surrounded by sand dunes, lagoons, marshes, a lot of wildlife, and bike and walking trails. At the other end, just outside of my riding, we have the Fundy National Park, which highlights the highest tides in the world. We have a lot of beautiful parks, and we certainly benefit from them. As a child I benefited, and as an adult I still benefit from those parks on a regular basis.

I wonder if my colleague would be able to elaborate on the importance of our government following through with our commitment to enhance the Rouge National Urban Park and how it would benefit not only the residents in surrounding areas but Canadians in general.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address her question to the Chair. At one point, she addressed her comments directly to the member.

Although there are no national parks in my area, I can tell the member that she can come to Manitoulin Island, God's country, and she will see what beauty is.

The hon. member for Yellowhead.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, here is one for Jasper. It is always a great debate in deciding who lives in the most beautiful part of Canada. We all live in the most beautiful country in the world, and we should be very proud of that fact.

I am very pleased that the Liberal government decided to go ahead with the Rouge National Urban Park. More national parks are very important to Canada. It does not matter where they are. I have been to many of them from coast to coast, and they all have a specific beauty about them. Many of them teach us about our past experiences and the people who lived in those areas, and we need to build more of them.

Right now, we are studying parks and protected spaces. I believe we need to look at many more places across Canada to increase the number of national parks and protected areas.

● (1330)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague sits on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and it is a pleasure to work with him.

My question is this. I know there is a lot of consternation and talk about ecological integrity. I visited Grasslands National Park and spoke with the warden, who said they are now hiring trained biologists. They have added lands that have been grazed and developed, and they are working hard to find out if, in fact, they can return them to natural grasslands. In other words, it is going in the direction of biological integrity.

Part of biological integrity is protecting the waters that are also part of national parks. I know that my colleague from the Conservative Party shares my concern that the federal government needs to step up and do more to protect our fresh water. Would he like to address the aspect of protecting those areas for future generations?

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, it is very important that we look at our freshwater ecosystems across Canada. Right now, that responsibility is on the shoulders of most of the provinces and territories within Canada. They are doing an adequate job, but we could do much better. There are roles that the federal government can play to work with the provinces and develop guidelines to protect some of our national treasures, which include our waterways. I am not only talking about the Ottawa River system that someone spoke about. There are the North Saskatchewan River, the Athabasca River, and the Fraser River, all of which have great ecological atmospheres about them, and we should be working with the provinces, the municipalities that surround them, and the federal government to make sure we protect them.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

I am pleased today to speak in favour of Bill C-18, a bill that would amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act, and the Canada National Parks Act.

With the indulgence of the House, I am going to dedicate my speech today to Parks Canada employee and volunteer extraordinaire Barry Campbell, of Tofino, B.C. Barry devoted 45 years of his life to Pacific Rim National Park Reserve as a park naturalist, park warden, and volunteer after he retired, pulling hundreds if not thousands of bags of invasive weeds from the park. He died just after Christmas from cancer. Barry mentored me during my first parks job as a park naturalist, and I enjoyed it enough that I continued to make working within four parks and the environment my career and my passion right up to today, when I work as the NDP critic, or advocate, for national parks. I thank Barry for starting me on the path to a lifelong devotion to parks. My sincere condolences go to Barry's wife, Barb, and to his children, Michael and Ben, and their families.

While we are here today to talk about Rouge park, I would like to take a moment to put Rouge into both a historical and a system perspective.

Government Orders

Canada's national parks system began in 1885 with Banff National Park, so it is 132 years old. May 1911 was an important date, as the first ever body to administer national parks was established. It was called the dominion parks branch, which is now Parks Canada. In 1930, the National Parks Act was created and first focused on preservation.

There are currently 45 national parks, 46 with Rouge included. They cover every province and every territory, and they represent a variety of landscapes and natural heritage. They currently cover just over 303,000 square kilometres, or about 3% of the total land area of Canada.

Twelve of our national parks are UNESCO world heritage sites, including Wood Buffalo National Park, which is under investigation right now. There is a fair bit of concern as to whether Wood Buffalo should keep its status due to the Site C dam in British Columbia and the oil sands in Alberta.

The smallest national park is Georgian Bay Islands National Park at 14 square kilometres. Rouge will be just 19 square kilometres, at least until it is increased. The largest park is Wood Buffalo National Park at almost 45,000 square kilometres.

How are these parks currently doing? The most recent report is entitled "State of Canada's Natural and Cultural Heritage Places" from 2016. It talks about the need to improve consultation with stakeholders when establishing parks, regarding ecological integrity. Progress has been made since 2011, when things were in really quite bad shape, but 91% of the indicator ecosystems have now been assessed. Regarding species at risk, the report states that many species continue to face threats from inside and outside heritage places, habitats are disappearing at a rapid rate in many parts of Canada, and climate change can also affect biodiversity.

Parks Canada's 2012 national asset review highlighted that over half of the agency's holdings were in poor or very poor condition and required investments, maintenance, and rehabilitation. It also goes into parks' ecological indicators and some of the issues that are currently out there. There definitely needs to be some improvement in terms of managing our existing parks as well.

Another area where parks and protected areas are challenged in Canada is in meeting the Aichi targets signed onto by Canada. Canada has agreed to set aside 17% of its land by 2020 as protected areas. We are currently at about 10%. Also, 10% of Canada's marine areas should be protected by 2020. We are currently at about 1%.

The environment and sustainable development committee is just completing a study on how to meet and perhaps exceed Aichi targets moving forward. There are many ways we can do that, including working with first nations to create indigenous parks, making sure that there is connectivity between parks and protected areas, working interdepartmentally within the federal government, working with the provinces and territories, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations. There are many other recommendations. I ask members to stay tuned as a great report will be coming to Parliament shortly.

• (1335)

One of the recommendations is also to consider expanding the number of national urban parks, of which Rouge is the first one.

Why does Rouge deserve to be Canada's first national urban park, and why do we support the bill?

Bill C-18 proposes amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park Act, and these important amendments include making the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity the first priority of the minister in all aspects of the management of the park, and adding approximately 1,669 hectares of federal land to Rouge national park.

Bill C-18 also broadens Parks Canada's ability to pay out funds from the new parks and historical sites account. That will help create new parks as well.

Finally, Bill C-18 modifies the boundary of Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta by withdrawing 37 square kilometres to create the Garden River Indian Reserve, which is a long planned commitment around reconciliation, so there are three aspects to the park.

Why is Rouge that important? First, Rouge park is one of the most biologically diverse areas in Canada, including a rare Carolinian forest, 23 federally designated species at risk, and over 1,700 plant and animal species. It also provides the only ecological connection for wildlife between the Oak Ridges moraine and Lake Ontario. It includes many agricultural and culturally important resources, including a national historic site and one of Canada's oldest known aboriginal historic sites and villages.

Important as well, there is an active farming community that is not protected under the Park Act, and it is really important to realize that agricultural activities and conservation, if done well, can go hand in hand, and Rouge park would be a good model to demonstrate that.

It is the first national park in an urban setting, accessible by public transit. It creates a model for other areas of protection in urban settings, and approximately 20% of Canada's population live within one hour of Rouge park. These are all really important factors as to why it is important to protect Rouge.

Government Orders

In conclusion, we want to recognize the hard work and dedication of all community members who have worked tirelessly to protect the existing parklands and to establish Rouge National Urban Park. We believe that future national park management for Rouge should do a number of things. It should clearly prioritize ecological health, ecological integrity and conservation. It should ensure that all activities that may affect the park undergo a thorough environmental assessment, and that is one of the challenges of that bike trail in Jasper, there has been no environmental assessment or community involvement. It should include a science-based management plan to provide for strong public and parliamentary oversight. We should consider adding almost 10,000 acres to the park by adding federal lands currently set aside for an airport.

We will continue to hold the Liberal government accountable to deliver a Rouge park that truly can serve as a model for establishing a number of new urban national parks across Canada.

● (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to pick up on a point to which the member made reference. Today we are debating Bill C-18, and I think we owe a great deal of appreciation to those individuals, many of whom are stakeholders. We have political leaders, but it is also important to recognize that there are very many community leaders. For all the right reasons, they saw and understood a vision and want to, as much as possible, advance this national park, the Rouge.

We are in third reading. I think it is important that we take a moment during the time we are debating the bill to acknowledge how much we appreciate the efforts of all those individuals who go far beyond the elected offices who really helped make this happen.

I wonder if the member might want to emphasize that particular point.

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, what I like about Rouge park is that it was built from the ground up. It was built by people who lived in the community, who had concerns, who had a vision, and they kept at it for a long time, many years, until they finally saw it realized.

I also like the fact that it brings together agriculture and conservation in a model adjacent to millions of people who live close by, because people need to start to understand the importance of agriculture and how it benefits conservation. This will be a great model for that.

It brings together some great principles that also came about because of community involvement, and that is necessary to ensure the well-being and future of the park. The more people who care about it, the more people will be there to watch how it goes in the future.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was waiting for the secretary of state to ask me this question earlier, but he did not, so I am going to ask my colleague. The Liberal member asked about opening up the parks for Canada's 150th birthday and allowing all Canadians free access to our parks. The member was a former park supervisor for many years with the province of Alberta. One of the impacts I see on our major national parks by opening them up to the public is the demand on parks such as Banff and on

the people who are working there and also the demands on the infrastructure, such as traffic.

What does the member think about giving Canada's seniors with very low incomes free access to our parks all the time, not only for Canada's 150th birthday?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, there are several aspects to the question and I will start with the basic question about free access to parks. I worked with B.C. and Manitoba parks for many years and there was often an internal debate and discussion about whether parks are a social good, which means they should be free, or whether they have a business side to them, which means people should pay to enter them. My preference would be that governments fund all parks systems well enough that they do not need to charge a fee to get in. I am very interested to see what happens this year with free access to national parks.

I raised this question with the minister who said that every national park in Canada has been asked to produce a plan for this year on how to deal with potential increased use, including Banff and Jasper. I look forward to seeing what those plans look like. Hopefully national parks will be well prepared for free use this summer.

● (1345)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I will try to be brief. I was trying to get the floor to speak because I felt like screaming out in some of the Conservatives' commentary. Ecological integrity is not a new buzzword by the Liberals. It has been essential since 1998 when the panel on ecological integrity reported. It has been embedded in the legislation of Parks Canada and the only reason why they would not put out fires in boreal ecosystems is that those are fire-driven ecosystems and the Rouge Valley national park is a Carolinian forest and not fire driven.

Are there any comments from my knowledgeable colleague?

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, absolutely, ecological integrity can be as small as a marsh. If we ask Ducks Unlimited what is it trying to do in marshes, it is trying to restore the ecological integrity of a marsh. In a riparian area we can restore ecological integrity, so it has really nothing to do with forest fires, unless forest fires are an intricate part of maintaining ecological integrity in that particular landscape or ecosystem. But ecological integrity could be applied on a very small scale as it will be in Rouge park.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill C-18, which proposes amendments to the Rouge National Urban Park Act that was passed in the last Parliament. I will be speaking in favour of this bill, as it strengthens the protections of this park and its ecological integrity.

I will begin my comments about national parks in general, Rouge Park in particular, and then spend some time talking about how this bill is pertinent to a national park proposal in my riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay.

Government Orders

Rouge Park is the first urban national park in Canada, marking an innovative step in the approach Parks Canada is taking to protecting our ecosystems across the country. When we first started creating national parks back in 1885, we had vast areas of wilderness to choose from in southern Canada. We created large parks throughout the western mountains, Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, Yoho, Glacier, Mount Revelstoke. In the boreal forests of the prairie provinces we made Prince Albert National Park, Riding Mountain National Park, and the enormous Wood Buffalo National Park. Some early national parks were smaller, such as Point Pelee National Park in the Carolinian forests of southern Ontario. However, for the most part, we look to our wilderness as a source of parkland. We had lots of that a century ago. Today, those opportunities are much more limited, and I was happy to see Parks Canada broadening the scope of their protected areas with the creation of Rouge National Urban Park.

Our national parks play a number of roles, and first among these is to protect the full range of ecosystems found across this wild and diverse country. Our national parks provide a rich opportunity for Canadians to experience, enjoy, and learn about our natural heritage. That is certainly an important role for parks near urban centres, such as the Rouge. Bill C-18 emphasizes that first role, the preservation and enhancement of the ecological integrity in our parks, which is critical to the success of all natural parks, whether they are areas of vast wilderness or smaller areas hemmed in by urban and agricultural landscapes. The bill would make the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity the first priority of the minister in all aspects of the management of the park. Also, the bill would add more federal lands to Rouge park. Size matters, at least when we are talking about ecological integrity.

In the mid-1900s, Parks Canada began a program to represent the full ecological diversity of this huge country in the national parks system, adding parks to Atlantic Canada, and in the north. As the decades went on, it became more challenging to find representative areas in the south that could function as parks. Grasslands National Park in Saskatchewan dealt with issues around ranching and grazing, while the establishment of Gwaii Haanas involved payment to the B. C. government for lost opportunities in forestry. Despite these challenges, these parks are now considered successes, and indeed national treasures. Gwaii Haanas is also a model of how co-management with first nations communities and government can work in a national park setting.

However, there are still ecoregions of Canada that are unrepresented. In 1979, almost 40 years ago, one of my first real jobs after graduating from university was a contract with Parks Canada to report on opportunities for the creation of a national park in the dry interior of British Columbia, one of the only major ecoregions south of 60 with no representation in our national parks system. I found large areas on the interior plateau that were relatively intact but lacked many of the characteristics that made the dry interior unique in Canada, particularly desert grasslands and ponderosa pine forests. These grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems in Canada, along with the Carolinian forests of southern Ontario, as in the Rouge, the tall grass prairies of Manitoba, and the Garry oak savannah of southern Vancouver Island. Those rare grassland ecosystems were best represented in the south Okanagan Valley. However, opportunities for a large wilderness park there were

limited. Most of the low-elevation habitats were highly altered, and most of the grasslands converted to orchards and vineyards. The land base is a complex mosaic of provincial, federal, first nations, and private ownership.

For various reasons, nothing was accomplished to create a national park in the dry interior of B.C. for about 25 years. Then, in 2002, an initiative began to bring together various groups in the south Okanagan to get a national park established there. Federal, provincial, and municipal leaders, first nations, and environmental groups lobbied B.C. and the Canadian government and were successful in starting a feasibility study to look at the idea.

• (1350)

While there is general local support for the park proposal, the situation is complex and there are many issues to consider. First Nations were in favour of the idea in principle, but wanted a real role in the development of the park and a direct role in the management of it, as is done in Gwaii Haanas and many northern National Parks. First Nations initially objected to sacred areas included in initial Parks Canada maps of the park proposal. These areas are now excluded and First Nations are again supportive.

Environmentalists were disappointed that some important areas were dropped from the Parks Canada proposal. Hunters were concerned about the loss of hunting opportunities.

A large helicopter school was concerned, and still is, about assurances that its operations would not be affected by a new park.

Ranchers, the group most directly affected in terms of their livelihoods, were deeply concerned that a new national park would put an end to their operations. In BC, most ranchers lease large areas of crown land range in the summer and without access to that land base, they would be out of business very quickly.

It was a complicated situation, and it is perhaps not surprising that the process floundered for several years before the feasibility study was released with a positive answer in 2011. First nations released their own study, again agreeing in principle to move forward with planning in 2013.

Statements by Members

Parks Canada spent some time working on a new policy to deal with the concerns of ranchers. It eventually decided that for this park, grazing could be allowed exactly as it was now managed under the B.C. Forest and Range Practices Act. Unfortunately, just before the talks could move on to the next stage, the B.C. government pulled out of the process. Again the initiative languished until the province recently announced it was willing to come back to the table and talk about a national park. I was very happy to hear that decision, and I hope to see the process move forward once again.

Like Rouge Park, the national park in the Okanagan would not be like the big wilderness parks across our country, but it is needed to protect the rare and diverse ecosystems in southern British Columbia. It would provide a big boost to the local economy. If other national parks in B.C. are anything to go by, it would create hundreds of direct and indirect jobs, all while protecting the local environment. It would also bring federal funding for the acquisition and management of the park. Yes, it will take time and continued dialogue to create, but we should not give up on it simply because of those difficulties.

The innovation I see in the creation of Rouge Park sets a good example of how new national parks can and should be created in the future, as Canada's national landscapes become increasingly fragmented. I would point to the recent creation of Gulf Islands National Park Reserve as another model of park creation in a landscape of complex land ownership.

Bill C-18 would also broaden the ability of Parks Canada to pay out funds from the new parks and historic sites account. This measure will give the government greater flexibility in paying out funds for the acquisition of land to expand any national park, not just for establishing a new park. Again, this makes it easier to establish parks in areas of complex land ownership. Since the days of expropriating land for national parks is essentially over, private lands will only be added on a willing seller basis and that is very difficult to arrange the moment a park is created.

Bill C-18 would strengthen the ability of Parks Canada to meet its mandate to give strong directions for ecosystem integrity and would create room for innovative solutions to both park establishment and park management. It would keep Rouge Park as a national treasure and I hope allow Parks Canada to continue to preserve the full diversity of our natural heritage, including the dry grasslands and forests of the south Okanagan Valley, for our grandchildren and their grandchildren.

• (1355)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we look at the bill, it is very symbolic of the sense of Canadians from every part of our country. We get a sampling of that when other members talk about the parks in their ridings, or provinces, or regions. I could talk about the Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba among other historical national sites. These all provide a sense of pride within our communities and in those who visit them.

We have legislation regarding the Rouge Park, which will be accessible to millions of Canadians within an hour's distance, and that is important. Could the member provide some thoughts on the importance of national parks and how we can explore opportunities

in national parks into the future for other urban centres and the possibilities that might be there?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I am an ecologist by training. I am a former park naturalist. When I was going through college, I worked as a park naturalist at Mount Robson park, Shuswap park, and Manning park. I am also an educator. I taught at UBC. As such, I am very anxious to promote the ability of Canadians to get into parklands and natural lands of all sorts, where they can experience and learn about our natural heritage.

I would very much like Parks Canada to rebuild its park interpretive program, and interpretive programs across the country in provincial parks. Parks, like Rouge park, near urban areas are extraordinarily important. I hope Parks Canada continues that trend and creates more parks like it across our country.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know there have been severe cuts to the funding to maintain and protect our national parks, and there has been history of cutting the funding for the naturalist programs. Could the member speak to the importance of increasing funds so people can appreciate and understand the natural character of our parks?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would echo my comments that we need to provide all the opportunities we can to give Canadians the opportunity to learn about their natural heritage. Parks are a prime place for them to go to get that knowledge. Park naturalist programs, the interpretive programs that used to be so good in provincial parks and national parks, have been cut back tremendously, or have vanished altogether. I would love to see them return in the near future.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa has only covered 5% of all of Quebec's infrastructure spending in the past five years. The remaining 95% came out of Quebec's own coffers.

Amounts allocated in the last budget were welcome, but the whole process is bogged down by the federal government's insistence on approving projects one at a time.

The parliamentary budget officer confirmed last week that only one-third of the \$13.6 billion announced last week has been spent. The rest is held up in Ottawa. In Quebec, the federal government is twice as slow as everywhere else, but the Liberals knew this before they launched their program. During the election campaign, they promised that uncommitted funds would be transferred in a lump sum to the federal gas tax fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Statements by Members

Now that they are in power, the Liberals only want more power. The federal government's desire to control everything has brought everything grinding to a halt, and Quebec municipalities are paying the price.

* * *

[English]

LOUIS RIEL

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Manitobans celebrated Louis Riel Day. Every year, on the third Monday of February, we commemorate the life of the founder of Manitoba and leader of the Métis people.

Riel fought tirelessly to preserve Métis culture and values and to gain representation for all Manitobans in the House of Commons. He was elected to this chamber as a member of Parliament in 1873 and 1874. Though he was denied his right to officially take his seat, he snuck in one night to sign the rolls and mark his place in history.

I am proud that the riding of Winnipeg South, which I represent, includes Riel House National Historic Site, the place where Louis Riel is commemorated as person of national historic significance.

Louis Riel is remembered as a visionary leader and as a champion of human rights. Much of what he fought for still resonates today, including the democratic right of all people to be represented in their government and to have a voice in decisions that affect them.

* * *

HALIBURTON—KAWARTHA LAKES—BROCK

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people and organizations in my riding that deserve to be recognized today in the House: Lindsay's own The Strumbellas on its nominated for three Juno awards: group of the year, single of the year, and Juno Fan Choice Award; also happening right now the 60th anniversary of the Sunderland Lions Music Festival; Lindsay's Emma Wooldridge and Laura Brown on being selected to play for Team Canada at the International Ice Hockey Federation Girls Global Game; Peterborough mayor, Daryl Bennett, and his team for raising for over \$123,000 at the sixth annual Giving Gala in support of the Community Foundation of Greater Peterborough; Dale Walker, who is retiring from the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation after 18 years as executive director, and her team for raising more than \$13 million in that time for better health care in the Highlands.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the organizers and volunteers who put on the annual Dorset Snowball and the 2017 Haliburton Frost Fest this past weekend, which were both huge successes.

* * *

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to acknowledge and celebrate Black History Month.

I had the pleasure of attending the 15th annual London Black History Month opening ceremonies hosted by the London Black History Coordinating Committee.

In keeping with the spirit of inclusion and celebrating London's diversity, this year's keynote speaker was Sunday Ajak, a student and fantastic public speaker, from John Paul II Catholic Secondary School.

Also, an uplifting performance was put on by the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School choir.

It was said that by highlighting contributions made by London youth to the community, we could empower and further engage our youth to take pride in our rich diversity.

This year, the London Black History Coordinating Committee wanted to educate, inform, and uplift all Canadians on Black History milestones and accomplishments, and that is exactly what it did.

I want to give a special shout-out and a sincere thanks to community leaders Carl Cadogan and Leroy Hibbert for their continued effort to educate the people of London on the rich culture and history the black community contributes to London and our beautiful nation, Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

L'ITINÉRAIRE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to applaud the remarkable work of a Laurier—Sainte-Marie organization, Groupe L'itinéraire.

L'itinéraire is the most widely read street newspaper in Canada with 25,000 faithful readers. One hundred and fifty men, women, youth, and seniors are proud vendors of their newspaper. Their involvement enables them to restore their self-esteem, end their sense of isolation, and improve their living conditions.

L'itinéraire's intervention philosophy is people-centric. About 50% of the newspaper content is now written by the vendors themselves, who have received the necessary training. The organization's comprehensive approach addresses a range of needs from food security to housing to psychosocial support.

L'itinéraire has served as a vital community to many vulnerable people for the past 28 years.

A special shout-out to my newspaper carrier, Daniel. Good work.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

*[English]***KNIGHT OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL ORDER OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR**

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to give special recognition to veterans of the Second World War in my riding. Donald Sutherland and Frank Taylor have been awarded the rank of the Knight of the French National Order of the Legion of Honour. This is the highest national order awarded by France and is in recognition of their personal involvement in the liberation of France during World War II. The honour is awarded to Canadians in gratitude for their courage and bravery in liberating France.

On February 17, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Sutherland received their medals in an official ceremony with Marc Trouyet, the French Consul General in Toronto, at Guelph's Royal Canadian Legion Colonel John McCrae Branch 234.

We are all humbled by the bravery of our nation's veterans, like Mr. Taylor and Mr. Sutherland, and the lasting recognition France has accorded them.

* * *

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF 4-H ALBERTA

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise to congratulate 4-H Alberta on its 100th anniversary. There are many provincial celebrations planned for this excellent organization.

For the last 100 years, 4-H clubs have been a valuable asset in our rural communities. 4-H has seen a number of transformations in the last 100 years, and one of the biggest is that they now have a much broader appeal. They are now becoming more relevant in more urban parts of Canada. They teach excellent lifelong skills, such as co-operation, leadership, critical thinking, organization, public speaking, and community service. The 4-H motto resonates today:

....my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country...."

I am proud of the excellent opportunities 4-H clubs across Canada provide for our youth. I wish 4-H Alberta another 100 years of success.

* * *

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Mr. Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Hibernia oil field lies 315 kilometres southeast of St. John's. In 1993, it was expected to pump 563 million barrels in its lifetime. In December it pumped its one billionth, and it will continue on for who knows how long. Why? It is because the reserves have been bigger than we projected, supporting three other projects and billions in exploration last year alone; because our light, sweet crude is easier and far cheaper to refine; because our oil is pumped in tidewater and can be shipped over the North Atlantic to the highest bidder; and because the ingenuity of the people in the Newfoundland oil industry knows no bounds.

Our innovations have turned a profitable operation into a hugely profitable one for its investors, including the government. We share our offshore expertise with the world.

This week, the Newfoundland and Labrador Oil and Gas Industries Association is holding its annual oil and gas week in St. John's. I say to them, keep innovating, keep creating the jobs we need, keep it up.

* * *

JEWISH DISABILITY AWARENESS AND INCLUSION MONTH

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month. Just yesterday I was proud to be at the Sylvan Adams YM-YWHA in my riding, which will be receiving \$30,810 from the Government of Canada to purchase equipment that will allow greater access to its swimming facilities for those with limited mobility.

Amazing work is being done by community organizations across Canada. For example, in Toronto, when Jeffrey, a man who was immobilized and communicates only with his eyes and gestures, needed housing, DANI was there to help.

[Translation]

Others need services that are better adapted to their specific needs. As a result, the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto created a working group made up of 24 synagogues to help develop inclusion initiatives.

[English]

I invite all members in this House to join me in acknowledging the Jewish Federation's service agencies, activists, and families in the gallery today and in thanking them for their terrific work in helping others in need.

* * *

ICE DANCE GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Scott Moir and Tessa Virtue have done it again. They have won another gold medal at the ISU Four Continents Figure Skating Championships in South Korea.

I congratulate them on all their achievements: Olympic and world gold medals; competition medals, six out of six wins in this 2016-17 season alone; and most of all, being the inspiring role models they have become for young people across Canada.

I will join all residents of Ilderton, Scott and Tessa's skating hometown, in my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, to cheer on this incredible ice dance couple as they compete in the world championships later next month.

I wish best of luck to Scott and Tessa. They truly are champions, on and off the ice.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

BOB WHITE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand to pay tribute to Bob White, a true icon in the Canadian labour movement. A lifetime of fighting for workers' rights began at the tender age of 17, when he was a shop steward, not long after leading 500 workers off the job on his first strike action.

Recognizing that Canadian workers needed to control their own destiny, in 1985 Bob White changed Canada's labour landscape by leading the charge to split from the United Auto Workers to form the Canadian Auto Workers. After serving three terms as CAW's president, he moved on to the Canadian Labour Congress, serving as its president for seven years and continuing to be a fierce advocate for workers' rights. A tireless champion for social justice and fair trade, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada for his exceptional service to this country.

Bob White was respected by workers and business leaders alike and inspired the current generation of labour leaders, like Unifor president Jerry Dias and CLC president Hassan Yussuff, both former CAW members.

To Bob's family, friends, and former colleagues, we offer our deepest condolences.

* * *

WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): On this World Day of Social Justice, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to underscore Canada's commitment to the fundamental belief that all people across the world are equal in rights and dignity.

[*Translation*]

Social justice is fundamental to peaceful coexistence. We help to advance social justice when we break down barriers related to gender, age, race, religion, culture, and disabilities.

[*English*]

Many global problems stem from systemic prejudice and discrimination. These divisions come not from religion or faith, since all religions are built on aspirations for peace and human dignity, but rather from political and economic injustices.

[*Translation*]

In Canada, our government is working to make progress in various areas, including relations with indigenous peoples, women's rights, and access to justice. We recognize that social justice is only possible when the diversity and fundamental rights of all people are respected.

* * *

[*English*]

JEWISH DISABILITY AWARENESS AND INCLUSION MONTH

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, February marks Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month, a unified effort among Jewish organizations and communities worldwide to raise awareness,

champion rights, and foster the inclusion of people with disabilities. This initiative, which began in 2009, highlights the importance of the accommodation and inclusion of people with disabilities within Jewish communal life and provides a focal point for Jewish Canadians to demonstrate leadership beyond their community.

I am proud to welcome a delegation to Ottawa, led by the Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, representing Jewish federations, service agencies, activists, and parents from across Canada. This group is here to promote the breaking down of barriers and the advancement of inclusion and accommodation of individuals with disabilities and their families.

I wish them well.

* * *

HERITAGE

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is a very special day. Not only is it the second day of Canada's Heritage Week, it is also recognized by the global community as International Mother Language Day.

Heritage Week was created to celebrate the unique value of Canada's built heritage. These are the roots and places that tell this country's story. From coast to coast to coast, I am sure we can all think of a historic building worth preserving.

Today is also an opportunity to appreciate Canada's cultural heritage. In 1999, UNESCO recognized February 21 as International Mother Language Day to celebrate the linguistic heritage of peoples across the world. This effort would have been impossible without the efforts of the Vancouver-based organization Mother Language Lovers of the World Society and Mr. Abdus Salam, a founding member, whose family now lives in my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. I would like to commend Mr. Salam for his tireless efforts and join him in celebrating our country's linguistic diversity.

* * *

BOB WHITE

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the life and legacy of Bob White, a trailblazer who will be remembered for his heart of gold and nerves of steel.

Brother Bob fought tirelessly for a Canadian identity in the labour movement. His courage and vision led to the birth of a new union, the Canadian Auto Workers, in 1985. Bob was CAW's first president, serving three terms before moving on to serve for seven years as president of the Canadian Labour Congress. He was also an Officer of the Order of Canada, but it was his love of working people that fuelled his dedication to the labour movement.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

As Jerry Dias, president of Unifor, said yesterday, “Bob was a true maverick.... He believed in using our collective strength to make both our workplaces and our world better places”.

Today we mourn his loss with the labour community and extend our deepest condolences to Bob's family and friends. We are all part of Bob White's legacy, and his vision for a Canadian social trade union movement will live on.

Rest easy, Bob. We will continue the fight. Solidarity forever.

* * *

• (1415)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada was founded on the principles of free speech, democracy, and the rule of law. There is no other principle more important to the functioning of a democratic society than freedom of expression. That is why this foundational principle must be protected and guarded.

However, there are lines that can be crossed. These lines are codified in Canada's criminal laws. The recent call by a student leader at McGill University to “punch a Zionist today” crosses that line. Such words are a call to violence, and as such, they are harmful to our society. They are based on hatred and incitement to violence against religious minorities.

Resorting to such thuggery is also usually the first sign of having lost the argument. In our democracy, we can debate ideas. We can have differing opinions. One thing we cannot do is threaten violence against our fellow Canadians.

I appreciate the fact that the individual responsible for these hateful words has offered an apology. Regardless, these words should be widely condemned by all of us for what they are, an unacceptable incitement to racial hatred and violence.

* * *

[Translation]

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome to Parliament Hill and pay tribute to Hassan Guillet, the imam of the mosque in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. *La Presse* named him person of the week.

I thank Mr. Guillet for the words of peace that he shared with us on Sunday at the Saint-Jean-l'Évangéliste cathedral. His rallying call to the people of the world was one of mutual respect. We need to be more open and accepting.

Dear colleagues, Canada is a welcoming, tolerant country built on community spirit. Diversity is our strength, and respect is one of our key values. Our country is a cultural mosaic that gets richer and more inclusive every day. Last week, we discussed in the House Motion No. 103, which condemns Islamophobia and all forms of racism and religious discrimination.

Let us work together and unite our voices to make tomorrow even better.

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, Douglas Garland was sentenced to 75 years for the brutal murder of Nathan O'Brien and his grandparents, Alvin and Kathy. He got 25 years for each murder. This was made possible in part because of legislation passed by our Conservative government allowing for consecutive sentencing for multiple murders.

The consecutive sentencing law has put Garland where he belongs, in jail with no chance of getting out, ever. The Prime Minister is now reviewing sentencing laws. Will he guarantee today that this law will not be touched?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the justice minister is currently reviewing our criminal justice system to ensure that it is fair, that it keeps Canadians safe, and that it is doing things responsibly.

On mandatory minimums, it was the Liberal Party that brought in mandatory minimums for the most severe of penalties, and we have demonstrated time and time again that we will not flinch from doing what is necessary to keep our communities safe.

I look forward to the hard work our justice minister is going to be doing in making sure that we have the best justice system possible.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not answer the question. These were horrible murders, and for the family of Alvin, Kathy, and five-year-old Nathan, and for all Canadians, one of the few comforts was that justice was seen to be done. Douglas Garland will be behind bars and will never get out, partially thanks to consecutive sentencing.

I am going to ask the Prime Minister one more time. As he reviews sentencing laws, can he assure Canadians that he will not touch this one?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, our justice minister is currently looking at sentencing laws in our criminal justice system and ensuring that we fulfill the responsibilities Canadians expect of our system and of our government, which is to keep Canadians safe, and to ensure that we have the right system in place for people who break the law. That is exactly what we are looking at. That is exactly the work we are doing, and that is where I have entire confidence in our justice minister.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class Canadians are bracing for yet another round of Liberal tax hikes in the next budget. There is a long list of tax credits on the chopping block again. These are credits that seniors, workers, families, and students depend on. We also know that he wants to hike user fees. The Liberals might even slap a tax on Netflix. The Prime Minister's plan is to nickel and dime Canadians in a quest for every bit of cash that he can find.

Will the Prime Minister just come clean and tell us which taxes is he going to hike?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if members opposite really cared so much about the middle class, they would not have voted against lowering taxes on the middle class and raising them on the wealthiest 1%, which is a commitment we made that is part of the core of our focus, which is helping the middle class and those working hard to join it.

That is entirely going to be the focus of the budget we are going to be bringing forward in the coming weeks. That, we can be assured, will focus on helping the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is there in black and white. The tax bill on middle-class Canadians has already gone way up under this Prime Minister. With new taxes on savings accounts, education, textbooks, children's activities, higher CPP and EI premiums, a national carbon tax, we are talking about thousands of dollars a year for every family in the country.

When will the Prime Minister stop misleading Canadians and admit he is making the middle class pay for his out-of-control spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous government gave tax breaks to the wealthiest and not enough help to those who actually need it. That is why we got elected on the commitment to help the middle class by lowering their taxes and raising them on the wealthiest 1%.

We brought in a Canada child benefit that gives more money to nine out of 10 Canadian families by doing less for the families that do not need the help and more for those who do. On top of that, we have ensured that we are raising the GIS for our most vulnerable single seniors by close to \$1,000 a year, on top of many other initiatives we are doing that will help students, seniors, and workers.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class Canadians are paying more and more under this Prime Minister. There are new taxes on savings accounts, textbooks, and children's activities, higher CPP and EI premiums, and a carbon tax. That adds up to thousands of dollars a year for many families.

When will the Prime Minister stop misleading Canadians and admit he is making the middle class pay for his reckless spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the first thing we did was lower taxes on

the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%. The Conservatives voted against that, by the way.

The fact is that we also brought in the Canada child benefit to give more money to families who need it and reduce or eliminate benefits for millionaire families. That will reduce child poverty in Canada by 40%.

We are focusing on the middle class and those working hard to join it.

* * *

CANADA-U.S. RELATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for more than a month now, the NDP has been calling on the government to suspend the safe third country agreement. Since the agreement is still in effect, refugees are choosing to cross the border illegally, at great risk to themselves. The Prime Minister clearly told refugees that Canada would welcome them, but he is refusing to put his money where his mouth is.

Will the Prime Minister finally take action and suspend the safe third country agreement?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is an open and generous country. Last year, we welcomed tens of thousands of refugees. We will continue to welcome refugees.

One of the reasons why Canada remains an open country is that Canadians have confidence in our immigration system, the integrity of our borders, and the help we provide people who are seeking relief and a better life.

We will continue to strike a balance between having a rigorous system and accepting those who are in need.

● (1425)

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under the safe third country agreement, refugees cannot apply for asylum in Canada if they are already in the U.S. Many refugees are crossing the border illegally, risking life and limb because they have no other option. Clearly, the Conservatives had no plan, and while the Liberals sound welcoming, they have implemented absolutely zero measures to address this situation. Things will only get worse.

Will the Prime Minister finally act, suspend the unfair agreement, support border communities, and help those desperate refugees?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is an open and welcoming country, and one of the reasons we are able to continue to be open and welcoming is that Canadians have confidence in the integrity of our borders and the integrity of our immigration system. We will continue to ensure that laws are enforced and followed and that we remain demonstrating the strength and integrity of our immigration system. We will be welcoming, but we need to make sure that it is done properly at the same time by all officials in Canada.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, values need to be followed by action or what good are they? We are getting reports of massive raids by U.S. immigration, including a horrible story of a seven-year-old boy abandoned after officials arrested his mother at a football game. While a former Conservative prime minister serenades Mr. Trump, will the Prime Minister speak up? With another executive order expected soon, will the government finally denounce Trump's immigration policies and take any new actions to address the impacts on Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect their government to do two things: to stand up for Canadian values and continue to talk about the openness and the strength with which we engage with the world and also to have a strong working relationship with the American government and officials. That is what we are focusing very much on doing, because there are millions of jobs on both sides of the border that depend on us working well together, but we will always stand up for our values and our strengths.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government seems to be hiding its head in the sand by refusing to recognize the urgency of the situation. Border crossings in Quebec are busier and busier, Canadian citizens are being turned away at the U.S. border without a valid reason, and the situation in the United States is increasingly problematic. However, this government just smiles and tells us that all is well.

What is the government waiting for to take concrete action that will deal with the repercussions of Trump's policy on Canada?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to concrete action, we are working with the U.S. authorities to ensure that jobs in Canada, economic growth, and the security of our borders continue to benefit small businesses, Canadian workers, and economic growth for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

We will always speak loud and clear for Canadian values, and we will continue to always work constructively with Americans.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to our opposition, the government has backed down on its plan to bring in a new tax on health and dental benefits. However, the Liberals still need money. They still need to look for new revenue streams, and of course middle-class Canadians are going to be the ones to pay for it. Which tax credit will the government have to eliminate to try to pay down the deficit?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue to assist middle-class Canadians and help them improve their situation. We will continue to help people who need it through tax cuts, for instance, and by creating solutions that will help their families.

We introduced the Canada child benefit, which will help nine out of 10 families by giving them more money. Helping Canadian families and the middle class remains our goal and will be the main objective of our budget, which will be presented within the next few weeks or months.

* * *

FINANCE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deficit is three times higher than what the government said it would be during the election campaign. That is quite something. The original \$10 billion was already far too much.

The government plans to return to a balanced budget on the 12th of never. It is not sure when exactly, because it has no plan. The government is spending like crazy and throwing money out the window. It is future generations who will pay the price.

What does the Prime Minister plan to do to eliminate the deficit?

• (1430)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made a choice. We chose to invest in our future, in that of our children and the middle class.

That is why we are investing in infrastructure, for example. That is what we will keep doing to ensure that our country has a more innovative economy and a higher growth rate in the future.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has become fashionable for millionaires to give self-righteous speeches about income inequality. For example, last week our millionaire Prime Minister told a sumptuous gala at the palatial Hamburg city hall, "I fully appreciate the irony of preaching about the struggles of the middle class to a sea of tuxedos and ball gowns while wearing a bow tie myself".

The greater irony is that back home he is raising taxes on the poorest Canadians through his new carbon tax. Did the Prime Minister mention that in his gala speech?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would note that 80% of Canadians live in a province that already prices carbon pollution thanks to the leadership that the provinces stepped up to during the decade of inaction under the Conservative government. Provinces are using the revenue from the pricing of carbon pollution to give the money back to families through rebates, to cut personal income taxes and corporate taxes, and to invest and to create jobs in the clean growth economy.

By pricing carbon pollution we can fight climate change, reduce our emissions, put money back into Canadians' pockets, and support good middle-class jobs.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know from Statistics Canada data that carbon taxes disproportionately harm those with the least, because they must spend roughly one-third more of their household income on the items that will be taxed. The government is refusing to release data on how much harm its tax will do on the poorest Canadians and on the middle class.

The Prime Minister admits that he has been preaching about the struggles of the middle class. Why will he not practise what he preaches and announce that nobody with below average incomes will be forced to pay his new tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating a cleaner, more innovative economy that reduces emissions and protects the environment while creating well-paying jobs for the middle class and for those working hard to join it.

After a decade of inaction and years of lost opportunities under the previous government, we are finally taking the steps required to protect this planet for our children and our grandchildren. Our focus is on taking real concrete and lasting actions to reduce our emissions, to grow our economy, and to create good middle-class jobs.

Our government has posted online the results of our federal-provincial analysis of pricing pollution for all Canadians to see, and I would encourage the member to read it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know all too well that this government's spending is completely out of control. Signing off on a \$1.5-trillion debt and not returning to a balanced budget until 2055 is totally unacceptable.

It does not stop there because the Minister of Finance has a boundless appetite for achieving his other objectives. According to *Les Affaires*, the latest salvo is to increase the capital gains inclusion rate from 50% to 75%. That is a direct attack on Canadian taxpayers and job creators.

Why is the Minister of Finance being so money-hungry and why is he so willing to take more money out of Canadians' pockets—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will stimulate economic growth in order to ensure a better future for Canadians across the country. That is our goal.

We will definitely have opportunities to improve the situation of the middle class with our budget. We will take measures to continue with our agenda to help the middle class and those who need help.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really like the minister and I have a lot of respect for him, and also for his excellent French. He is an honourable man. However, I am going to take what he said with a grain of salt. We remember that, not so long ago, the Prime Minister said that he would not tax health and dental benefits. Then a few days later, he voted for a motion that said the exact opposite of what he had said. In short, he says one thing and votes for the opposite.

Will the Minister of Finance finally tell us the truth? Will he, yes or no, impose more taxes on Canadians and job creators, the creators of wealth, the entrepreneurs?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that at the beginning of our term, we cut taxes for the middle class. That was very important for us. We introduced the Canada child benefit to help the middle class and people who need help. Our plan is to continue helping families across the country. There will be measures in our budget that are good for our economy and for Canadian families.

* * *

• (1435)

YOUTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister created a youth council. It is a good initiative, but it is sorely lacking in transparency. As of now, we know nothing about the issues that have been discussed or whom the council has met with. We do not even know if the government will incorporate the youth council's proposals into its policies or its next budget, nor is the youth council expected to issue a public report.

In order to prove that he is not just using these young people to make himself look good, will the Prime Minister authorize the council to publish a report on its deliberations? Will its members have the power to hold consultations if they want?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that, for the first time in history, we have 26 young people from across the country who meet with the Prime Minister several times a year to share their thoughts and ideas about the issues that matter most to them. The Prime Minister is also taking the time to engage with youth on Facebook, in person, and at high schools, colleges, and universities. The Prime Minister recognizes the importance of engaging with youth. That is what he will continue to do.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, questions are directed to the Minister of Youth and it is simply disrespectful that he refuses to answer any of them. While it is a great idea, the Prime Minister's youth council is not transparent. We do not know who he is meeting with, and we do not know what is going to come of it.

The reality is that young Canadians are facing significant challenges, and they deserve to have access to this process. Young Canadians also deserve accountability.

Will the Prime Minister make this information public, yes or no?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is very proud that, for the first time in history, 26 young people representing youth from all across the country, with different lived experiences and backgrounds, get to meet with the Prime Minister several times per year to talk about the issues that matter most to them. They talk to the Prime Minister about the best ways that the federal government can help them.

We are not stopping there. The Prime Minister is also very proud of the fact that he is working with young people by engaging with them online, in high schools, colleges, and universities. He understands the importance of engaging with young people across the country, and that is exactly what he is going to continue to do.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, more asylum seekers entered Canada illegally in places like Emerson, Manitoba and Hemmingford, Quebec. The municipality of Emerson has now formally requested that the government provide more resources for border security and public safety.

Will the government answer the calls for help from communities like Emerson? Will it develop a plan to enforce and if necessary strengthen our laws to stop illegal border crossings?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure we all share a common interest in ensuring the integrity of Canada's borders and the enforcement of Canadian laws. Indeed, the RCMP, the CBSA, as well as the immigration department are working seamlessly and relentlessly together on those two objectives, ensuring the integrity of Canadian borders and the enforcement of Canadian laws. If the CBSA or the RCMP are to advise us that they need further resources in order for them to do that job effectively, we will listen very carefully to their advice.

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada has a fair and generous immigration system. We welcome tens of thousands of new Canadians every year.

However, the increasing number of asylum seekers who are entering the country illegally through Manitoba and Quebec is worrisome. Those who are seeking refuge should do so through the appropriate channels.

Will the government enforce and strengthen our laws as needed to stop illegal and dangerous border crossings?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be absolutely clear that the laws of Canada are indeed being enforced. They are being enforced by the CBSA within its jurisdiction at points of entry, and they are being enforced by the RCMP between the points of entry in co-operation with local police authorities. Both of those agencies will ensure the integrity of Canada's immigration system and the integrity of our borders.

Let me make the particular point of congratulating and thanking the people of Emerson, the people of Lacolle, and others across the country who have shown such generosity and goodwill in dealing with this situation.

• (1440)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, those are very good words, but people in Manitoba in these border communities are asking the federal government to provide help to deal with this influx of illegal people coming across the border. These are community resources and many times they are actually volunteer first responders. People running across farmers' fields illegally cannot continue. It is not safe for the people who are running across the fields; it is not safe for the community. What is the government going to do to provide support to the communities and to stop this illegal activity?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CBSA and the RCMP are constantly scrutinizing the situation. They have already made some adjustments within their internal resources to ensure that they have the personnel and the tools in place to enforce Canadian laws, to keep Canadians safe, and to attend to the safety of the asylum seekers as well. One thing we will not do is what the previous government did in eliminating the health benefits available to asylum seekers and making the condition of vulnerable people even more vulnerable.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past several days, 35 migrants have illegally crossed the border from the United States into Canada near Emerson, Manitoba in my riding of Provencher. The residents of Emerson have been doing everything they can to assist the migrants and the authorities in dealing with this influx. However, the Minister of Public Safety has been missing in action and needs to assure Canadians that our borders are secure. Can the minister explain to the people of Emerson what action he is taking to restore and maintain the integrity of our borders?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I repeat, first of all, the thanks and congratulations to the hon. gentleman's constituents for the manner in which they have responded to this situation. As Commissioner Paulson told the hon. member earlier today, the RCMP, the CBSA, the IRCC, and other Canadian agencies are working seamlessly and relentlessly together to achieve the objectives of border integrity and public safety. If they require more resources to do that, they will certainly let us know.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the United States has managed to convict rich taxpayers involved in the UBS Swiss bank scandal and recover millions of dollars, Canada has not brought a single Canadian taxpayer to justice.

The best the Canada Revenue Agency was able to manage was the creation of the voluntary disclosure program, under which fraudsters are guaranteed confidentiality, do not have to pay any financial penalties, and are protected from prosecution. It is shameful.

When will the minister take concrete legislative measures to combat the use of tax havens? More importantly, when will she please stop giving fraudsters preferential treatment?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to the fight against tax evasion in order to ensure that our tax system is fair for all Canadians. Our government invested \$444 million to crack down on tax havens.

I invite all Canadians who have any information in this regard to contact the Canada Revenue Agency through the informant leads program. The agency reviews all of the information submitted. I repeat: everybody must pay their fair share.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, she may want to talk to her own department because almost a decade ago, a whistle-blower named Bradley Birkenhead exposed billions of dollars in illegal offshore tax havens, yet when he phoned Revenue Canada and the justice department, they refused to act.

No bank was fined, no one went to jail, and hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes were never found. With only a quarter of the money recovered, Liberals patted themselves on the back and said, "Job well done".

Clearly the government has two sets of rules: one for the wealthy and well-connected, and another set for everybody else. Who are the Liberals actually working for, their billionaire friends or the Canadian in the middle class and those working so hard to join it?

• (1445)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind Canadians that we are working with all our international partners to combat tax evasion, because it is a global problem.

Our government is firmly committed to preserving the fairness of our tax system, and everything we do is intended to ensure that all Canadians pay their fair share.

Last year's announcement of a historic \$444-million investment proves just how important this is to our government.

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, whether in my riding of Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle or anywhere else across this country, Canadians are proud to call such a diverse and vibrant place home.

We cannot afford to ignore incidents of hatred or violence directed against our minority communities, such as the incidents that occurred in Quebec City, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Hamilton.

[Translation]

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell Canadians what measures the government is taking to combat racism and discrimination?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her important question.

I want to take this opportunity to condemn the acts of discrimination that were committed this past weekend in North York and Montreal.

On February 9, 2017, I had the opportunity to announce a call for projects through the community interactions program.

[English]

Our government will dedicate \$5.5 million per year to organizations that submit projects to work toward the elimination of discrimination and racism.

We have said it many times, diversity is our strength and inclusion is a value that we as Canadians hold dear. We will continue to work and to fight for these values.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week marks one year since the minister introduced the Phoenix pay system despite a number of reports advising against it. That decision has had some harsh repercussions for thousands of Canadians.

I have some examples to share. Mr. Little is a federal correctional officer who has not been paid for months and is in danger of losing everything. Ms. Leclerc wrote to tell me that she is under enormous stress. She has been serving the Canadian government for 35 years, but she is still missing whole chunks of her pay and other things she needs to retire with dignity.

There are thousands of cases like these. Does the minister regret the decision she made last February 24?

[English]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a difficult time for a lot of public service employees, and it is totally unacceptable that anyone who has worked has gone without pay for work performed.

Oral Questions

What I regret is the decision taken by the previous government when it laid off 700 compensation advisers, making it impossible for us to do the job that needs to be done. We are—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. Members will come to order.

Most members from all parties are able to listen to things they do not like in question period. I urge other members who have not been listening to do so.

The hon. Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Hon. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, we have taken extra measures to make sure that our employees get paid the money they are owed. We are putting in place extra satellite offices and hiring 250 additional employees that would not have been necessary had the right decisions been made when the previous government decided to go with this payroll system.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this story, the government is not the victim, it is the accomplice of the Phoenix fiasco.

[*Translation*]

The opposition, the media, and public servants do not believe the Liberal government's story. It is refusing to take responsibility, and it is hiding behind excuses that nobody buys. The software should have been phased in to ensure that everyone was prepared to implement it properly. That was clear from the Gartner report commissioned by Treasury Board, whose minister is here.

On behalf of all Canadians, I am asking the minister to apologize for the bad decision she made last February 24.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is totally unacceptable that employees are going without pay for work performed. That is why we have taken so many extra measures to make sure they indeed get the pay they deserve. We have recognized that there was an injustice done to those employees. However, the injustice was done by the previous government, and we are now trying to fix the problem that it left us with. We will fix it, and the employees will have a payroll system better than they have ever had.

• (1450)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the start of the Liberal Phoenix fiasco. Thousands of government employees continue to be underpaid, overpaid, and some not paid at all. Internal documents prove that the minister was warned not to proceed, and yet she still did. She ignored these warnings, and a year later people are still caught in the Liberals' fiasco, with no end in sight. For a year the minister has agreed that the situation is unacceptable—when did we hear that—and spends all of her time blaming others for her incompetence. On what day will this fiasco finally be cleaned up?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are making sure that we are taking every possible measure we can to fix the Phoenix payroll system. We are doing exactly that by hiring additional employees, by opening satellite offices, by opening a call centre, and by making sure that

any employee who was overpaid or underpaid lets us know about it, then we fix the problem immediately. This is totally unacceptable. We are no more in favour of what is happening with the Phoenix payroll system than the employees who are impacted, but we are going to fix the problem.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the minister spent half the time fixing her errors as she does blaming others, we would not be in this situation. The minister can try to spin this all she wants, but the truth is this. She knew Phoenix was not ready and she decided to move ahead anyway. That was her decision alone. Now the government employees are getting incorrect T4s as they prepare to file their income tax, and no one is willing to help them or respond. What does the minister have planned to help people being penalized for her incompetence?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with the Canada Revenue Agency, with Revenu Québec, and with the unions to make sure that employees get the correct T4 slips. If any employees get T4 slips that do not have the correct amount, we will fix them immediately, so we are asking them to reach out to us. However, we are working closely with the unions, the Canada Revenue Agency, and Revenu Québec.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, I was surprised to read the comments of the Liberal Party's Quebec caucus chair. According to him, the government will support the industry in the event of a dispute and that the federal government is looking into potentially compensating for losses. For months we have been calling for a plan B to defend the forestry industry. I think the Minister of Natural Resources should talk to his colleagues so that they can get their stories straight.

To be clear, will the Minister of Natural Resources vouch for what his colleague told the media?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking the challenges in the forestry sector very seriously. We are working with our provincial partners to protect all forestry jobs across the country.

We are prepared for all eventualities and we will continue to work in the best interest of Canada's forestry industry. Canadians can count on us.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no answer because there is still no plan in place to protect the Canadian forestry industry from incoming tariffs from the U.S., yet a Liberal MP told his local media that the industry will be protected in case of conflict and that his government is studying the possibility of compensation. Canadian forestry workers need to know what this means. Tens of thousands of jobs are on the line, which small communities depend on.

I have a simple question. If the Liberals are finally working on a plan to defend the Canadian forestry industry, what is it?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that the forestry sector is important for Canadians right across the country.

We understand that, in order to come up with an approach, it is necessary for ministers and officials to talk about what is in the national interest. Those discussions have already started. They will continue. We will be prepared for all eventualities.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months Ukraine has been calling on the Liberals to extend Canada's military training mission beyond its March deadline.

With escalating Russian aggression, our Ukrainian allies are concerned that the Liberals have turned their backs on them again. The Liberals have already cancelled life-saving satellite images, they have refused to provide the final signature on a defence co-operation agreement with Ukraine, and they backed down on a campaign promise to put sanctions on corrupt Russian officials. Operation Unifier must be extended.

Why are the Liberals not standing shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine in its fight against Putin's proxies?

●(1455)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government stands firmly in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

The minister reiterated this when she met with the President and Foreign Minister of Ukraine just last week at the Munich security conference. The annexation and invasion of Crimea was an illegal act. We say that to the world, and we say that to Russia.

The Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs are reviewing Operation Unifier. We will always be a friend and steadfast ally of Ukraine.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, although the Prime Minister and other ministers have offered very carefully worded reassurances that Canada's commitment to the beleaguered people and Government of Ukraine is undiminished, the Liberals have been pussyfooting around official extension of Operation Unifier and a direct response to Ukraine's appeal for weaponry to better defend against the Russian-sponsored war.

When will the Liberals speak up?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that this government is unequivocal in its support for Ukraine.

We have condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea in the strongest terms. The minister reiterated this just last week with the Foreign Minister and the President of Ukraine in Munich.

We stand with the people of Ukraine. We have always been a friend and steadfast ally of Ukraine, and we will continue to be so.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how about something more than words.

British MPs today approved legislation that will make it more difficult for international human rights abusers to hide ill-gotten wealth in the U.K. The new powers were voted unanimously, and our mother Parliament named the Magnitsky Act initiative after the Russian lawyer jailed, tortured, and murdered for his investigation of corrupt Russian government officials.

This House unanimously approved a motion to implement Magnitsky-style legislation in Canada two years ago. The Liberals have dragged their feet. How long will they wait before they act?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know right now that the House foreign affairs committee is studying SEMA.

We look forward to hearing its report. Certainly, we want to ensure that a proper study is undertaken by this House that will help advise the government in its approach to Magnitsky.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago, a World War II-era bungalow in my community sold for over \$1 million.

Our government understands the importance of evidence-based decision-making. In order to provide affordable housing for middle-class families, I would like the minister to inform this House of the advancement of CMHC's work on escalating home prices in major urban centres, such as Toronto.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to acknowledge and congratulate our colleague from Toronto—Danforth for her hard work.

Our government believes that all Canadians deserve a safe, adequate, and affordable home. I have asked CMHC to study the cause of the rapid and recurring rise in property prices in major urban centres, and to identify and fill data gaps on the subject.

I have also mandated CMHC to have the data available by the end of the year. This will help home ownership stay within reach of more middle-class Canadians.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend a powerful video featuring Charmaine Stick of Onion Lake Cree Nation was released on social media.

The video shows Charmaine's reaction to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs dismissing her plea, her plight, her quest for financial transparency. She described the minister's comments as "very hurtful". She said the minister has no idea what she is going through and makes it sound so easy to access the band's financial information.

When will the minister finally empower Charmaine Stick and enforce the act?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone, including first nations governments, wants increased transparency and accountability. We will achieve this by working in full partnership with first nations and organizations. We are presently engaging first nations leadership, communities, and organizations to identify a way forward that is based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

* * *

• (1500)

JUSTICE

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a federal fund that is designed to support parents with murdered or missing children is failing victims. The victims fund has spent 14 times as much on administration costs as it has on actual grants. The fund spends only 7% of its budget on actual victims. This is unacceptable. The criteria for accessing this fund are so stringent that families are getting squeezed out.

Will the minister commit, today, to fixing this fund so that victims get the support they need?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to share the deep concern of Canadians and all members of the House for the very trying circumstances of families of missing or murdered children. The current program that was brought in by the previous government is clearly not working. In the coming months, we will study the program, make some changes to it, and ensure that it works properly.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we know, February is Heart Month. This month we got to learn more through the Heart and Stoke Foundation's event #HeartOnTheHill.

I know our government has been working hard to promote healthy choices for Canadians across the country. Heart health helps prevent possible heart diseases, diabetes, and strokes.

Oral Questions

Would the Minister of Health please update the House on the important work she is doing to encourage Canadian children to make healthy habits, leading to healthy lifestyles?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. This is Heart Month. It is a month when we need to think about how we can all reduce the risk of heart disease and make sure we choose healthy lifestyles. Our government is very happy to support a whole range of programs, including run to quit, the carrot rewards program, the APPLE schools program, and kid food nation.

I announced last fall that we have a new healthy eating strategy and we are doing a whole range of activities, including updating Canada's food guide.

I hope that all members of this House, and indeed all Canadians, will do what they can to reduce the risk of heart disease and make healthy choices.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, distracted driving is now responsible for almost as many deaths as impaired driving and is causing eight times the number of injuries. While the provinces, municipalities, police forces, and Canadians worry about this scourge, the Liberal government remains silent.

Is the government aware that the number of victims of distracted driving on our roads is on the rise? What measures will the Liberal government implement to protect the lives of road users?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I feel the same way as my colleague who just asked the question.

At the federal level, we definitely have jurisdiction over the criminal act of dangerous driving, but the provinces and territories are responsible for fines and demerit points for those who use cellphones while driving. Personally, I would encourage the provinces and territories to introduce penalties that reflect the severity of the actions in question.

* * *

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to airports, we want to have a say in what is happening in Quebec.

There have already been two unanimous motions by the Quebec National Assembly and a resolution by the CMM, which is made up of 84 municipalities. Now the UMQ is asking the Minister of Transport to respect Quebec's laws, municipal bylaws, and social licence before implementing any airport projects.

Will the Minister of Transport finally respect the Quebec consensus and stop acting as though Quebec belongs to Ottawa?

Business of Supply

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the decision to build an airport anywhere in Canada falls under federal jurisdiction. Of course, the decisions I make when I review each case must be made in the public interest. I even issued a ministerial order last March in the case of the Mascouche airport. Airports need to be safe. Those are the criteria that we use. We want to encourage Canada's aviation industry.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the failure of the Minister of Transport and his officials to listen to Quebecers just cost us 19 hectares of protected land.

A forest was clear-cut. Neither the people of Mascouche and Terrebonne nor Quebec and municipal elected officials were given a say in the matter.

We already know that the Minister of Transport could not care less about Quebec's environmental regulations. Perhaps the Minister of Environment can explain why she allowed this destruction.

As I understand it, caring about the environment does not mean acting like a wallflower.

● (1505)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before a decision was made about the Mascouche airport, the proponent commissioned a Léger survey, which indicated that 64% of the people in the Mascouche and Terrebonne area were in favour of developing this airport. We did due diligence in the public interest.

The Speaker: I would ask the member for Montcalm to listen to the answers.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for the Province of Ontario.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**OPPOSITION MOTION—SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION**

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:05 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Thursday, February 16, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands concerning the business of supply.

Call in the members.

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 the House]

● (1515)

[English]

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

(Division No. 201)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Block	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseauult	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk
Finley	Fortin
Généreux	Genius
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harcastle
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Jolibois
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Toole	Paupé
Plamondon	Poillievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Ritz	Saganash
Sansouey	Saroya
Scheer	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan

Vecchio
Wagantall
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga

Viersen
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer— 126

NAYS

Members

Aldag
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bains
Beech
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brisson
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Chan
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dubourg
Duguid
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hutchings
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Oueltette
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan

Alghabra
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Baylis
Bennett
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Drouin
Duclos
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Gameau
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Hussen
Iacono
Jones
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCrimmon
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-

Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)

Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 165

Simms
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Routine Proceedings

PAIRED

Members

McDonald

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to its study of unmanned aerial vehicles regulations. Unmanned aerial vehicles are more commonly known as drones.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report as soon as possible.

* * *

● (1520)

PETITIONS

MISSING PERSONS INDEX

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

The first petition relates to a question I asked last week in the House. We have had legislation to bring forward a missing persons index, a DNA data bank, for some time. The petitioners want to ensure that does take place. They are all petitioners from within my riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition relates to the ongoing concerns, this time of petitioners from the Edmonton area, to ensure that there be a moratorium against the release of genetically modified alfalfa.

Government Orders

BEE POPULATION

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by many British Columbians who are very concerned about the rapid deterioration in our bee population and other pollinators across Canada. The petitioners point out that these insects are very important not only to our natural systems, but also to agriculture and industry. They are asking the government to take concrete steps to address the problem of high mortality rates among bees and other pollinators, to develop a strategy to address the multiple factors related to bee colony deaths, and to encourage seed companies to produce and facilitate the purchase of seed that is not treated with neonicotinoids to make sure that our bee population can remain healthy for generations to come.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise again to speak to Bill C-18, an act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

Today, I am going to spend a bit of time talking about my riding in northern Alberta. I like to call my riding the promised land, as I have said a number of times. I am going to talk about a little piece of promised land in the northeastern corner of my riding, land that is now becoming part of the new reserve for the Little Red River Cree Nation. Gus Loonskin is the chief. I have not had the privilege of visiting that part of my riding yet. I have made arrangements to go there several times, but due to some unforeseen circumstances on two occasions, the meetings have been cancelled.

I have driven to the northernmost edge of my riding. It is a long four-by-four road into the communities. The chief thought better of my driving the road myself, although I am always up for an adventure. He said he would meet me in High Level and then things transpired and we never actually met, but one day I will make it up to the Little Red River Cree Nation and visit the communities of John D'Or Prairie, Fox Lake, and Garden River.

Garden River is within the boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park, and that is precisely what this bill is about today. It proposes turning 37 square kilometres of land in Wood Buffalo National Park

into a reserve for the Garden Creek community, which is part of the Little Red River band.

The Little Red River Cree Nation is made up of about 5,000 people in northern Alberta. It is about 200 kilometres south, maybe less, of the border with the Northwest Territories. At the end of June and beginning of July, there is nearly 24 hours of sunlight in northern Alberta. In the spring, people typically get a lot of work done because there are lots of hours of sunlight. After getting home from work, typically there is eight hours of sunlight left before people go to bed, so things get done at that time of the year. However, the inverse is true during December and January, when there are only a few hours of daylight. Typically it is light only from about nine o'clock in the morning until three or four o'clock in the afternoon. When there is snow on the ground, not much happens anyway, other than logging.

The Little Red River Cree Nation actually owns its own logging company, Little Red River Forestry Ltd. It owns a number of companies that operate in that part of the world and they are relatively successful. Having a population of 5,000 gives forestry companies in that area human resources to tap into. There is a significant amount of forestry that takes place in northern Alberta. There is also a significant number of other things that happen there.

Little Red River Cree Nation is also home to the Little Red River Wildland Firefighters Inc. Northern Alberta is a relatively sparsely populated part of the country and there are vast forests that people work in, such as loggers. There is also oil field development. There is a lot of wildlife as well. Managing forest fires is a big part of what is done in northern Alberta. The Little Red River Cree Nation is a definite part of that as well, because it has its own company that contracts to the Alberta government and the federal government to maintain the forests in the area.

From my research, this is part of Treaty No. 8 territory. Treaty No. 8 was signed in 1899, well over 100 years ago. Shortly after that, Wood Buffalo National Park was put in place to allow for a large buffalo herd to move freely. Interestingly, however, there was no buffalo herd there, so the park was created and the buffalo were transported from Wainwright, Alberta, which is about 900 kilometres south, and they were transplanted in Wood Buffalo National Park.

● (1525)

This leads to some concern today, because these bison have bovine TB. Even the local indigenous population does not hunt them because of the worries of the disease that happens to live in some of the bison. There is an ongoing concern about that.

Either way, whatever the case may be, at 47,000 kilometres, this is one of the largest, if not the largest, national parks in the country. It takes up the whole northeastern corner of Alberta. It is not a national park that a lot of people visit, because there are not a lot of roads to it. To get to this particular corner, people would have to fly in or drive in during the winter on a winter road. I believe that people can get there by taking a ferry down the river as well. For the most part, however, nobody drives in and out of that area on a regular basis. It is a significantly remote corner of the province. There is not a lot of industrial activity in the park, and therefore, there is no need for roads, and roads going to that corner of the province simply do not get built.

Government Orders

Since 1988 or maybe a little earlier, but for decades and nearly as long as I have been alive, they have been working on transferring this piece of land out of the park and into a reserve. This work has been ongoing.

I would also point out that there are other areas in my riding where people are waiting for a reserve. There is the Peerless Trout First Nation, which is probably about 300 or 400 kilometres south of the area that is in the bill. The people there are also waiting for their reserve. They have been promised land as well, and they are working tirelessly for their reserve.

This is a three-stage process. I have met with the band and council. They have shown me what is going on, and I have been able to advocate for them on these things. They have stage one and their own piece of land, which is now the reserve. They have built a health centre. They have their own fire station, and are building an education centre there as well. However, there are still stages two and three. They are looking forward to getting that completed.

This is an ongoing process with many levels of government dealing with it. There's the provincial government. Typically, all of the crown land in Alberta is managed by the provincial government. The provincial government has to sign off on it, which I believe it has. The local municipality also has interests in that area. It has a big road maintenance yard right inside that area. There has to be an agreement on how that is going to be managed as well. There are some hurdles that have to be stepped over in order to move forward.

There is the Lubicon Lake Band, which was missed by the Indian accountants who came through in the 1800s and therefore never got its own reserve. These people have been living there for hundreds of years, and they just happened to have been missed. It is fairly easy to see why. People can travel for hours and hours on the highway and see only bush. There is a sign at the beginning warning of there being no gas for 175 kilometres. People had better have a full tank of gas. The band also moves around depending on the time of the year, and has several camps on the edges of these lakes. They were missed when the allocation for reserve lands came out, and so they never had a reserve. However, we worked diligently for 20 years or so, and in 2010 the band got its first agreement on where the land would be.

As members can imagine, sometimes there can be a kerfuffle between neighbouring bands. One band may say that it is that band's traditional territory, and the other band may say the same. This is also the case up in northern Alberta where I represent. We are looking to see more progress on that. However, the basic outline has been nailed down, and I think that deal was signed in 2010 with the federal government, and we are continually working toward that.

● (1530)

It seems these land claim deals typically take years and years just to get everybody on the same page and get all the details hammered out. I know that the Lubicon Lake Band First Nation is definitely looking forward to having its own piece of promised land.

As we consider the bill, the Rouge park aspect of the bill has been talked about extensively and I understand that it affects a lot more people seeing as it is perhaps right in the centre of a big, sprawling metropolis, with many ridings that interact with it. I would emphasize that the land in the northern part of my riding, at about

37 square kilometres, is about half the size of the Rouge national park, so it is a significant piece of land. Perhaps there are not as many people who will be impacted by this piece of land, but for the livelihood and the way of life of the Lubicon Lake Band First Nation, those 5,000 people who live in northern Alberta, this will have a profound impact on their ability to develop that area and to build permanent structures there and be able to use the land in the method that they see fit. It is a fairly virgin piece of land as well. There has not been too much impact in terms of industrial activity, unlike the Rouge national park.

I will leave what I have to say about the Wood Buffalo National Park and the taking of the 37 kilometres out of the park. I think I have addressed it well. I know the people of Little Red River are quite excited about this new development, but it has been worked on for generations. Regardless of whether the federal government has recognized this as being their territory or not, they have been living there already and they are excited about it, but it is also a matter of fact because they already live there and are raising their families there.

I will move on to the Rouge national park, the piece of this bill that has had the most attention from members. I think we are starting to sound like a broken record, but I want to talk about the term "ecological integrity". Coming from northern Alberta, one of the most beautiful places in this country, to put the term "ecological integrity" on the Rouge national park seems like a great irony. I mentioned northern Alberta where we are taking part of the Wood Buffalo National Park out. That is an area that has ecological integrity and it is easy to see how we can continue to manage that purely because there are not a lot of people who live in Wood Buffalo National Park. In fact, this is the only community that lives in Wood Buffalo National Park.

However, the Rouge national park has been lived in for thousands of years. Significant industrial activity has happened in that area. Currently there are highways, power lines, and pipelines that run through it. All of these things make our lives better. Highways allow us to travel at high speeds, 100 kilometres an hour, to get where we need to go. Pipelines bring natural gas that we use to heat our homes, so we need these things. There is no doubt about that. With regard to power lines, I have a cellphone on my desk right now that every day is charged up. Every night I charge it up and most of the MPs here could not survive without our cellphones. It is a bit of an understatement, we probably could survive. It is not like water or food, but the anxiety that I feel when my cellphone is not in my pocket and it is not readily available, or if the battery goes dead, is significant.

● (1535)

That example is about the power to charge up my cellphone every night. I guess it is a bit of an overstatement to say I cannot survive without it, but I think members understand what I mean, that the power is important.

Government Orders

That says nothing about the heat that it provides. I know in Alberta, my home is heated with natural gas but where I rent here in Ottawa, my home is heated with electricity. It is imperative that the electricity continues. In order for that to happen, we are going to need power lines and we are going to need pipelines. It is a great technological feat to see that each house in this country is heated by some form other than wood nowadays. It is much too easy. In fact, I think that is part of the problem, that we have forgotten what it is like to go out and chop wood, and bring it in to keep our homes warm. We have forgotten what it is like to have to store wood all year long in order to burn it throughout the winter.

Now if we are cold, we just go over and turn the thermostat up. We do not think too much of it past that. We do not think about all the power lines that it took, and we do not think about all the pipelines. We do not think about the big dam that is up in northern Quebec or Labrador or B.C. or wherever it is that generates the power that we get to use.

Right here in Ottawa, within sight of this building, there is a big power generation dam. We often drive by there and wonder what it is. That is what is powering our cellphones. That is what is heating homes. It is that kind of thing. These are the technological advances that humanity, because we have put our minds to it and co-operated together, has been able to make, to make all of our lives better.

When we say Rouge National Urban Park should have ecological integrity, it is a misnomer even just to insinuate that currently we do not have ecological integrity there in terms of it being a natural habitat. There is a lot of human impact that has happened there.

Second, if we are going to put that on there, Parks Canada has a definition for that, a “hands-off approach”, letting nature take its course. If a stream is going to erode away the dirt, exposing a pipeline, potentially causing a spill, we are just going to let that happen and we are going to have to move the pipeline. If that is a stream that erodes away the base around one of the power lines, we will have to just let that happen. We cannot take preventative action, which, in my thinking, would be the smart thing to do.

One of my towns in northern Alberta, the town of Whitecourt, is looking to become a city soon. Every time the census comes out, the residents look to see if they have made it over the 10,000 mark. If it makes it over the 10,000, it can apply to become a city. At this point, it is a town.

Just last year, it launched a project to divert the water from the river to some degree to prevent it from washing away big parts of the town. There is a big lumber mill and a big park, and things like that, down in the river valley. It was being threatened by the river eroding the bank away. Just in one year, 35 feet was lost off the bank of the river. The river was moving into town, basically. Big berms have been built in the river to divert the water, so the water does not hit the bank directly and erode it more.

That is the beauty of humanity's genius, the fact that we can see these problems, and we can undertake methods to divert the water or prevent the forest fire or all of these kinds of things.

To put the term “ecological integrity” on a place like Rouge park seems very counterintuitive to me. No matter how much this piece

has to be in there, I do not think it was an appropriate term to be placed on the Rouge park.

That said, I see my time is winding to a close here. I would like to congratulate the people of Little Red River Cree Nation on their new reserve. I would like to thank the government for continuing the hard work that has been done over the last decades to get us to this point.

• (1540)

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we discussed on Friday, my friend and colleague from Peace River—Westlock and I worked quite closely together on the committee. I want to congratulate his riding and certainly the Little Red River community for their achievement in this bill.

I take issue with my friend's assertion with respect to ecological integrity. Certainly the Rouge National Urban Park is situated in one of the most developed areas of North America. It is accessible to close to seven million people within a one-hour driving distance. It is unique in the sense that it is an urban park. Ecological integrity, however, is not new to the Canadian parks system. If we look at the Rouge park, its foundational value is to ensure that it has ecological integrity but it is also in an urban setting. Therefore, I am very confident that Parks Canada is able to manage and champion that balance. We have, over the years, pushed the button on the environment and I know Parks Canada is well equipped to find that appropriate balance here as part of the management plan.

Therefore I do take issue with my friend, but I would like to extend the opportunity to him to visit Scarborough—Rouge Park. I know the North American Indigenous Games are coming up this summer and part of that will be in the riding. Likewise I would look forward to going and seeing the member. I wonder if the member would be willing to come down this summer for the indigenous games.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, as for visiting my colleague's riding, I do have a riding that is two and a half times the size of the Netherlands and I have 100 communities in my riding. I will assure the member that I will be very busy this summer visiting my own riding, so I am not sure that I will be able to make it out to visit his. I am sure his riding is beautiful, though not as beautiful as mine. I will admit I am slightly biased on that.

Regarding the member's concern about my concern about putting ecological integrity in this bill, Jasper National Park is a four-hour drive from my house and I visit there often. It has the term ecological integrity. In 2007 or 2008, I was driving through the park and there was a forest fire going on. We got to watch the forest fire that summer burn across the whole mountain range and it was significant. I would suggest that is the experience I have had with ecological integrity and I would definitely be concerned about that happening in the member's neck of the woods.

• (1545)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to address my colleague from Peace River—Westlock since our Christmas break, and I want to congratulate him on the birth of a new baby on January 9. I loved hearing more about his riding in this debate today, which seems to have been subtitled, “who lives in the most beautiful riding in Canada”. It is a debate no one will win.

Government Orders

I wanted to point out to the member that his experience with forestry in his area of the world is that vast expanse of boreal forest across Canada, which is not without its own risks. With the exception of the Garry oak forest in my area of southern Vancouver Island, this Rouge Valley national park is actually protecting the Carolinian forest, which is the most endangered forest type in Canada and this national park must include ecological integrity if for no other reason but for that. I just wanted to add that to his otherwise very entertaining comments.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, that is precisely why I would argue that the term “ecological integrity” is problematic in this context. Ecological integrity would say that if there were a forest fire or a flood we would let it have its way. The member seems to be advocating that we would not let a forest fire take out this highly protected piece of forest. I am not arguing that this should not be a park; I am saying that we should not put the term “ecological integrity” on this piece of land.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock for a wonderful explanation of the fundamental differences between the Rouge National Urban Park and the Wood Buffalo National Park in his riding. It was a particularly educational experience for me.

I want to follow up on the comments my colleagues made about the notion of ecological integrity. Not only, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands noted, is this a particularly important Carolinian forest, it also represents the largest diversity of flora and fauna in this particular region, which is, in itself, worthy of protection. Would my friend not agree that the notion of ecological integrity is particularly important, from an aspirational aspect, to make sure that this diversity is maintained?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, ecological integrity, as I understand it, and as I experienced it in Jasper, is that they let the forest fire burn. They just let it go. If the river is going to erode the road, they let it erode the road.

What my colleague seems to be saying is that we need to protect these rare species of flora and fauna in this area. I totally agree with him. We need to protect those things. That is why the term “ecological integrity” is not a good term to place in this, because I have seen ecological integrity in action burning up hectares and hectares of the Alberta forest. That is how the forest is renewed, and that is how it needs to go. That is ecological integrity, allowing the forest to burn or allowing a place to flood. If we want to protect the flora and fauna of Rouge National Urban Park, ecological integrity is not the term to use.

•(1550)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think everyone who has spoken today is very supportive of making sure we protect these lands. I wonder if the member could speak a little about the farming practices that are going on within the context of the park.

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, that is an interesting question. I am not personally familiar with it, but I understand that there is a significant amount of farming happening right in the Rouge National Urban Park. That was a surprise to me, because I was not familiar with farming within national parks. As I said, up in northern

Alberta, our national parks are fairly off limits to doing a lot of things. We are allowed to drive on the roads, and that is about it. Camping in undesignated camping spots is not even allowed where I come from. The whole concept of farming within a national park, especially when we are talking about ecological integrity, seems interesting.

I could give a shout-out to another beautiful part of the country. I know my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock lives in one of the very beautiful places in our country. I have walked down the wharf at White Rock several times in my life, so I will give that shout-out to her riding as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, although that sounded a bit more like a question, I would like to add a few comments before the close of debate today on Bill C-18.

The Rouge National Urban Park Act is extremely important. It has given us an opportunity to have a discussion about the larger purposes of national parks in Canada.

I want to begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territory of the Algonquin of Golden Lake. I think that is an important aspect of what we are doing here with the Rouge National Urban Park; it is reconnecting with the first nation peoples and their traditions, use, and occupation of the territory that was here before there was a Canada.

It is important that as we reflect on the purposes of national parks we not fall into what I have found frustrating in the debate on Bill C-18, which has been something of a false debate on the purpose of a national park and why we are worried about ecological integrity.

Ecological integrity is at the heart of the reason we create parks. We do not create national parks in this country to create amusement park areas or primarily for the purpose of giving Canadians and foreign visitors a chance to walk in the woods. That is a wonderful side effect of creating a national park.

National parks have the highest order of protection within the International Union for Conservation of Nature's protected areas hierarchy. They are the crown jewels in every country. National parks, unlike provincial parks, are more restrictive in what one can do. Yes, I enjoy hiking in national parks, but I know that in some areas, one is not to take a dog at all, and in no place is one to take a dog off a leash. Provincial parks are different.

Government Orders

In no place in Canada should we compromise on the fundamental principle of ecological integrity to encourage economic development. There was a bit of a slippery slope some time ago. Back in 1998, the federal government commissioned a panel on ecological integrity. It was chaired by Jacques Gérin, a former deputy minister of Environment Canada and a very respected civil servant, who I am proud to call one of my dear friends. Jacques Gérin, as the deputy minister of Environment Canada, had the misfortune for a while of being deputy minister to the one minister of the environment in the history of this country who truly did not understand the purpose of a national park. This was in the Mulroney administration. Some members may recall Suzanne Blais-Grenier. She was the only minister of the environment who ever said out loud, “Gee, it’s a shame. Why can’t we mine and log in our national parks. That seems like a lost opportunity.” Her time working within the Mulroney cabinet was brief. Fortunately, the prime minister, Brian Mulroney, did not appreciate having a minister of the environment musing about clear-cut logging in national parks or why we were not mining or damming. She was shuffled out of cabinet, and the person I came to work for some time later, the hon. Tom McMillan, replaced her.

It was a moment when people began to rock back on their heels and say, “Wait a minute. Could we actually have a minister of the environment in cabinet who does not understand that the purpose of national parks is to protect these areas from development?”

We have a vast area of this country outside of all protection. It is very clear that most of Canada is not protected. Therefore, when we do say that this is a national park, we have to understand the purpose of that park. That purpose was clarified by a panel created on ecological integrity back in 1998 that reported that ecological integrity must not be ignored. It must be fundamental.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

This issue is critically important to the creation of national parks.

[*English*]

With that, the Canada National Parks Act was amended to ensure that ecological integrity stayed there as the paramount purpose of national parks. Frankly, that was being eroded over the 10 years of the Harper administration. We saw a private, for-profit company put an ice walkway in Jasper National Park. Yes, it is a great tourist attraction, but no, it did not contribute to the ecological integrity of Jasper National Park. Neither did it contribute to the ecological integrity of Cape Breton Highlands National Park when the previous administration was promoting the horrific idea, which thankfully, this Minister of Environment and Climate Change has seen the end of, of a mother Canada statue in Green Cove, a pristine area of the coastline of the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Development and tourist attractions of that type are completely inappropriate for our national parks.

The debate on Bill C-18 has given us a chance, in closing the debate at third reading, to reaffirm that national parks are about ecological integrity. That is why we have to go back and look at the Sable Island national park act that passed in the 41st Parliament. It still, lamentably, allows the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board to have superior regulatory authority within the national park over Parks Canada itself. The CNSOPB is allowed to order seismic

testing and to merely notify Parks Canada. It does not even have to consult in advance. That national park act, like the Rouge National Urban Park Act, needs to be revisited and ecological integrity restored as the core purpose of creating that park.

There have been some red herrings in this debate about forest fires burning out of control. Ecological integrity in every instance relates to the ecosystem we are protecting. The Carolinian forest is, with the exception of the Garry oak forest type in southern Vancouver Island, the most endangered forest type in Canada. Unlike Canada’s boreal forests, the Carolinian forest is not a fire-driven ecosystem. It does not need, for ecological purposes, fires to burn through it. It is a moist forest. It is a hardwood forest. It has 70 different species of trees. It is far more biologically diverse than the boreal, for example. It has more than 400 bird species. It has marshlands, and we are losing our wetlands at an extraordinarily fast rate, particularly in southern Canada.

Despite the concern, which I acknowledge is valid, from an environmental lawyer like John Swaigen, from the Friends of the Rouge, who would still like to see changes made, this is a point where we cannot make changes. We might revisit it in a number of years. However, right now we need to reassert that while 75% of the Rouge National Urban Park is still in its wild state and 25% is disturbed, Parks Canada can have a plan and a vision, and Canadians can support it, to restore more of the marshlands and restore more of the Carolinian forest. We can ensure that in this time of climate change we provide as much of a corridor as possible for those species that are moving further north as the climate changes so that they have a habitat to find as they go north,

We need the Rouge National Urban Park. We need it whether it is an urban park or a wild park. It is the Rouge National Urban Park Act that we debate today, that we put to bed today at third reading. I support it, I am grateful for it, and I am very grateful to my colleagues for giving me this abbreviated time. I did not need to take my full 10 minutes.

I just want to reassert that parks are about ecological integrity, full stop. That is why we create them. That is why we must protect the concept, the principle, and the foundational purpose of our national park system: to protect the ecological integrity of Canada’s diverse ecosystems.

• (1600)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her continued care for the environment over many years.

Government Orders

We are working right now on a study on the Aichi targets to try get Canada's protected land from 10% to 17% and our marine area from 1% to 10% by 2020, which are pretty ambitious targets. Many of the witnesses we heard from suggested that in the long run, Canada should be looking at 50% of the land and 30% of marine areas protected in some form in Canada.

I would be interested in the member's views on the future for conservation and protection in Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia who himself has had a long career track record, particularly with our parks system.

Targets are important, but targets can be misleading. One of the things out of the Brundtland Commission, the World Commission on Environment and Development, was a mistake. Certainly the author of the Brundtland Commission report, Jim MacNeill, lamented that somehow, people took out of that report 12%. It was sort of a magic number. If we could protect that, then everything else would take care of itself.

Ideally, we have graduated systems of protection. The national parks, as I mentioned, are the crown jewels, so no industrial activity at all should take place within national parks, and we should avoid the notion that they are a cash cow to pay for Parks Canada.

As my colleague from Kootenay—Columbia mentioned earlier, Parks Canada should be adequately funded so that the agency does not have to rely for so much of its revenue stream on people paying for services. That tends to drive us in the direction of national park Disneylands. We need to avoid that.

If we go out across the landscape, farmers, we know, are great conservationists. Ranchers can be great conservationists. Knowing how to protect things, they lamented deeply that the Harper administration killed the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, losing hedgerows, losing tall grass prairie. All parts of our ecosystem can be protected through sustainable development and sensitive use, even when we are exploiting them for economic purposes.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been going back and forth on the term “ecological integrity” for a while. Could the member allay some of my fears because, to me, the definition of ecological integrity means that we allow processes such as wildfires, flooding, and pest outbreaks to run their natural course?

It would be much appreciated if she could explain to me how that definition is acceptable within an urban setting.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, there are three core elements of ecological integrity: preserving and protecting natural biodiversity, which is the range and number of species; the natural processes, which the member's question relates to; as well as limiting unnatural stressors.

In the context of wildfires, Parks Canada has never let a wildfire burn in any park if there is human habitation nearby. Therefore, that is a limit. It is a natural limit and it makes sense. As I mentioned before, with the Carolinian forests, fires are not a natural stressor. Fires can occur in any place in Canada, but they are not part of the natural ecosystem type known as the “Carolinian forest” as opposed to the boreal, which clearly is a fire-driven ecosystem. Replenish-

ment, rebirth, and new forests happen in the boreal through fire. However, even in the boreal forest, Parks Canada would not allow a boreal forest fire to burn out of control and threaten a community.

Therefore, there are common-sense limits to this, and Parks Canada has always applied them.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned ecological integrity and that the Conservative government failed in allowing the walkway at the Columbia icefields. However, prior to the walkway being there, it was a pull-off at the side of the road on a rock ledge. I wonder if she could tell me how the ecological integrity of the park was damaged by putting that in, when on any given day prior to the walkway, we might have had 100 people stop to look over the rock ledge, and today we might have anywhere from 4,000 to 6,000 people stop to look over the ledge, but still not use any more of a footprint than it did in the first place.

• (1605)

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, as the member for Yellowhead would know, that walkway was enormously controversial for many reasons, I believe one being that it violated the fundamental principles of our national parks system to create a for profit operation. Yes, the walkway was built with investor private capital for the benefit of that investor. That in and of itself makes it incompatible with the purposes of our national parks.

We are creating national parks for the ecosystem that exists in Jasper, for the grizzlies, the caribou, and the species there. It is an added benefit, and there is no question that tourism attractions are wonderful. However, if we want to build an ice walkway and put private money to do it, do not do it in one of our national parks.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): 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 (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Call in the members.

Government Orders

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez: Madam Speaker, I ask that the division on the motion now before the House be deferred until tomorrow, after the time provided for oral questions.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred until tomorrow.

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PRECLEARANCE ACT, 2016

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved that Bill C-23, an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, from this government's first day in office, we have been focused on the various drivers that will grow the economy, create good, solid jobs and genuine opportunity for the middle class and all those working so hard just to get there. That is why we cut middle-class taxes and bolstered family incomes with the new Canada child benefit. That is why we increased federal support for students, skills, and learning. That is why we are investing in innovation and infrastructure. That is also why we are seizing meaningful opportunities to expand international trade through new and improved trade agreements, trade missions and marketing, and initiatives that help move both people and goods across international boundaries in faster, easier, and more efficient ways, all while maintaining our safety and security and respecting our rights.

Bill C-23, an act respecting the pre-clearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, is very much aimed in this latter direction. The legislation would allow more Canadians and Canadian businesses to enjoy the convenience and economic benefits of clearing American customs and immigration procedures in Canada before entering the U.S.

Expanded pre-clearance will strengthen Canada's economic competitiveness by accelerating the flow of legitimate trade and travel while enhancing the security of our border. Moreover, it will allow more Canadian travellers to complete U.S. border procedures while under the protective umbrella of Canadian law and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Canada and the United States are each other's top trading partners and the cross-border economy is essential to our shared prosperity. Nearly \$2.5 billion in goods and services cross the Canada-U.S. border every day. In fact, some \$1.5 million worth of goods and services have crossed that border since I began speaking about two minutes ago. Our exports to the United States constitute more than 20% of Canada's GDP, and two and a half million jobs rely on those exports to our southern neighbour.

There is more. In 2015, over 600,000 Canadian jobs were directly attributable to tourism and Americans represented over two-thirds of the nearly 18 million overnight visitors Canada received in that year. In all, more than 400,000 people cross our land border every day. Border benefits flow both ways. Some nine million U.S. jobs depend directly on trade with Canada and Canada is the primary export destination for 35 American states. Clearly, the movement of people and goods across the border is vital to the dynamism of the North

American economy and a powerful engine for growth and job creation in both countries.

However, border delays and concerns about potential delays can be a very significant impediment to economic growth. Our government is committed to addressing that. A central element of our campaign platform was a commitment to build a solid foundation for greater trade, stronger growth, and more job creation by working to reduce the barriers that limited trade and promoting a steadier flow of people and goods.

Some years ago, Canada and the United States began working on a new legal framework for the pre-clearance system between the two countries, but it was not implemented and did not include a definite business plan for the expansion of pre-clearance. Through this past year, we tackled those deficiencies, building on more than six decades of successful pre-clearance experience between Canada and the United States.

● (1610)

Our expansion plans will begin with new pre-clearance services for air passengers at Billy Bishop island airport in Toronto and Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City, and for rail passengers heading into the United States from Montreal Central Station and on the Rocky Mountaineer railway in British Columbia.

We have also agreed to regularize pre-clearance operations at certain rail and marine sites in B.C. that currently offer a partial service. This improvement will be especially significant for the west coast cruise ship business.

One of the steps on the path to all of this expansion is the adoption of new legislation in both countries. The requisite American legislation was signed into law last December, after being adopted by Congress with, unusually, unanimous support in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The related Canadian legislation is what we are examining today.

Before I get into some of the details of Bill C-23, let me take a moment to discuss what exactly pre-clearance is and what benefits Canadians can expect from its expansion.

Pre-clearance simply means that rather than customs and immigration procedures happening just after we cross the physical border or after landing at a U.S. airport, they happen in advance. Canadians who have flown to the U.S. from one of the eight airports in our country where pre-clearance is currently conducted, and that is Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto Pearson, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax, are very familiar with how pre-clearance works and what the advantages are.

Travellers are cleared for entry into the United States by U.S. border officials before they board the plane, which means they avoid lineups and delays after they land. They can also fly directly to any U.S. airport, including airports like LaGuardia airport in New York City or Reagan airport in Washington, D.C., which do not have full customs facilities and ordinarily receive only domestic U.S. flights. Pearson airport in Toronto, for example, presently offers direct flights to 50 American destinations. Without pre-clearance, that number would drop to 27.

Pre-clearance makes it easier, not only for Canadians to travel to the United States, but for Canadian businesses to attract American tourists and business travellers to Canada, which is obviously a major benefit for local economies. That is why there has been so much support for the planned expansion, which we announced last spring, that will be enabled by the bill before us now.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

Following the announcement last spring, the president of the Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de Québec stated that we had reached a historic milestone in terms of the region's accessibility.

According to Mayor Régis Labeaume, the arrival of preclearance at Jean Lesage airport is a great victory for his city. In the words of the president of the Quebec City airport authority, "this grand project will forever change the face of the airport by considerably reducing travel times to the United States and by enhancing the client experience of our passengers".

[*English*]

The president of the B.C. Chamber of Commerce has said that the agreement to expand pre-clearance will help businesses grow and avoid spending time in border lineups.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has welcomed the expansion because pre-clearance operations, which have existed in one form or another for over 60 years, have been, in the words of the chamber "a massive success" that "greatly reduce congestion at the border and allow for streamlined processing of trusted trade and travel".

In short, Bill C-23 will be good for business all over the country, good for tourism, and good for ordinary Canadian travellers as well.

The first part of Bill C-23 sets out the Canadian legislative framework that will govern American officers conducting pre-clearance in Canada of people and goods bound for the United States. In general, travellers already familiar with the way pre-clearance works will not notice any difference.

As is already the case, American pre-clearance officers will be authorized to collect the same information from travellers that is collected by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at regular U.S. points of entry; and in many other respects including search authorities, detention authorities, and penalties for lying to an officer, Bill C-23 is generally similar to the law governing pre-clearance that is currently in effect and has been so since at least 1999.

I know there are always concerns about the authorities that U.S. officers would have in Canada just as there are always concerns

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across the border about the authorities Canadian officers would have in the U.S. I can assure the House that our government takes very seriously the need to protect the rights of travellers and to ensure that they are treated fairly and in accordance with the rule of law.

I will therefore take just a few moments to address some of the concerns that have been mentioned in public.

First, with respect to searches, the current law allows a U.S. pre-clearance officer to conduct a frisk search if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a traveller is hiding something or carrying something dangerous. This would not change under Bill C-23.

If there is a need for a search requiring the removal of clothing, the current law obligates U.S. officers to request a Canadian counterpart to conduct the search. This, too, would remain the same. The only difference under Bill C-23 is that the U.S. officer could conduct the search if no Canadian officer is available. This would be extremely rare, and any such search would be subject to the same legal and constitutional protections as would apply to a search done by a Canadian officer.

Further, historical experience over the past 60 years would indicate that any conflict in relation to those rules governing searches would have happened exactly zero times based on the experience over six decades.

With respect to detention, U.S. officers would not have the power to arrest or charge travellers in Canada. Rather, as is currently the case under existing law, a U.S. pre-clearance officer who has reasonable grounds to believe that a traveller has committed an offence must turn the traveller over to Canadian authorities as quickly as possible. With no exceptions, only Canadian authorities would determine whether charges should be laid.

With respect to travellers wishing to withdraw from a pre-clearance area, they would be entitled to do so, but they could be required to identify themselves and give their reasons for withdrawing. This is simply to prevent the illicit probing of pre-clearance sites by people trying to find weaknesses in border security before leaving the pre-clearance area undetected.

With respect to the arming of officers, U.S. officers in Canada would only be entitled to carry the same weapons as Canadian border services officers do in the same environment. For example, because Canadian officers do not generally carry firearms inside airport terminals, U.S. officers would not be authorized to carry firearms there either.

Most importantly, the bill says explicitly that American pre-clearance officers must exercise their powers and perform their duties under this act in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act. As I said earlier, the alternative is for travellers to be processed entirely in the United States with no Canadian legal protections.

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The pre-clearance agreement between Canada and the United States provides for full reciprocity, so that too is laid out in Bill C-23. No power or privilege is conferred upon the officers of one country and not the other. This is an important point to bear in mind as Canada studies and pursues future opportunities to set up Canadian pre-clearance services in the U.S. for people and goods that are bound for Canada.

• (1620)

Expansion of the service also includes pre-clearance of cargo. During the Prime Minister's recent visit to Washington, Canada and the U.S. both recognized the success of the existing pre-clearance operations for travellers, and we declared our mutual commitment to establish cargo pre-clearance in order to make trade across our border faster, easier, and more secure.

All of this fits within our government's overarching objectives of growing the economy and creating jobs, and it upholds our platform commitment to foster a productive relationship with the United States in the interests of our mutual prosperity and security, all while safeguarding our Canadian rights and freedoms.

Since I began my remarks about 20 minutes ago, over \$25 million worth of goods and services have been traded across our border with the United States and more than 5,000 people have travelled across that boundary. However, the potential for even more trade and travel between our two countries and for greater economic growth is strong. We can and we must make the border flow of people and goods faster, easier, and more secure. That is what Bill C-23 would achieve, and it would do so while allowing more Canadian travellers to enjoy the protection of Canadian law and the protection of the charter when going through U.S. customs procedures.

This is an important debate. I thank the House for its attention this afternoon. I look forward to the constructive input that I am sure hon. members will offer during today's debate and throughout the legislative process on Bill C-23.

• (1625)

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, when we hear the argument of trade, goods, and so forth, it sounds like a compelling argument on the surface, but one question needs to be asked with respect to Bill C-23. With pre-clearance already happening, it is hard to understand why we are giving so many more powers that Canadians do not currently have under a pre-clearance system that seems to be working just fine.

I could ask about many of the points the minister raised, but unfortunately my time is limited, so I will focus on one that has been a subject of discussions and concern in the public. That is the question of leaving the pre-clearance zone. The minister offered as justification that it is to make sure people are not staking it out, that people are not examining how it is. This, to me, runs the risk of profiling.

At the public safety committee last week, representatives of the Islamic Society of North America specifically raised the issue around that provision in the bill. They said what ends up happening is, if a Canadian—and given how things are going currently at the U.S. border, unfortunately it may be a Muslim Canadian—arrives at the border and does not appreciate the line of questioning or finds that it

infringes on his or her rights or is just abusive and he or she decides to leave the pre-clearance zone, beyond what the minister has said, the bill would allow that individual to be detained and questioned within reasonable delay, but reasonable delay is not defined.

I am wondering if the minister could assure us and explain how that is not the exact kind of situation that we are going to find ourselves in, especially given the current U.S. administration's behaviour towards certain groups of people.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, with respect to the pre-clearance areas within various airports, they are obviously areas that need to be very secure because they deal with sensitive cross-border issues. The powers that would be provided under Bill C-23 are very similar to what exists at the present time under existing legislation. The hon. gentleman makes the suggestion that, in his view, the change with Bill C-23 is large and drastic, and I would beg to differ. I do not see it as a major alteration in the law that presently exists.

The safeguard that the member referred to that is embedded in these particular clauses of Bill C-23 with respect to people wishing to withdraw from the pre-clearance area, that safeguard is extremely important. They can withdraw. They may be asked questions to identify themselves. They may be asked questions for their reasons for withdrawal in order to protect the integrity of that zone, but the whole process is subject to a strong limitation. It cannot “unreasonably delay” the traveller; those are the words in the act. The concept of reasonableness is a concept that has long jurisprudence attached to it and would undoubtedly be applied assiduously by Canadian courts.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, certainly, we recognize the continuation of important work that was begun under the previous government. Former prime minister Stephen Harper, of course, negotiated the beyond the border agreement with former president Barack Obama. We see this legislation as carrying through on some of the items within that.

Could the minister reflect on some of the discussions happening in the United States? Does he see the ability of the beyond the border agreement to continue forward in its fullness in light of the new administration? What kinds of discussions has he had with respect to that going forward?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in the course of my remarks, when we look at the statistics, it is obviously in the interests of both countries to have a successful border relationship. In terms of the volumes of people and goods and services that flow back and forth every day, every hour, and every minute, and every literally, it is important to both countries to make that relationship successful.

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The beyond the border initiatives actually stretch way back to the time of John Manley and Tom Ridge, when the first arrangement was put together. The current arrangement is coming to the end of its life cycle. There are a number of things that need to be accounted for to finish off the previous work that was agreed to by previous administrations, and it will be important for Canada to pursue with the United States where this process now goes from here: for example, are there future opportunities to carry on the work to make the border efficient and expeditious, as well as fair in the way it deals with people, while at the same time make the border secure and safe in both directions?

I have had one opportunity so far to raise this in a face-to-face fashion with the new Secretary of Homeland Security. That was a good conversation, but it was a preliminary conversation. Obviously, a lot more detail is required. Within the next three or four weeks, I hope to have the opportunity to carry on that conversation to examine exactly where we wish to expand our opportunities in relation to the border.

• (1630)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the concerns I have with the bill is the continuation of integration with the United States on programs where previous programs have been disavowed, or have not ensured that the current agreements are kept in good faith. An example is NEXUS. I have written the minister about this.

I will be very specific with another issue, so hopefully people at home can really realize the significance of this. Our hospitals used to have prior arrangements with the United States so that preborn children and their mothers, as well as newborn babies, could get access to American hospitals for high-risk pregnancies and births, as well as after-birth emergencies. They could get into Detroit, for example, within minutes versus going to London. It is a life and death situation. We have yet to hear back from the minister about this. It was proved null and void under the Trump administration. Why would we want to go further when we still do not have clarity about our current rules and agreements and what they are supposed to be?

If there are no known entities for doing that, simply leaving it to people to figure out in life and death situations is just not good enough, so why would we go deeper when we cannot even get basic answers on past practices with agreements?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, with respect to NEXUS, in fact, within a very short time of that issue arising a couple of weeks ago, we did obtain clarity with respect to the NEXUS rules and the applicability of those rules, especially in relation to permanent residents. When points of dispute or concern arise, the best way to deal with them is to confront them directly, raise them directly with counterparts, and work very hard to get satisfactory answers.

On the issue of the hospital exchanges, that would, I suspect, be primarily under provincial jurisdiction, but I am more than happy to pursue that issue, to examine its current status.

With respect to Bill C-23 itself, though, from the perspective the hon. gentleman represents of why it would be wise to have this arrangement as opposed to not having this arrangement, by having

the arrangement in place, it would mean that more and more Canadians would go through the process of clearing American customs and immigration procedures while they are still in Canada, before they cross the border. Therefore, being in Canada, they would have the protection of Canadian law, including the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

What is the alternative if we do not have that protection? It means that people would be cleared on the American side under complete American jurisdiction, with no protection of Canadian law. Clearly, pre-clearance is a better way to do it.

• (1635)

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 St. Albert—Edmonton, Justice; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, Foreign Affairs; and the hon. member for Salaberry—Suroit, Youth.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to discuss Bill C-23, preclearance act, 2016.

[*Translation*]

The previous Conservative government supported pre-clearance agreements with the United States and took several steps to enter into agreements to facilitate travel by Canadians. In 2015, Canada and the United States signed the Agreement on Land, Rail, Marine and Air Transport Preclearance, which established a legal framework for new pre-clearance operations for all means of transportation.

In 2012, the government announced the creation of binational port operations committees at eight Canadian airports that provide a U.S. pre-clearance service. The Conservative Party's position is that transborder clearance agreements with the United States are important and help improve security and border integrity, and create jobs and growth in Canada by facilitating the movement of legitimate goods and travellers.

[*English*]

The bill does create a legal mechanism for border security officers in Canada and the United States to provide for the pre-clearance in each country of travellers and goods bound for the other country. Trade and travel between the United States and Canada are key to the economic success of both nations. More than \$2 billion travels across the border every single day. We must take all necessary steps to facilitate this trade and travel while ensuring that our border is meaningful and secure.

Specifically, the bill before us today is the implementation legislation for the agreement on land, rail, marine, and air pre-clearance that was negotiated by the Conservative government. The bill is incredibly important for both our security and prosperity. It is important that legitimate travel and trade be able to occur as freely as possible while also leveraging the work done by the Canada Border Services Agency officers and Customs and Border Protection officers.

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First, let us talk a little bit about pre-clearance, what it is and how it has been working, because contrary to what some would have us believe, this is not a new concept. As the hon. member just mentioned in the House, pre-clearance operations were implemented in Canada for the first time back in 1952 when the United States pre-clearance officers began screening travellers for United States-bound planes at the Toronto international airport. A formal pre-clearance agreement with the United States did not exist at that time. In fact, Canada and the United States reached their first air transport pre-clearance agreement in 1974.

Pre-clearance is designed, of course, to push the effective border out away from the homeland. What does that mean? It means in this instance that travellers are screened in their country of origin before boarding a flight rather than being screened when their flight lands. This is important, because threats are interdicted before they can enter a new country, and screening times become more uniform.

It may interest members to know that more than 12 million passengers at eight airports went through U.S. pre-clearance in 2016. In pre-clearance operations, border officers from the inspecting country, in other words, the United States or Canada, carry out customs and immigration inspections in the host country before allowing goods or people into the inspecting country.

● (1640)

The objective of pre-clearance is to improve and expedite the flow of legitimate trade and travel while continuing to ensure border security and integrity. If there was no pre-clearance, Canadians would not be able to take advantage of nearly half of the direct flights between Canadian and United States destinations. They instead would need to fly to an intermediary city in the U.S. and go through customs screening. This would increase the costs of these trips, it would increase the amount of time these trips would take, and it would ultimately make travelling harder.

However, pre-clearance also has a security benefit. Potential threats to the other country can be stopped by law enforcement before they even cross the border. This type of action is important in the context of the broader beyond the border agreement. The United States and Canada have a long tradition of working together to ensure that the border remains open to legitimate trade and travel, and closed to terrorists, criminals, and illegal or unauthorized goods. Work done by the previous government has deepened and institutionalized this co-operation within, at, and away from the shared border. This is great work that was done by the previous government, and we are glad that it has been pushed across the goal line, but obviously there may be some imperfections.

Media have reported on concerns that U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers will be able to detain Canadians on Canadian soil. In my view, this criticism is overblown and is not matched by the legislation. The legislation is clear that CBP officers are not peace officers, and powers of arrest only lie in Canadian hands. However, individuals may be held for questioning at the discretion of the inspecting country officer. This, in turn, makes sense. Pre-clearance is effectively treating the customs checkpoint the same as if an individual approached a land border.

I look forward to hearing concerns from individuals and groups at committee stage about detention powers. If there are issues that need

to be addressed, the committee can consider these. We all know that an important part of national security measures is maintaining the confidence of the Canadian people. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness needs to explain to Canadians how the legislation will work. I would be happy to help him in this regard. He has to continue to explain that rights will not be violated, and that security will be protected.

We have heard a lot about national security these days and years. We have heard a lot about the Liberal campaign promise to significantly alter the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, more commonly referred to as Bill C-51. I would put it to this House that it would be a manifestly irresponsible course of action. The CSIS director has confirmed that the new threat disruption tools have been used over two dozen times. Removing these tools, which permits CSIS to do things as simple as talk to the parents of radicalized individuals, is tantamount to tying its hands behind its back.

We have heard the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness make comments about reviewing the passenger protect program as well. In most if not all of these cases raised in the media of individuals not being able to fly, the issue at play has been the American no-fly list. There is little that the minister can do about a policy of a foreign country, other than lobbying for its change.

We have also heard suggestions that the newly created offence for the advocacy or promotion of terrorism in general is too broad and will impede on the right of free speech, yet in the context of our national security review at the public safety committee we have heard from groups such as the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, and B'nai Brith Canada. They have unequivocally stated that these measures provide necessary safety and security to their communities.

I would put to the House that we need to get serious about dealing with Canada's national security. We need to listen to the debate. We need to listen to the security experts. That brings me back to the legislation we are discussing today. Academic review after academic review found that pre-clearance allows border authorities to better utilize resources because screening is done away from the homeland.

● (1645)

A recent paper published by the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region has found:

The Pre-clearance agreement gives US Customs and Border Protection and Canada Border Services Agency officials the authority to conduct border security and inspections in the other country prior to departure. By taking a perimeter approach to security, each country will address potential threats early and improve efficiency of legitimate travel and trade at the border.

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One often-overlooked component of this bill is that it is not only pre-clearance in the air mode, but it is by rail as well. We know that travellers often move between Montreal, Quebec, and Plattsburgh, New York. In the absence of pre-clearance, once the train crosses the border, it must stop and all passengers must clear customs. This process can take up to one hour. It is cumbersome, needless, and can dissuade further travel due to increasing demands on time. Pre-clearance would allow customs inspections to occur before a passenger even boards the train.

This type of security measure leverages the resources brought to bear in both countries. If there is a security risk, an irregular migrant, or otherwise inadmissible person and if they attempt to travel, they can be stopped and dealt with in their country of origin. Border officials from the inspecting country and law enforcement officials from the host country can work together to ensure that the appropriate outcome is determined.

This legislation is focused on passenger travel, which is very important, but there is more that needs to be done. As I said earlier, more than \$2 billion travels across the border each and every day. The government must proceed with pre-clearance of cargo, as well.

Under the leadership of the previous Conservative government, a truck cargo pre-clearance pilot project was conducted at the Peace Bridge crossing between Fort Erie, Ontario, and Buffalo, New York. This project has resulted in important lessons learned that can now be implemented to improve the pre-clearance times for cargo. These include eliminating user fee cash collection at the primary inspection, updating technology connectivity, and mandating advanced electronic filing of manifests for all commercial entries.

When this legislation was tabled, the Liberal government did make reference to the fact that the issues around cargo had been referred to a working group on pre-clearance. It has been several months now. I understand the hon. public safety minister also referenced this issue in his remarks today, but we would like to see some results soon.

The recent joint statement following the meeting between the Prime Minister and President Trump did not make any reference to this issue, nor did it make any substantial reference to the efforts to thin the border for legitimate trade and travel while ensuring that terrorists and illegal migrants are stopped in their tracks. This is concerning, but unfortunately, we have to wait, and I hope not wait too long, to see how this relationship will move forward.

We do have a government that has made some provocative statements in the past, whether it is tipping its hands on NAFTA negotiations or eulogies for Fidel Castro, statements that will not gain favour with our largest trading partner, and this of course is not an effective way to get results for Canadians.

However, I see the bill here today and I see that we can make progress on these issues. Let me take the opportunity to summarize.

Bill C-23 is basically good legislation. I am proud to support it going to the public safety committee for further study. The reasons for this are very simple.

First, the legislation would allow air, rail, and marine travellers to proceed to their destination on the other side of the border more

quickly. That means smoother travel, and smoother travel is more desirable travel, and more desirable travel means an increase in tourism dollars spent in Canada.

Second, this legislation would allow Canada and the United States to leverage our shared security resources. CBP and CBSA officers would work together, along with their law enforcement partners in the FBI, RCMP, and local police forces, to ensure that terrorists, criminals, and illegal migrants are stopped at the earliest opportunity. Pushing the border out is a common-sense principle that we need to continue to advance.

● (1650)

Third, this legislation is the result of hard work and negotiation by the previous Conservative government. Former prime minister Stephen Harper and former president Barack Obama had a great strategy for our shared border, and this is another piece that would make our shared border work better.

We absolutely must ask the Minister of Public Safety and his officials important questions about the balancing of liberty, security, and trade. We absolutely must hear from important stakeholders, such as civil liberties groups, the Customs and Immigration Union, the National Airlines Council of Canada, important groups that deal with the issues raised in this legislation each and every day. However, on its face, Conservatives can support measures to streamline our border and to make it simpler to travel to and from the United States.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague for his open-mindedness about this bill. The bills that are introduced in this place protect our rights and freedoms.

I would like to hear my colleague speak about the assurances that we are giving Canadians with respect to protecting their privacy and the information we will be giving pre-clearance posts, which is similar to the information already submitted at border crossings.

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, naturally it is very important that we protect our fellow citizens. This bill must provide for a plan to ensure that we strike a balance between protecting our rights and freedoms and the security of our country.

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[English]

It is a balancing act. I believe it is important to strike the right balance. I believe that this bill, on its face, does strike the right balance. As my hon. NDP colleague mentioned as well, it is important to go to committee to hear from groups to make sure that we have struck the right balance. If there are things that have to be done to make more clear what the intention of the House is, we should be open to that, but on its face, I believe that we are very close to, if not where, we should be.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, one of the things I have been concerned about is the changing relationships that we have on the border and the inability for us to act. I know the hon. member has raised some other issues relating to refugees coming into Canada from the United States, and that says a couple of things that are important to note.

First and foremost is that if those refugees are seen as dangerous or requiring intervention that is significant, then we have an issue with our trading partner the United States allowing those people into the U.S. in the first place and then coming to Canada. I would like to know from the member what we should do about that in the relationship, in terms of informing the United States that we are going to have a further level of security with it having those types of people potentially in its harbour.

My second point has to do with if there is a problem with the detention area. The explanation of the minister is about some clandestine kind of operation and understanding what is going on and reporting that intelligence back if people are detained. The reality in my riding of Windsor West where we have people crossing on a regular basis, is that people, including children, are detained for eight hours, six hours, four hours, two hours. Often they are never even brought to an officer, nor is there even a brief exchange on what the actual protocol should be for people. No wonder they do not want to stay and wait for that. Just this weekend in my area somebody was detained for two hours. A middle-aged woman with full documentation was going over to the United States from Canada. There was no explanation other than they just wanted to detain her.

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, I will take the second issue first, if the member is amendable to that, and say that absolutely, these are the kinds of issues that have to be probed as we continue to discuss the bill and hear from stakeholders. Certainly, as the hon. Minister of Public Safety said in the House just a few minutes ago, it has to be reasonable. That is the ground. If there is evidence of unreasonable detention, that is an issue which I believe we have to probe. The hon. member is welcome to join us in committee when we discuss those issues, for sure.

In terms of the general balance, again I would say that we should strive for that. From my perspective, we know it is a public good to have pre-clearance. No one should be debating that. When we talk about irregular travel, that is to say, illegal travel, in between border sites, it is a bit of a different issue. Certainly, it is one which we raised in question period today, and certainly it is one which is in the public debate, but I do not think we should conflate the two issues. If someone is an irregular traveller moving across the border in between points of entry, it is a very different issue than what we are trying to do at the points of entry.

I would just say to the hon. member that our position should be that the law is there for a reason. It should be a reasonable law. It should be a law that is four square within the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and parliamentary wisdom. At the end of the day, we have to make sure that the law is applied properly and fairly as well.

• (1655)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for my hon. colleague.

First, he made mention today in question period and previously of the concept of an illegal refugee. I would like him to explain more about that. If refugees are fleeing for their lives, the definition of refugee being someone who has a well-founded fear of persecution or often the loss of his or her life, and I am thinking of, say, Jews leaving Nazi Germany in the dead of night and trying to make their way into Switzerland, if they make it to another country, and they are in between border points and try to cross the border to get to safety, I am having difficulty understanding why he terms that illegal. If I were a refugee fleeing for my life and being chased by murderous thugs who wanted to imprison me because of my race, I would try to cross a border, and if that was the only place I could cross, I would do that. I would like to know if he can envision any situation where a refugee might have to cross the border in between border control areas.

Second, he made reference to Canada taking a position on a foreign affairs or policy issue that would not find favour with our largest trading partner. Is he saying that Canada should not chart an independent foreign policy because we might upset the United States?

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, the law is quite clear. If an individual comes from the United States to Canada in between points of entry along the invisible border that exists between the two countries, that is an illegal and irregular transit between the two countries. That is very clear in our law. It is there, obviously, because we want to document individuals before they cross the border to find out whether their claims are legitimate.

Certainly, there are people who face harrowing situations in their original homelands but have made applications in the United States, which has a juridical process to deal with those applications for refugee claims. I know the NDP thinks in a dissimilar way to the Conservatives and Liberals on this, but the issue before us is whether the safe third country agreement should be in force and effect. We happen to agree with the Liberals that it should be, but I know New Democrats feel differently.

In terms of Canada's independent foreign policy, of course I am all in favour of that. My only point was, to crystallize it down to one example, that to unduly eulogize a Cuban dictator, "el Comandante", as the Prime Minister termed him, was perhaps not the best way to introduce himself to the new U.S. administration, nor, I would say, would it be in the Canadian interest to have this declaration from the Liberal government right at the outset that NAFTA is on the table and that we are prepared to renegotiate NAFTA. That was a poor policy move by the Liberal government and one with which I disagree.

Government Orders

• (1700)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if the member across the way could explain this to me. When the leader of the Liberal Party became Prime Minister, there was a U.S. presidential election. It seems to me that there is a very positive relationship between Canada and U.S., the White House, our Prime Minister and the PMO. I did not see that to the same degree when Stephen Harper was the prime minister.

Could the member expand on the relationship the former prime minister had with President Obama?

Hon. Tony Clement: Madam Speaker, it was a different kind of bromance. I will give the hon. member that.

It is important for all prime ministers to stand up for Canadian interests. We will be watching that very closely as the relationship between President Trump and the Prime Minister moves forward. We will be watching closely to see that Canadian interests are defended.

Certainly the Prime Minister gave a little gift to President Trump with that wonderful scene with the female entrepreneurs. That helped President Trump a great deal. It probably helped the Prime Minister a great deal as well.

However, we want to see some substance on the issues about which Canadians care.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we resume debate, I want to remind members that there is 10 minutes for questions and comments. We should be able to get in more than three or four questions. I would ask individuals to keep their questions short so others can participate fully in the discussion.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by revisiting something that my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka mentioned. I completely agree with him. The NDP does have a different way of thinking relative to the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I must say that that is key to this debate and to our thoughts on Bill C-23. The New Democrats will always be in favour of making it easier to access and cross the border, but never at the expense of Canadian rights, and particularly not when those rights are compromised on Canadian soil. That is the key issue for us today.

We acknowledge the explanations that the minister gave. It is true that pre-clearance can make more destinations available to travellers. Take for example, a person who is departing from Montreal and travelling to the United States. The fact that he or she can go through pre-clearance at the Montreal airport means that there are many more destination options available. Why? Because the destination airports do not have to have American customs facilities.

The bill before us and the associated agreement were initially presented to us as a way to increase the number of destinations available to travellers. There would be then more airports in Canada with pre-clearance capability, for example, the Jean Lesage airport in Quebec City. There would also be Canadian customs officers on the

American side of the border for the first time, which would simplify the process even more. However, this bill goes much further than that.

[*English*]

It is not just about expanding the number of destinations from which Canadians can go through pre-clearance or even having the presence of Canadians on American soil doing the same work that up until now had not been done, an option that was not available, which changes things in a positive way.

However, it is more than that. It is the powers that are given to American agents on Canadian soil that really give us pause. As with many of the debates that we have had in the House over the last number of weeks, since we came back to Ottawa after the holidays, this is another issue where the government cannot ignore the reality that the new American administration is just not the same. We are dealing with a situation that is unpredictable and rapidly evolving. Despite assurances from the government, despite the fact that the Liberals gave each other high-fives because no bad news was good news after the Prime Minister's visit to Washington a week ago, there are some serious concerns about what will happen moving forward.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Allow me to provide some examples.

There is an executive order that went relatively unnoticed because another one got all the attention, President Trump's discriminatory order that targets certain communities whose members are trying to escape a horrible situation, seek refuge, and rebuild their lives elsewhere. That is the order that grabbed everyone's attention. However, another order changed the way the law applies to protecting the private information of citizens who are not American.

Why does that matter? Because we live in a digital era where technology changes quickly. As everyone knows, there are two ways in which technology plays an increasingly important role at the border. The first has to do with our cell phones. We bring them with us to the United States. Access to international plans allows us to have a certain amount of data and minutes. These days, almost everyone travels with their cell phone.

[*English*]

Why is that important? Because we are seeing more and more stories now of uncertainty around what legal protections Canadians will have crossing the border when it comes to, for example, their cellphones. How does this relate to Bill C-23?

There is an example from this past weekend, which was covered in *Daily Xtra*. A Vancouver man was turned away at the border because he was asked for the password to his phone, and the agents went through his phone. The individual, who is a member of the LGBTQ2 community, was turned away because he was suspected of being a sex worker. Why? Because when they looked through his phone, he had dating apps and things like this, which many people have on their phones. It is nothing unusual.

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We could talk about discrimination based on the person's sexual orientation, but I will put that issue aside for the moment. The other issue was that he was told he had cleared his phone. What does that mean? It means a person has erased his or her text messages, browsing history, and anything else that could be used to profile a person or be used to be turn someone away. We do not want to name communities, but we certainly can think of which communities would be looking to do this with their cellphones, because they would be profiled at the U.S. border by a U.S. agent.

Why is this a concern with Bill C-23? Because this would be happening on Canadian soil. There are no guarantees, despite affirmations to the contrary, that the government can give us of how this would be charter compliant. We have lawyers who are raising this issue, wondering under what legality American agents would be able to apply executive orders coming down from the President on Canadian soil.

[*Translation*]

Beyond the issue of digital data and cell phones there is also the matter of the technology that the Americans want to put in place.

I commend the minister on one thing: he was proactive. He is currently talking to his U.S. counterpart about not implementing certain technologies at border crossings, such as fingerprint scanners. We are hoping for a positive outcome.

When it comes to a bill like Bill C-23, the question is what we will do when the Americans want to set up this type of technology. Will they do it? We have no idea.

The same goes for a citizen who would want to leave the pre-clearance facility. I asked the minister what assurances he could give us about providing citizens with the necessary protections. We were assured with the words “reasonable timeframe”, but what exactly does that mean?

The minister can cite precedence, but the fact remains that this is a rather open and vague term that allows a person to be detained and questioned for hours without any guarantees.

Why is this concerning? Because the situation has changed. American agents are being given powers over Canadian citizens on Canadian soil when they leave a pre-clearance zone. The minister is assuring us that it is simply to ask questions and understand their motives to ensure that no one is analyzing the pre-clearance zone. Certain security concerns need to be addressed and I understand that. However, this raises several questions.

Why is this needed now, when it was not needed in the past? Pre-clearance zones already exist, so there is no need to grant this power. Why does it have to be an American agent? Why could it not be a Canadian agent? How do we avoid the profiling that will inevitably result from this?

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security heard from witnesses who spoke to exactly this issue, in the context of Bill C-23.

● (1710)

[*English*]

I would like to quote Madam Safiah Chowdhury, who is a representative of the Islamic Society of North America. She was at the public safety committee. Without being questioned by any member of the committee, she proactively brought up this bill as a specific example of some of the issues that concerned people about how we were broadly expanding the powers given to American agents at the borders, on Canadian soil, without taking time to ask ourselves what the consequences would be. She said:

Right now when I travel through, say, Pearson, if I am questioned in a way I don't like or I think infringes upon my rights or I think is trying to put me in a position that makes me answer questions that typecast me in a certain way, I have the opportunity to leave and go back to my home. However, under these provisions that are being presented, there will not be that opportunity. I will be forced to enter as a Canadian on Canadian soil and to answer these questions, especially given the climate in the United States. This is really worrying.

There are also concerns about how it disproportionately affects permanent residents, particularly of Muslim backgrounds, and how this may impact their ability to come back to their home country, the country they have adopted as home.

That last point is important. I know the minister will reassure us and say that these folks will not be detained indefinitely, that they are allowed to come back. However, we have to ask ourselves a real question, a question that has been raised by immigration lawyers.

For someone who is not yet a citizen, who is only a permanent resident, and who is undertaking the steps that we as members of Parliament have regularly witnessed through our work as we accompany our constituents when they go through this process, which is already, and rightfully so, a long and complicated process, what happens then? What kind of black mark is being left on the files of people because they have been questioned and potentially led down a path by an American agent, not a Canadian one, for the simple fact they are perhaps going to visit a sick family member in the U.S., or because they might have work obligations, or they might be entrepreneurs and have obligations through trade and other things?

This is a serious question and nothing we have heard from the government reassures us that this is not going to happen. When we hear testimony like that, it should give members pause. It certainly gives us pause.

[*Translation*]

Another very important issue is that of carrying firearms. I have already raised this with the minister. In fact, Bill C-23 amends the Criminal Code to allow American agents to carry firearms on Canadian soil. We were told that this is an example of reciprocity, in other words, these agents will only be allowed to carry firearms under the same circumstances as Canadian agents. That answer is satisfactory, if we take it at face value.

However, this raises another question, to which we have not received a satisfactory answer: where is this written in the act? In fact, the Liberals are quoting agreements that have no legal restrictions.

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[English]

Memoranda of understanding are just not enough when it comes to something as serious as allowing American agents the right to bear arms on Canadian soil. The question has to be asked. Why is this new provision needed when pre-clearance already happens in many airports, and at the port of Vancouver, for example, in Canada. What requires this change? We do not have the answer to that.

[Translation]

Considering all the problems this will cause at the border, this is not just about human rights. It also has financial implications.

I want to share something we heard from the president and CEO of Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, an airport that could benefit from this agreement because it would have pre-clearance. Not all of the locations have been chosen yet. If we are looking for an example of where this could have a positive impact, that is the perfect example.

Gaëtan Gagné, president and CEO of the Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, said that the people of Quebec City are not “second-class Canadian citizens”.

What he meant by that was that the people should not have to pay for a service that is free in airports such as Montreal's. There is a financial factor in play here, and the federal government has obligations. We hope that the minister will be able to provide some answers during this debate.

● (1715)

[English]

I just want to come back to the question of biometrics, which I raised earlier in my speech, because I do want to quote, from the public safety committee, Mr. Alex Neve, who is the secretary general of Amnesty International Canada. We asked about the concerns regarding biometrics, and I want to qualify that. I recognize the minister's efforts with his American counterpart to not have these types of technology implemented, at least not at a rapid fire pace, but again it begs a question. If these technologies are implemented by the U.S. government, what impact will that have in the pre-clearance zone? I want to use this quote to raise that particular concern while we talk about the border. Mr. Neve said:

...we certainly have signalled the very real potential that there are serious human rights violations that can ensue if, for instance, those new technologies aren't used responsibly. That's number one. Number two, they do not have effective safeguards in place, so it often comes down to questions of safeguards and review and oversight, and we know, for the large part, that Canada's national security framework is lacking on that front.

Given that uncertainty, it begs the question as to what would happen under those circumstances.

Peter Edelman, who is a lawyer and a member of the executive of the section of the Canadian Bar Association dealing with immigration law, said he is concerned about the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He asked how we can be assured that the U.S. CBP pre-clearance officers will be subjected to the charter. The bill does not specify their status as agents of the state.

[Translation]

The other aspect that I want to raise is very troubling. To return to something else I mentioned in my speech, I would remind members that on Friday, in the House, I asked a question about the possibility of U.S. border agents asking more frequently for people's cell phones to gather information about social networks and other information on phones. I said that a cell phone contains much more personal information than a suitcase, for example. Consequently, searching the suitcase of a law abiding citizen, which contains his razor and clothing, for example, is not the same as searching his cell phone.

The parliamentary secretary answered that everything was fine since there are directives in place for Canadian officers. However, we still have questions about the obligations of U.S. officers. It is a matter of culture.

We know that our men and women in uniform follow procedures to ensure our safety in Canada, and we are very proud of that. Though we cannot go so far as to challenge American procedures, we can still ask questions.

In cases of violations committed by American pre-clearance officers, the inspecting party, in other words, the United States, will have primary jurisdiction over most offences, except murder, aggravated sexual assault, and terrorism.

That seems fine, but what about assault in general? That is an important item that is missing from the list of exceptions. What sort of practices can be used during an interrogation? We do not know, but should assault be committed during an interrogation, there is nothing in the law to ensure that the American officer in question is subject to Canada's jurisdiction.

There are other concerns that I could mention, but I would like to conclude by saying that, although these concerns are nothing new, they are becoming increasingly important given the rapidly changing reality. Unfortunately, the government does not seem to be able to stand up and oppose President Trump's human rights violations and discriminatory policies.

● (1720)

[English]

With the time that is left to me, I do want to propose the following amendment:

[Translation]

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word “That” and substituting the following:

“the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-23, An Act respecting the preclearance of persons and goods in Canada and the United States, because it: (a) neglects to take into account the climate of uncertainty at the border following the discriminatory policies and executive orders of the Trump Administration; (b) does not address Canadians' concerns about being interrogated, detained, and turned back at the border based on race, religion, travel history or birthplace as a result of policies that may contravene the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (c) does nothing to ensure that Canadians' right to privacy will be protected during searches of electronic devices; and (d) violates Canadian sovereignty by increasing the powers of American pre-clearance officers on Canadian soil with respect to the carrying of firearms and by not properly defining a criminal liability framework.”

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The amendment is in order.

Government Orders

Questions and comments. The hon. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am grateful to have the observations that were just made by the member representing the NDP, in which he raised concerns about legal protections, and I would like to draw his attention to two particular clauses in this legislation and to ask why he finds these clauses deficient. I refer to subclause 10(2) that says, in reference to a U.S. pre-clearance officer in Canada:

is not permitted to exercise any powers of questioning or interrogation, examination, search, seizure, forfeiture, detention or arrest that are conferred under the laws of the United States.

Then clause 11 says that U.S. pre-clearance officers:

must exercise their powers and perform their duties and functions under this Act in accordance with Canadian law, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, the *Canadian Bill of Rights* and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

I just wonder how much clearer we could possibly be.

• (1725)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his question.

The first issue is the application of American laws, which is problematic. I would like to quote Craig Forcese on the subject of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

[English]

Craig Forcese said:

Consent of the foreign state to the application of the law is an obvious exception. But so too is what the Court called “some other basis under international law”.... The difficulty in deciding what those other bases are stems from the Supreme Court’s rather unpersuasive approach to prescriptive and enforcement jurisdiction in international law.

The problem is that we are opening this door to a situation where, even though the bill says one thing, we are looking at the application of it, and that is what concerns us.

The other issue is the one I raised, where we enumerate specific instances where American agents would be subject to Canadian courts and we say murder, terrorism, and sexual assault. There is no mention of assault. There is another glaring example.

Our issue is that pre-clearance happens already, and we want to understand why the American agents need these powers, and if there are so many charter protections, why include them at all?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. minister is here, because I was unable to put my question to him. I have real concerns about Bill C-23. In a nutshell, it is best summarized by saying that, if a Canadian citizen or a Canadian permanent resident seeking entry to the United States has the absolute right to withdraw from the interview at any time and leave, I would not be as concerned as I am by the provisions that say that questions can continue.

I am concerned by subclause 16(1) as a justification that:

A preclearance officer is, if they act on reasonable grounds, justified in doing what they are required or authorized to do under this Act and in using as much force as is necessary for that purpose.

Also, subclause 2, limitation, encourages them not to cause death or grievous bodily harm, but again, this is all on the decision made on the spot by a U.S. agent.

I have to ask this for my hon. colleague who just spoke. Do we imagine that there will be intensive training for U.S. agents to understand the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms? Certainly there are a lot of examples of U.S. agents not understanding the U.S. Bill of Rights.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, that is an important point, because the use-of-force standards for Canadian agents and for American agents are different. That is exactly one of the parts of the bill where we can identify that being an issue.

It raises another issue, if my hon. colleague will allow me to raise another point that I did not have time to mention during my speech. The minister raised it in his speech. It is the concern, for example, of the absence of a Canadian officer if ever a body search has to take place. The example the minister gives is that in six decades it has only happened once or it has never happened, so it does not matter. However, we do not draft laws by saying, well, it never happens so it probably will not happen, so it is no big deal. It is very serious, especially when we consider, for example, the transgendered community and the very different definition that exists for U.S. customs in how its officers treat people in terms of deciding whether a man or a woman will be the one doing the search on a citizen. How do we reconcile that with how we treat a Canadian who might be in that position? It is not clear, and it is a problem.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, to my colleague, I imagine that you are getting the same kind of mail that I am—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address comments and questions to the Chair.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Madam Speaker, I would like to hear my colleague’s comments on whether he is getting the same kind of mail that I am, hearing from constituents who are concerned that U.S. border guards are not likely to carry out responsibilities at our border in the way we would expect on Canadian soil. Here is an excerpt from a letter from Katherine in Nanaimo. She is a U.S. citizen and a Canadian permanent resident. She said:

My second objection to Bill C-23 has to do with the new powers that it would give to American border guards in pre-clearance areas. I do not think that American border agents on Canadian soil should have the power to carry firearms, detain Canadian citizens or residents, or conduct strip searches....

I am sure that there are practical and economic benefits to Bill C-23. I myself enjoy the convenience of pre-screening when I visit the U.S. through Vancouver International Airport. These benefits, however, cannot be valued higher than the human rights of Canadian citizens and residents.

I’d like to know whether my colleague has heard anything through this debate that gives him confidence that the violations my constituent describes are justified by the accelerated movement of travel through the border.

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• (1730)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, the issue here is that people are concerned because we are saying that we want to expand the number of places where pre-clearance happens, and we want Canadians to do pre-clearance in the U.S. As I said in my speech, that is all fine and good; yet we do not have a justification for why they would need this sudden expansion of powers. As I said at the outset, in the climate that exists now where we are seeing Canadians being turned away at the border, being asked for their cell phones, and being profiled, Canadians are rightfully concerned about what this would mean.

Again, I return to my question for the minister. If the safeguards are so strong that none of these things will happen, then why even give these extra powers to American agents at all? Why not just have faith in Canadian agents and law enforcement to ensure security and to ensure that this is all happening properly and just keep the system in place as it is now? That is not something the government has been able to justify.

Once again, we have the government finding itself in a situation where there is a climate that is changing quickly. It is an unpredictable situation. Who knows what executive order will be signed tomorrow? Who knows what Canadians will be asked to give up next at the border for the right to simply go to visit a family member or to conduct business or work? That is the concern Canadians have, and that is why we find that there has not been sufficient justification for this expansion of powers.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am not too sure but it seems that the New Democrats are just closing their eyes in terms of one specific reality, which is that pre-clearance has been received quite well among the Canadian population. We see it as a positive thing. It is important that we emphasize that. When we think of U.S. customs officers who are on Canadian soil, for all Canadians and residents the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a given for them. I do not quite understand what the New Democrats are suggesting. Are they suggesting, in this new era, that we should be looking at decreasing the number of pre-clearances that are taking place? I do not think that would be in sync with what most people want to see.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, what Canadians want to see is a government that will stand up for their rights and not have a situation like the gentleman from Vancouver who is turned away at the border because of his sexual orientation and because he is being accused of hiding something nefarious on his phone because he deleted his browser history.

As I said at the outset, we certainly agree with the upside of pre-clearance. Again, I would ask the government to explain why, if pre-clearance already exists and pre-clearance zones already exist, we need to hand over all these powers to American agents on Canadian soil if the system is already in place and we simply want to have it happen at more destinations.

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I invite my colleague from Ajax to speak first.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member. I

appreciate the opportunity to speak on this incredibly important bill, Bill C-23, Preclearance Act, 2016.

One of the largest priorities of our government is ensuring that our border runs smoothly, efficiently, and securely. Indeed, the relationship between Canada and the United States is a fundamentally important one to our economy. There is \$2.2 billion in trade daily between our two economies. Of course, our friendship extends over many decades, and our border is often referred to as the envy of the world.

The meetings that were recently had in Washington with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to deepen that relationship obviously included the issue of pre-clearance, making it easier for goods, services, and people to move across our borders, and to improve security, the state of our economy, and the ability for us to do commerce with one another.

On the American side, they have already legislated the necessary measures to enhance pre-clearance. They did so in the Promoting Travel, Commerce, and National Security Act of 2016. It is essential that we follow suit and do the same thing. Indeed, the Preclearance Act of 1999 only contemplates pre-clearance for air travel. I will be talking in a moment about why it is so essential that we expand that to other areas.

Already, folks would have used pre-clearance. I used it this weekend. There are around 30,000 Canadians a day who use it, and 12 million travellers annually at eight different locations. When we are talking about it, it is important to note that this is something that is already taking place with enormous success. I think it is important to contemplate what are some of the benefits, both of what is happening today but also what is being contemplated with this legislation.

There would be an increase in security. The ability to block somebody who should not be travelling from travelling in the first place is a massive advantage. It makes sense that we do not want somebody who should not be travelling to board that plane or that train or that ship in the first place. Pre-clearance gives us the opportunity to stop that from happening.

It also means that when it is on our side, if there is an incident where we have encountered some sort of violation, that we get the opportunity for prosecuting that domestically.

There is also an opportunity for greater border integrity along the same lines, because this would expand pre-clearance to also happen in the United States, something that has long been sought. That means that we could stop somebody from entering Canada, somebody who does not belong. Currently, that person would arrive in Canada, and we would then have to deal with them, removing them after the fact. Certainly that is a significant benefit.

To travellers and to our economy, there would be a great deal of benefit. Let us start with the benefit of being able to directly travel where one wants to go. Right now, as an example, at Jean Lesage in Quebec, if people want to go to Nashville, they have to go through a connection. There is no opportunity to fly directly.

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By expanding this and by allowing pre-clearance to happen in Quebec City, the number of cities would be expanded from 27 to 50. It would give direct access to a number of different airports that we would not otherwise have and, by the way, that no one else in the world does have. It could include LaGuardia or Reagan or Columbus, Ohio, or Milwaukee, or Richmond or, as I said, Nashville and many other locations.

This would be a tremendous benefit that I think is easily understood by anybody, for travellers to get directly where they want to go. I know everybody wants to avoid layovers wherever possible. That is not only a convenience factor, it makes the attractiveness of doing commerce between our two countries much greater as well.

The other thing that might surprise folks is, already, Pearson in Toronto is the fourth largest point of entry into the United States. Let us think about what that means. Imagine somebody is looking to do a cruise. They are coming from Europe and they want to see the B.C. coastline and go up to Alaska. It means that they can board that cruise ship in Vancouver, get pre-cleared, and be able to go to small towns in Alaska without having to go through any sort of border process or any sort of rigamarole. That is an enormously attractive thing for people who want to come and visit our two countries, to only have to go through one border process and be able to go through it in a much more efficient way in a place that would be larger and more capable of being able to process people effectively.

• (1735)

When we think about the cruise ship industry specifically, let us look at the size of it. It is \$435 million of economic benefits just to the B.C. coastal region alone, and that includes 4,600 local jobs. Therefore, if we can use this to facilitate a greater movement of folks and be able to encourage that industry, obviously that is a tremendous benefit.

There have been some folks who have raised an issue of concern around security. I think one of the biggest points to consider on this is to imagine ourselves as travellers and we want to go to the United States. Where would we rather be checked? Would it be on U.S. soil or on Canadian soil where we have the protection of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the protection of the Canadian Bill of Rights, the protection of the Human Rights Act, and the broader protections of Canadian law, period? If something goes wrong, I would imagine, as Canadian citizens, we would want to be on the Canadian side of the border. It is important, when all the powers are contemplated, that we have the full protection, force, and effect of Canadian law. Therefore, when one is travelling, I would think that one would feel a lot safer, a lot more secure, in having that pre-clearance happen on Canadian soil and under Canadian law.

We can look at some of the places we would like to be able to expand to. Obviously, we already have expansion possibilities of Billy Bishop, I mentioned Jean Lesage, Central Station, and Rocky Mountaineer Station in Quebec and B.C. specifically. I hope that this is only the beginning.

The vision of pre-clearance is one that allows travellers to move quickly and efficiently, and this bill would expand it as well to cargo so that we could see a greater exchange of goods and services moving more easily across our border. Canadians could know when

they arrive at the border that they are doing so with the full protection of Canadian law.

Last, I would indicate that on the broader issue of the Canada Border Services Agency, we are committed to looking at oversight and making sure that we do an ever better job of delivering the services at the border. However, the more I get to know this file and have an opportunity to work with the minister, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to thank the incredible men and women who work at our border every day to help facilitate that trade between our two countries. I think this bill only furthers to support them in their noble goal to move goods and services between our countries and to deepen the trade that exists between Canada and the U.S.

• (1740)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, this is a bill that we will support. With a riding that has the second largest border crossing in the country, we will benefit greatly by getting this done.

I was curious when you said that the bill would allow pre-clearance in the cruise line industry. The cruise line industry has been doing that for years. I was wondering what this bill would give that industry that it does not have right now.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would remind the hon. member to speak through the Chair and not directly across.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, it exists in a limited capacity, but the bill would expand it much more broadly. It would make it much more easy to facilitate and would expand it greatly.

The reason I touched upon that example particularly is just to show how in one small facet we have so much economic activity that is driven by it. I think wherever we can remove red tape and barriers and help move those folks more easily when they are coming to visit in Canada or a Canadian citizen looking to do a cruise that is multinational between Canada and the U.S., then I think we have to get on it.

However, we can look beyond the cruise ship industry to all of the industries. It is not hard to imagine the thousands of jobs and the tens of millions of dollars that it would help facilitate.

I thank the member for both her question and her support of the bill, which is incredibly important.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have received correspondence on this from my constituents, and it is pretty consistent. They are concerned that, in essence, we are giving away more rights to armed border guards, American border guards on Canadian soil, and giving away our sovereignty without any added benefit to Canadians.

The second thing they are concerned about is that they see this as Canada pandering to Mr. Trump and the United States, and starting down a very slippery slope potentially of our relationship with the Americans and perhaps future pandering to Mr. Trump's interests.

I would appreciate my colleague's response to those concerns from my constituents.

Government Orders

● (1745)

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that nothing could be further from the truth. I would say to the member that he needs to go directly back to his constituents and talk about each one of those points.

For the sake of brevity, I will not reiterate all the incredible benefits this bill would facilitate. However, I will go back to the really important point that pre-clearance would be totally subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadian law, and when people were travelling, we could say to them that when they had pre-clearance, they would have the opportunity on Canadian soil to have the protection of Canadian law. If those people were otherwise travelling to the United States in the absence of pre-clearance, they would be sitting on U.S. soil, with none of those protections. Therefore, I would say that there is a strong argument that their rights, far from being diminished, would be expanded as a result of pre-clearance. We could also say that if they wanted to directly travel to a place like Columbus, Ohio, this bill would ensure that they were given that opportunity to do so directly as a personal benefit. We could also say that the industry and trade that supports any of the jobs we are lucky enough to hold in this country would also be expanded by this bill.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would quickly say that this is a much better Bill C-23 than the last Bill C-23 we had, which was the Fair Elections Act, so I thank him for that.

One of the worst experiences I have had was going through Washington's Dulles International Airport and having a three-hour delay. Had there been pre-clearance to get into the U.S. from Europe, I would not have missed my flight while my bags made it to Canada, which was an entertaining experience.

I would like to know this. Bill C-23 would expand this to all modes of transportation. Does that mean that the very long delays crossing a border by train would soon be addressed or that there would at least be the potential to do so?

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I would say to my hon. colleague that this would absolutely expand it to all modes of transportation. When we look at the Preclearance Act of 1999, it only contemplated aviation, which meant that we were not able to confer those benefits to matters such as rail, boats, or any other modes of travel. This would confer those benefits and should mean reduced lines and reduced waiting times, which should mean not only more convenient travel but greater economic activity and greater opportunity for trade.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak today on the subject of a bill that will give Canada significant economic and security benefits, Bill C-23, the preclearance act.

As our country celebrates its 150th anniversary, it is important to note that this legislation honours the strong ties that Canada has proudly cultivated with its greatest trading partner, friend, and ally. These ties will persist between our respective governments, businesses, and people.

As we have heard, pre-clearance is a border management tool that does much to facilitate those ties, and it does so while contributing to our security and our economic interests. It has been part of our two countries' successful trade and border security relationship for a long time. Both countries have signalled an interest in expanding the program to new airports, including the Quebec City airport, and beyond air transportation, where it is currently used, to all modes of transport where and when it makes sense for both countries. The bill before us is the Canadian legislation needed to realize that vision.

Pre-clearance allows border services officers from the side performing the inspection to determine whether individuals and goods can enter that country while they are still physically in the host country.

We know from past experience that this works. Pre-clearance has been adopted in eight major Canadian airports. Indeed, every year, some 12 million passengers heading to the U.S. go through pre-clearance in Canada before they even board their planes.

From a security standpoint, it is best if border officials can address any and all concerns at the point of departure. From the travelling public's perspective, it is more convenient. Having undergone pre-clearance before boarding the plane, travellers can avoid long delays at U.S. customs, thereby shortening connection times and adding some predictability to their travel plans.

Passengers and airlines also benefit from the fact that they can now fly directly to domestic airports in the U.S. that do not have customs facilities for international arrivals.

This is how pre-clearance delivers economic benefits while helping maintain border security and integrity.

This bill will enable us to build on the success of the current air pre-clearance operations and expand them to other airports and, in fact, to all modes of transportation. The bill has an element of reciprocity, in that it will set up the legislative framework to govern potential Canadian preclearance operations in the United States.

I would like to use my remaining time to explain what pre-clearance will mean for the Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City. In March 2016, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security agreed, in principle, to expand pre-clearance to this location and three others, namely Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto, the Montréal Central train station, and Rocky Mountaineer, in British Columbia.

The potential of pre-clearance in terms of regional economic development spells good news for this city, which is known as the cradle of French culture in North America. Quebec City's mayor, Régis Labeaume, described this as a great victory for Quebec City. It is not surprising that Mayor Labeaume and Aéroport de Québec Inc., which manages the Jean Lesage International Airport, as well as several other businesses, senior officials, municipalities, and other business associations in the area applaud the news. This is a measure they all fought hard for because they understand the benefits to passengers and to the local economy.

Government Orders

In 2015, the Jean Lesage airport welcomed over 220,000 passengers travelling to the U.S. Once the pre-clearance facilities are in place, departing passengers will undergo pre-clearance by U.S. border officials before boarding. As a result, when passengers arrive in the United States, it will be as though they were arriving on a domestic flight. This will reduce connection times and make their travel plans more predictable.

These pre-clearance facilities will make travelling to the United States more convenient for passengers and could also greatly increase the number of passengers using the airport by attracting more tourists and American business travellers.

• (1750)

Right now, flights from Jean Lesage International Airport go directly to New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Orlando, and Fort Lauderdale. Once the pre-clearance facilities are in place, the airport could offer direct flights to more American cities because planes could land at airports that do not have customs facilities.

That represents a significant economic advantage for the region. It will bring in approximately \$75 million a year and create new jobs. That is why Quebec City and the Jean Lesage airport are so enthusiastic and eager to get pre-clearance facilities. I would like to close by reiterating that pre-clearance is an essential border management tool that will enhance prosperity and security.

Adding pre-clearance facilities to new sites, such as the Jean Lesage airport, will allow Canada and Canadian businesses to build even stronger ties with partners and clients in the United States in a way that strengthens our security and our economy. That is why Bill C-23 is so important. I therefore encourage members on both sides of the House to support it.

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

Since he mentioned the Jean-Lesage airport, I will ask him a very simple question. The president and CEO of the airport believes that it is unfair that Quebec City has to pay for the infrastructure needed for a pre-clearance area given that Montreal did not have to pay these costs and is not charged for this service.

Would my colleague like to comment on whether the government will commit to help different ports, stations, or airports that will host such new sites and pay the related expenses?

• (1755)

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, it just so happens that a long time ago, in my first career, I was a customs officer at the Jean-Lesage airport in Quebec City.

I have to say that making this investment is more than worth it, considering the economic benefits that will ensue. The current new economic reality is that new sites were approved along with the ensuing expenses. There is ample evidence of the return on the investment.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I took Bill C-23 back to the riding with me so I could read it carefully over the weekend.

I recognize that the bill emanates from an agreement that was made between the previous U.S. administration under President Obama and the previous prime minister, Stephen Harper. I find it heavy-handed in its description of what U.S. agents would be able to do, particularly in relation to keeping Canadians, or those with permanent residency in Canada, longer to ask them questions, or pursue other avenues of questioning, including searches if the pre-clearance officer has reasonable grounds to think that this might yield fruit. This would be on a range of things, from whether or not someone might have concealed materials that are not allowed into the U.S., and fruits and vegetables come to mind, a trivial example, to falling into the net of being considered a potential terrorist threat.

Given the current bent of the U.S. administration at the moment, in its anti-Muslim actions, it puts a different complexion on this agreement than that which we might have been willing to accept from a previous U.S. administration. I wonder if the government party has been considering whether we should not have amendments to the bill to reduce the scope of power of U.S. authorities in pre-clearance.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

I am also pleased with the experience I gained from my former career in Quebec City, which means that I can confirm, convince, and reassure everyone that the professional work of customs officers is not done randomly, nor is it based on perceived notions or guessing.

Their training ensures that any measures taken are taken reasonably. Furthermore, any measures taken in Canada are protected by Canadian laws and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This means that in addition to any current, modern, or contemporary concerns that people may have, such as the ones raised by the member, it is a good thing that we have the pre-clearance here in Canada, precisely so that our laws and our charter apply.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very brief question for my colleague from Montarville.

Does he know, or can he explain to the House, how customs officers on both sides of the border choose their place of work in the other country?

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could provide a more technical answer about distribution of resources, but I do not have the details. I would be pleased to come back to the House later with more information about task and resource allocation.

As the member for Ajax and the minister said, this bill is merely a first step in a dialogue about an exchange of pre-clearance facilities in the hope that it will be expanded to the transportation of both passengers and cargo. With respect to where customs officers will be stationed, that is up to the departments. The Canada Border Services Agency and the U.S. border service are responsible for their respective resources.

Government Orders

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join the debate on Bill C-23. I will share my time with my colleague and very good friend from Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*English*]

I always begin with a Yiddish proverb, and I have one today: The door of success is marked by push and pull. I think this Yiddish proverb speaks about the relationship Canada has enjoyed with our friend, the United States, this long-standing relationship that predates Confederation, both our trade and military relationship, and families crossing the border back and forth.

This agreement, this legislation that would actually ratify the agreement and make it Canadian law, is part and parcel of that push and pull we have experienced on the door of success. Our economies are intertwined. America's success is Canada's success, and we would deepen that relationship through this agreement.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that a great part of this agreement and this piece of legislation was accomplished by our colleague on this side of the House, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, a member I had the distinct honour of working for many years ago, when he was first elected to this House, so I know the amount of work he puts into everything he does on behalf of his constituents and for this great country of Canada. This agreement is thanks to him. He did the majority of the work in getting it here. Now we see the fruits of his labour in this legislation to implement the agreement.

We know that pre-clearance of travellers already happens. It would be extended, thanks to this agreement and this legislation, to air, land, rail, and sea. There would be a greater opportunity for us to deepen our relationship with our American friends. It would also reduce congestion and delays in land travel, which, as we know, declined back in 2001, in the post-9/11 period, and it has never really recovered since. Individual passenger travel across the border has never really recovered. I have a piece of data from the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics that shows that 34% fewer vehicle passengers actually entered the United States in 2014 compared to the year 2000. It has gone down significantly.

Most people choose to fly, and that is where they experience pre-clearance. This would expand to other ports of entry into the United States.

The relationship we have with the United States very few other countries get to enjoy, with the preferential access we as Canadians have to the American market. As the member of Parliament for Parry Sound—Muskoka said earlier today in debate, the earliest agreement we actually have for the border crossing dates back to the 1970s. It is a long-term relationship we have had with our friends to the south, despite the disagreements we have had over the years, whether on foreign policy, economic policy, or social policy. We do not let them get in the way of deepening our relationship so it can increase trade.

We know that many jobs are dependent on our trade with our friends in the United States and that 35 states have Canada as their number one trading partner. A lot of that is thanks to the goods we ship to them and vice-versa, the goods they ship to us.

In February 2014, as part of deepening the relationship, we tried things. We tried pilot projects to track cargo. A pre-inspection pilot was launched at the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie, Ontario. The pre-clearance tested in that situation could facilitate legitimate trade and travel.

An existing bilateral air transport pre-clearance framework makes air travel much more efficient for 10 billion-plus passengers, and every year, at Canada's eight busiest international airports, we get to experience that pre-clearance.

For the rest of the time I have, I want to go through different sections of the bill, which I think address some of the concerns I have read in the news and in some of the emails I have received from constituents who have expressed concerns about the bill. I will try to address them as I go through it.

Bill C-23 has many controls in place, and oversight does exist. As many members have already mentioned, a lot would be constrained, so the powers border officers would be given would be constrained by Canadian law and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The power and performance of any duty or function would apply to U.S. pre-clearance officers just as much as to Canadian officers who would be there to help them, and they would be subject to Canadian law. We see in part one of the summary of the bill that the law would apply, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Part two of the summary says it “extends the application of other Canadian legislation that relates to the entry of persons and importation of goods into Canada to those pre-clearance areas and pre-clearance perimeters”.

Again, the preamble does the same thing. It mentions the concept of oversight. In the legislation, we see that powers would be given and then would be constrained through the law and through references to the charter or references to other pieces of legislation that would constrain the actions pre-clearance officers can take in the execution of the duties they would be granted through the legislation.

● (1800)

As an example, to ensure their security, Canadian and U.S. pre-clearance officers will be able to carry the same regulated items that the host country officers have in the same environment. In Canada, this means that U.S. CBP pre-clearance officers would be able to carry firearms at land, rail, and marine modes, but not when they would be conducting the pre-clearance of air passengers. Currently, Canadian law enforcement officers on duty during CBP hours of operation are able to assist, if required, in the eight Canadian airports with pre-clearance operations. That is freely available online on the government's website, so it should be pretty easy for most people to find.

Government Orders

One thing constituents have asked me is whether U.S. pre-clearance officers have the authority to make arrests on Canadian soil. Again, no, not in this situation. As with the existing air transport pre-clearance agreement, they would not have the power of arrest, only the power to detain. If they are asking more questions, they have to get assistance from a Canadian officer. That is again part of the oversight and accountability format that allows for detention, not arrest, and a Canadian official has to be involved if an arrest has to be made. It is part and parcel of this deepened relationship, where we trust our American partners to the south to make good decisions and use good judgment. We trust in their training.

It will not be perfect, and I say that to everybody. I have had bad experiences at the American border, just as I have had bad experiences at foreign borders, much worse. It happens in certain situations and is sometimes unavoidable. They are people, and people make mistakes. That happens in all countries. It has nothing to do with the specifics of the law, which provides sufficient powers and then limits those powers in a reasonable way.

When I have travelled to other countries, there have been limitations placed on me or I was asked questions I did not want to answer. However, I am always free to say I do not want to answer the questions and remove myself. It can happen.

Like I mentioned before, the preamble of Bill C-23 refers to this constraining of the powers through the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. One thing I will mention, because it is quite unusual in debating legislation here, is that the powers, duties, and functions found in the bill include such headings as, “Frisk search — concealed goods”, “Strip search”, “Monitored bowel movement” in section 23 of the act. I find it quite unusual to have these kinds of headings in legislation, but, again, we are trying to be as specific as possible in detailing the types of powers being given and the limitations on the powers.

I have seen a lot of legislation come before the House which includes greater certainty clauses. There is one in this bill, clause 9, which states, “For greater certainty, Canadian law applies, and may be administered and enforced, in pre-clearance areas and pre-clearance perimeters”. I have seen these greater certainty clauses in different legislation proposed by one of my colleagues, I believe it was Bill C-225, and in the physician-assisted dying bill as well. These greater certainty clauses give the indication to judges, should it ever get to that point, what exactly the legislation is trying to do. In this case, it clearly states that Canadian law applies equally to Canadian border officials and U.S. border officials in the process of applying their judgment to the functions they have been given, and that it is not unlimited, that it is absolutely constrained by reasonable limits.

Another limit in clause 10(2) states, “A pre-clearance officer is not permitted to exercise...any powers of questioning or interrogation, examination, search, seizure, forfeiture, detention or arrest that are conferred under the laws of the United States”. There is again that concept of limitation. We give them certain powers, but they are limited in other areas and constrained in the actions they can take.

Every officer goes through very intensive training before becoming responsible for border control. Through that process, officers learn about the different laws, what they can and cannot ask, what they can and cannot do, and how they are supposed to do their

jobs. That is true for every occupation and profession throughout Canada and the United States. We are giving them certain powers, but then we are limiting them. It is part of the concept that with the agreement we sign, we will have expectations of border guards fulfilling their duties, as well as expectations of our own officials in the United States undertaking their duties. I am sure the Americans are having very similar debates on why they are allowing Canadian officers certain powers at their borders.

The bill is the culmination of work by a previous Conservative government and it should be celebrated. Through this agreement, we will be deepening our relationship with our partners to the south and that deeper trade in 20 or 30 years will absolutely create more jobs. I look forward to the bill going to committee. Then we can hear more specific concerns from witnesses. My constituents have shared some concerns with me and I look forward to having that back and forth through emails with them, explaining portions of the bill to them, and hearing what they have to say as well.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

He raised one point that Bill C-23 would change. He talked about the fact that, if a traveller does not like an officer's questions, the traveller can leave the pre-clearance area. What this bill actually changes is that people will no longer have the right to do that. If they do, they will be subjected to interrogation by officers.

As I said earlier in this debate, when I was going back and forth with the minister, that can be justified on the grounds that they just want to get certain answers. The problem is that officers are being given the power to detain Canadians and permanent residents and ask them questions.

According to this bill, the period of time must be reasonable even though there is no clear definition. That is what we are concerned about. Let us take the example of a permanent resident who refuses to be questioned and wants to leave the pre-clearance area. This was an example used in the media by a former lawyer from the immigration section of the Canadian Bar Association.

Would it not be problematic if a permanent resident of Canada in the process of obtaining his or her citizenship were to get a criminal record, given that the law refers to lack of co-operation, simply because officers asked questions and were profiling and the resident simply chose to leave the pre-clearance area?

● (1810)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his question.

Government Orders

I do not agree with the scenario he just presented. Section 9 of the bill, entitled “Canadian law” states the following:

9 For greater certainty, Canadian law applies, and may be administered and enforced, in preclearance areas and preclearance perimeters.

What this means is that officers can detain a Canadian, but they cannot arrest a Canadian or a permanent resident of Canada. The person may be detained so that the officers can ask them questions. However, in the end, a Canadian border officer will decide whether other questions should be asked or if criminal charges should be laid against a person.

I spoke about my border control experience. These were not border controls for the U.S., but for Poland, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden. These are all countries I have travelled to. Before the European Union was created, there were border controls. It was very different. Questioning was much more aggressive at the Polish and German borders.

In Canada, American and Canadian officers have a role under the law and they will have to use their judgment to decide whether or not to ask an individual more questions.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a rather simple question for my colleague.

I would like to know his opinion on the importance of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its enforcement in the context of foreign border services officers on Canadian soil.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his good question on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Of course, every border services officer will be responsible for enforcing the law in Canada. That is easy enough to understand. It is easy enough to make it a daily consideration. It is not just border services officers who think about it. I used to work in human resources and this was always a consideration.

We have to consider the law and what the law wants from us. Charter rights are among the rights that are enshrined in legislation, in other words, written rights. We have to use our judgment in the exercise of our occupation or our work.

In my opinion, border services officers are people who have a great deal of experience and training. At the end of the day, border services officers on both sides of the border provide a service to the person wishing to enter the country. They also ensure national security.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate my colleague from Calgary Shepard for his excellent speech. He gave us a lot of information about Bill C-23 and drew on his experience working with the public safety minister of the time to share with his colleagues his knowledge about those discussions. I thank my colleague, and I hope that many people heard his excellent speech.

Bill C-23 was introduced on June 17 by the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. I listened carefully to his words today as he gave his approximately 20-minute presentation explaining why the government decided to introduce Bill C-23.

I would like to come back to something that he said at the beginning of his speech. It came as no surprise to me, because since

the current government was elected, we have been hearing its members regularly repeat the same talking points about the middle class and those working hard to join it and the tax cuts for the middle class, for Canadians who earn up to \$200,000 a year.

That is worth keeping in mind because the definition of the middle class does not always make sense on that side. Including those who make up to \$200,000 a year may be a way for our millionaire Prime Minister to put himself in that middle-class category.

As the government reminds us continually, what matters most to hard-working people is having a job, first and foremost. This government has been unable to create any full-time jobs in the past year. It does not have a plan. This is a government that cannot get results and that promises major infrastructure investments but cannot even make those investments happen, unfortunately.

If the government really wants to help the middle class, it should focus on creating jobs, not just repeating the same talking points day after day. I think Canadians would appreciate that. Bill C-23 is about Canada-U.S. relations. Unfortunately, in recent weeks, the government has not done much to improve our trade relationship with the United States.

One very concrete and specific example is diafiltered milk. This is a conflict we are having with the U.S. that could be resolved without even getting the Americans involved. I will say again that this is a conflict between the Canada Border Services Agency and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. A simple definition of exactly what milk is would resolve this dispute, which, despite everything, remains a stumbling block in our relations with the U.S.

There is also the other file on which the government has not really done anything, that is, softwood lumber. I am sure I will have the opportunity to come back to this in the coming weeks. The government has missed several opportunities to settle this matter.

As I am sure everyone is well aware, the U.S. recently elected a new government. With this new government come new policies. They are talking about tax cuts for everyone, the elimination of corporate taxes, cutting red tape, and of course no carbon tax.

Our Prime Minister recently visited the new president. One could expect this visit to improve and increase our cross-border trading. Unfortunately for Canadians, our Prime Minister did not talk about the problem of diafiltered milk. He did not talk about the softwood lumber issue with the American president.

Worse still than what the Prime Minister did not do during this meeting is what he did not do when he got back. The Prime Minister did not present a plan to help our businesses be more competitive. He did not announce a single concrete measure to help resolve the diafiltered milk issue.

Government Orders

There is nothing, no plan, no proposal to resolve the softwood lumber file. There is no plan to reduce business taxes and no intention to keep the promise to lower taxes for small and medium-sized businesses.

However, everyone in the House knows who the main job creators are, those who truly build our economy, especially in regions like mine and those of my colleagues in Lévis—Lotbinière and Calgary Shepard.

Small and medium-sized businesses play a major role in creating jobs everywhere. Unfortunately, the government has no intention of keeping its promise to lower taxes for SMEs. Not only is there no plan, but on this side of the border, we are getting a carbon tax.

● (1815)

In order for Bill C-23 to improve matters, the government must start by setting the example. It has missed the boat in terms of relations with the United States.

However, I have to say that Bill C-23 does indeed come from a government with vision. I am not, however, talking about the current government, but about a good government. I am referring to the vision set out on February 4, 2011, in a document released by former U.S. President Barack Obama and then Prime Minister Stephen Harper, entitled “Beyond the Border: a Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness”.

This declaration established a new long-term partnership focused on an approach to security and economic competitiveness based on the common perimeter of our two countries. This means that we will work together not only at the border, but also beyond the border, in order to enhance security and accelerate the legitimate movement of people, goods and services. To achieve this goal, the leaders asked that a common action plan be developed, and that is what is set out in this document.

Without the working group set up by the previous government, which had a vision for Canada, there would be no Bill C-23. Nevertheless, let us talk about this bill, which we will support, naturally, so that it can go to committee for thorough study with the help of experts.

This is an act that implements the Agreement on Land, Rail, Marine, and Air Transport Preclearance between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America signed by the Conservative government in 2015. It builds on the Agreement on Air Transport Preclearance Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America. It imposes reciprocal obligations on both countries to facilitate travel and trade while enhancing security.

This bill contemplates new Canadian locations, including Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto, the Montréal Central Station, and the Rocky Mountaineer Station. Pre-clearance is currently performed at eight Canadian airports, including Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax.

The Liberal government decided that the economic advantages outweighed the costs and is therefore going to work to pay for American customs infrastructure on Canadian soil. The airports in

question will provide the facilities and equipment needed and cover the costs related to hiring, training, and equipping American officers.

This issue is very important to residents of the Quebec City area, and the Jean Lesage International Airport is happily looking forward to acquiring pre-clearance facilities. In fact, in the past, people were impatiently urging all governments to get these pre-clearance facilities. Dozens of businesses, executives, municipalities, and chambers of commerce publicly expressed their support for pre-clearance facilities at the Jean Lesage airport.

I would like to quote the president and CEO of Aéroport de Québec Inc., who said the following in a 2015 news release:

Installing a U.S. Customs pre-clearance facility will bring considerable economic spinoffs to the region, while making it easier for our passengers to travel to the United States....It's a key added benefit for Québec City and an undeniable asset that will stimulate and support economic growth in the region and across eastern Québec.

I would like to add that all of Canada will benefit.

We are therefore going to support Bill C-23. This matter has been under consideration for a long time, and economic and tourism stakeholders have been waiting. It will give Quebec City and the other airports involved greater access to the American market and American territory, and I believe that that will be beneficial to all Canadians.

● (1820)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the current Bill C-23 is much better than Bill C-23 from the previous Parliament, but let us forget about that for now.

The last time I checked the schedule for the train from Toronto to New York, there was a delay at the U.S. border of between an hour and half to three hours. Expanding this train service is very important, and that is what this bill proposes. We see this in Europe. When I travelled from London to Brussels by train, I cleared customs on the England side, before going through the tunnel. It is very efficient.

I want to know what my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable thinks of the importance of also expanding this customs service to rail service.

● (1825)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important point, one that should be explored properly in committee.

Indeed, any measures that can enhance economic and tourism exchanges with our neighbours should be implemented, whether we are talking about travel by train or plane, in a way that respects both countries' jurisdictions. We should also consider implementing additional measures to facilitate the transportation of goods between the two countries, so this should eventually extend to trucking.

Once again, other avenues could be explored in order to go even further in terms of improving trade with our American neighbours. That said, if this government ever manages to settle the softwood lumber issue, it would be even easier to get our lumber into the U.S.

Government Orders

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I acknowledge the economic significance of pre-clearance and everything that this entails, but the fact remains that there are some serious concerns.

Again, even though this practice already exists, we are giving U.S. officers more power. One of the problems is the government's argument about the application of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Consider our cell phones when we cross the border. There was a time when most people did not bring their phones with them, or did not even have a cell phone.

More and more we bring our entire life with us on small computers tucked away in our pockets. The problem is that there is no real legislation in Canada to govern how border officers, Canadian and American alike, are to deal with this on Canadian soil. We can take for granted that the charter will provide some protection, but there are no real legal precedents. We are simply relying on ministerial directives that apply to the Canada Border Services Agency. This concern was raised by the Privacy Commissioner.

Given that the current U.S. government is talking about creating more laws to obtain passwords for social networks, especially for cell phones, does my colleague not understand the consequences this could have? Furthermore, even though the application of the charter is mentioned in the bill, according to case law, the charter has never been fully applied to what happens in customs.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I can understand my NDP colleague's concerns about the important question of the applicable authority. In Canadian territory, will the Canadian citizen be subject to American laws or Canadian laws?

The government has ensured that there are some safeguards around this issue. That is one of the reasons why our party wants to discuss this matter in committee. These are very pertinent questions to put to the commissioner in particular. I hope that he will be invited to appear before the committee to provide a more detailed answer to this question.

Once again, what is important is to have a balanced approach that will protect our rights and, at the same time, will eliminate a lot of paperwork and many problems at airports, including the Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, for people who want to travel to the United States.

[*English*]

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville.

I am happy to speak to Bill C-23, the preclearance act, 2016. This legislation has a number of significant implications for Canada. It is important to our economy and our security, just as it is for our bilateral relationship with the United States.

I have heard concerns from some people in my community about the bill and its perceived impact on the rights of Canadians. I will address these concerns in the course of my speech, but I would like to note at the outset that I am confident the legislation will not adversely affect our rights. In fact, the rights accorded to Canadians

under a pre-clearance regime clearly include the extra protections we enjoy in Canada due to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Border management is a top priority for our government, with officials from Public Safety Canada and its portfolio agencies working closely with their counterparts in the United States on a wide range of issues to ensure that we keep our border effective and functional.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

Border management is a priority for our government and for senior officials at Public Safety Canada and the agencies within its purview, which are working closely with their American counterparts on a wide range of issues to keep our border effective and functional.

[*English*]

This includes putting in place the best framework and policies that allow for the smooth flow of people and goods while securing our border. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that we are enthusiastic to make further bilateral progress on the pre-clearance initiative. To put the statement “smooth flow of people and goods” into context, more than 400,000 people flow back and forth between Canada and the United States every single day. Close to \$2.5 billion in two-way trade moves between these two countries every day.

Pre-clearance has long been a part of our strong border relationship and will be key to our future one. With this bill, we have the opportunity to usher in even greater security and economic benefits when it comes to Canada-U.S. border travel. Let me highlight the key elements of this bill and why it is so important that members join me in supporting its passage.

Once passed, this bill will open the door to move ahead with the ratification and implementation of the land, rail, marine, and air transport pre-clearance agreement which was signed by Canada and the United States in 2015. That door, once opened, will offer tremendous benefits to Canadians. There are two primary benefits from this legislation. One, it sets out the legislative authority governing pre-clearance operations conducted by the United States and Canada, including possible future expansion to additional sites and modes of travel. Two, it provides the basis necessary for Canada to eventually conduct pre-clearance in the United States just as the U.S. has done for so long in Canada.

Indeed, the United States has conducted pre-clearance in Canadian airports for many decades. As I live in Toronto, I have seen the pre-clearance regime that is currently operating in one of our airports, that being Pearson International Airport. It is currently operating in eight major Canadian airports, and in five pre-inspection sites in B.C. for rail and marine. Last year, more than 12 million passengers went through U.S. pre-clearance in airports located in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto Pearson, Ottawa, Montreal, and Halifax.

Adjournment Proceedings

Pre-clearance has been a boon for business and leisure travel from both nations. For Canadians, having pre-clearance in Canadian airports allows us to land in U.S. airports that have limited or no customs facilities. It nearly doubles the number of American destinations that are accessible directly from Toronto.

The first part of the bill sets out the important aspects of pre-clearance, including where and when new sites can operate, who will have access to the pre-clearance areas, what U.S. pre-clearance officers can and cannot do while working on Canadian soil, and how Canadian police and CBSA officers work with the U.S. officers.

It is at this point that I would like to address some of the concerns that I have heard about this bill. In particular, some have raised a concern that Canadians will have diminished rights in the pre-clearance zones. It is stated, not only in the preamble but also in clause 11, that the operations of pre-clearance by U.S. officers on Canadian soil are subject to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights, and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

The preamble states, among other things:

Whereas the exercise of any power and performance of any duty or function under United States law in Canada is subject to Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act;

Clause 11 of the bill states:

A preclearance officer must exercise their powers and perform their duties and functions under this Act in accordance with Canadian law, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Bill of Rights and the Canadian Human Rights Act.

This statement in the preamble and the wording in clause 11 are very important to me. I believe they respond to some of the concerns I have heard. In fact, the bill appears to provide greater protection to Canadian travellers in a pre-clearance zone than we would have at a U.S. border crossing in the United States on American soil. We would not have the protections of the charter, our Bill of Rights, and the Human Rights Act. These are things that are specific to our rights in our country.

I need to underline that there is no compromise on this. Canadians expect us to keep their rights and values top of mind in all of our work, and this is no exception. On this point, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has been abundantly clear.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

As it has been clearly established, all pre-clearance activities in Canada must be conducted in compliance with Canadian laws, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There can be no compromise on that. Canadians expect us to always make their rights and values a priority in all of our work, and this is no exception.

[*English*]

The second part of this bill is where we see the reciprocal element come into play. Along with the enforcement authorities that have been provided under U.S. laws, it would give the Canada Border Services Agency the authority to conduct pre-clearance in the U.S., in all modes of transport: land, air, rail, and marine.

This legislation would pave the way to expand the benefits of pre-clearance to any site and any mode of transport in either country pursuant to future agreements.

[*Translation*]

As we have heard, this legislation will pave the way to expand the benefits of pre-clearance to any site and any mode of transport in either country pursuant to future agreements. Canada and the United States have already announced their intention to begin the expansion with the Jean Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, the Billy Bishop airport in Toronto, Montreal's Central Station, and the Rocky Mountaineer Station in British Columbia. These sites were covered by agreements in principle signed during the state visit to Washington last March.

[*English*]

Already in Canada we have made these announcements. The necessary American legislation was adopted last December. It is now time for Canada to do likewise, so we can move forward with this important initiative. Bill C-23 would allow us to build on more than 60 years of pre-clearance co-operation.

I encourage all members to give this legislation their support.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Seeing that we are out of time, the hon. member will have five minutes of questions coming to her when we debate this topic again.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 1, I rose in the House to ask the Minister of Justice a question in respect of mandatory jail terms. I asked the question because the Minister of Justice has repeatedly said that as part of the government's so-called comprehensive review of the Criminal Code, mandatory jail terms are on the line, that it is the intention of the government to roll back mandatory jail terms and therefore roll back holding criminals accountable for their crimes by ensuring that sentencing is consistent with the seriousness of an offence.

While the minister has repeatedly stated that the government intends to roll back mandatory jail terms, CBC reporter Alison Crawford reported on February 11, the minister stating that work is well under way to eliminating many mandatory jail terms. The one thing that the minister has refused to do is say exactly which mandatory jail terms she has a problem with.

Adjournment Proceedings

There are dozens and dozens of mandatory jail terms in the Criminal Code and I submit that Canadians have a right to know just which mandatory jail terms the minister has a problem with. More than that, victims have a right to know.

I put to the minister the question that I put to her on November 1, and that is just which mandatory jail terms does the minister have a problem with. Is it the mandatory jail term for selling drugs near a school? Or is it the mandatory jail term for child pornography? Or is it the mandatory jail term with respect to drive-by shootings? Or perhaps it is the mandatory jail term for murder. Just which mandatory jail term does the minister have a problem with?

● (1840)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss both the question from my colleague, the member for St. Albert—Edmonton, as well as our government's answer.

As we have said on numerous occasions, there is going to be a comprehensive criminal justice review. As part of that process, we will take a careful look at mandatory minimum sentences. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice have been quite clear that, as a matter of principle, our government believes in and supports mandatory minimum sentences for the most serious offences. In her mandate letter from the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice has been asked to review the changes to sentencing reforms over the past decade to ensure that we are increasing the safety of our communities, addressing gaps, and ensuring that current provisions are aligned with the objectives of the criminal justice system.

Our government believes that it is important to ensure that all of our laws, including those with mandatory minimums, are effective in meeting their objectives, promote public security, and are consistent with individuals' constitutionally protected rights.

The cornerstone of sentencing in Canada is that sentences will be both fit and just. This means that they must reflect the degree of responsibility of the offender and the gravity of the offence. Responsible sentencing and making sure that the punishment fits the crime is essential to ensuring a safer Canada, a Canada with communities that are better served and protected by our criminal justice system.

While mandatory minimums may be appropriate for the most serious offences, their increased use over the past decade presents pressing issues and challenges. Particularly, their increased use has resulted in a large number of challenges under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

A number of these challenges have been successful before the Supreme Court of Canada. For instance, in the case of *Regina v. Nur* and *Regina v. Lloyd*, the Supreme Court of Canada found that both mandatory minimum sentences that were in question were unconstitutional, but at the same time provided important new direction on mandatory minimum penalties and how they should be addressed in the context of the criminal justice system. If they do not comport with the new direction that has been given by the Supreme Court of Canada, we believe that mandatory minimums will be vulnerable to constitutional challenge and may constitute cruel and

unusual punishment, which in and of itself would be a violation under the charter.

The evidence also demonstrates that mandatory minimum penalties negatively impact the criminal justice system in some circumstances. Mandatory minimums have lengthened the time required to complete cases by causing increases in charter challenges and thereby extending the amount of time required for trials. This is unfair to victims and their families who have to wait longer for a resolution of their case. By reducing the number of mandatory minimums, our government will also reduce delays in our courts, and I know that is something that the hon. member across the aisle would support.

Canadians want a criminal justice system that is compassionate to victims, that holds offenders to account for their crimes, and that protects Canadians. These are the objectives that guide our government in its consideration of reforms to the criminal justice system, to the sentencing regime, and to mandatory minimum sentences.

● (1845)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to welcome the parliamentary secretary to his new role. I have not had the opportunity to congratulate him in the House. I certainly look forward to working constructively with him on a number of matters.

With respect to the member's answer, I must say that I did not receive a clear answer in terms of just which mandatory jail terms the Minister of Justice has a problem with. The parliamentary secretary did refer to the Lloyd decision, which was a decision that struck down a very specific mandatory jail term on the basis of section 12 of the charter, cruel and unusual punishment. I would note, however, that in paragraph 24 of the Lloyd decision, the Supreme Court affirmed that in the context of striking down a section on the basis of section 12, there is a very high—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his congratulations. I, too, look forward to working with him.

Part of the process requires careful consideration and in the context of that careful consideration, it would be premature to identify the exact sections or criminal offences which our government at this stage is going to be revisiting mandatory minimum sentences.

Before we get to that point, we would want to consult with the criminal law profession, which we are doing. We would want to consult with other stakeholders, including the families and the victims and those who are negatively impacted by crimes. We would want to consult with communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. We would want to do that so we can take a balanced approach, a measured approach, one that is not vulnerable to the same kind of constitutional challenges which we have seen successfully brought before the Supreme Court of Canada in the last 10 years.

Adjournment Proceedings

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today on a question that I originally put to the Minister of National Defence on November 16 last year to talk about the peacekeeping mission and specifically to raise concern over the danger in this mission and the number of heavy weapons that the militants, whether they be ISIS terrorists, Boko Haram, al Shabaab, or even separatist forces that are fighting against the UN peacekeepers in west Africa have access to.

November 16 was just after Remembrance Day. We witnessed the Minister of National Defence use Remembrance Day as a platform to explain that he was going to extend the mission for our UN peacekeeping troops in Canada to be in Mali or be someplace in Africa for up to three years. Remembrance Day is not the time to be making those types of policy announcements. Remembrance Day is the day we commemorate those who have served this country and the many who have fallen in defending our rights and our values and fighting all sorts of atrocities, oppression and tyrants around the world.

The Prime Minister wants us to be back in the peacekeeping theatre because he is trying to get a seat for himself at the UN Security Council.

I have to make sure that everyone is aware that the Mali mission, where it is rumoured Canadian troops are going to be stationed, is the deadliest mission for UN peacekeepers anywhere in the world. Over 100 peacekeepers have already died since 2012 in Mali. That is not counting the number of troops that have been killed that are there as part of the French forces which are not part of the UN peacekeeping mission, or the Germans, who are part of the European mission. In 2016 alone, 26 UN peacekeepers died. The Mali mission represents only 15% of the entire UN peacekeeping troops around the world, yet the Mali mission represents 90% of the death rate. That is unacceptable.

The Minister of National Defence has said that he would be laying out the UN peace operations that Canada was going to be involved in by the end of 2016. Here we are almost two months into 2017 and the Liberals are still waffling and dithering, and delaying this announcement.

The question that I raised back on November 16 was in reference to a report that was put together by the Conflict Armament Research group, which is based out of the United Kingdom and France. It was able to identify a pile of weapons that had previously been in Libya but were now in the hands of ISIS terrorists as well as militants in Mali. We are talking about Russian-manufactured surface-to-air missiles, man-portable air defence systems, MANPADS, Polish assault rifles, Belgian- and French-manufactured mortar rounds, 60 millimetre and 81 millimetre, which do a pile of damage, and ammunition that was found in Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast. Chinese-type assault rifles that were manufactured only in 2011 were seen all throughout west Africa. This makes it incredibly dangerous for our troops that have to be stationed in the UN mission in Mali.

Again I come back to the government. When is it going to release the details? Is it going to be putting our troops into harm's way under a UN mission with convoluted chains of command and heavily

bureaucratic systems that make it impossible to do the actual job of peacekeeping?

• (1850)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his question and for the opportunity to discuss this important subject.

Our government is resolutely engaged at the international level and contributes in many ways to ensure that the world is a safe place. In accordance with the mandate given to the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs last August, the government has committed to participating in UN peace support operations.

Last August, Canada made a commitment to deploy up to 600 Canadian Armed Forces members to assist with UN peace operations. The three-year deployment is part of a government strategy that has a budget of \$450 million and involves a number of departments.

Canada has also offered to host this year's UN peacekeeping defence ministerial. The Minister of National Defence travelled to Africa twice last fall to gather information and gain a better understanding of local and regional needs and issues. He met with representatives of various African governments, diplomats, UN representatives, and people working on the ground with government organizations. However, no decisions have been made regarding the location or length of the deployment. No deadline has been set for making that decision.

We have carefully examined the various options for missions led by the UN and other international organizations. Our analysis is still under way, with very clear objectives. The safety of our men and women in uniform is increasingly important, and this aspect alone greatly affects our planning and decision-making processes.

Our actions will always be aimed at reducing as much as possible the level of risk our Canadian Armed Forces personnel are exposed to. We want to ensure that any troops deployed as part of a peacekeeping mission have the appropriate equipment and the training needed to carry out the mission they are tasked with.

It is our duty to ensure that, before deploying our troops, we seek always to maximize the impact of our presence and our actions.

We also believe in the need to establish firm rules of engagement to ensure the success of our missions. These rules of engagement enable troops to defend themselves and the people they are working with. Even if it is a United Nations peacekeeping mission, the chief of the defence staff will always be fully in command of our troops.

We must also ensure that our friends fully understand our approach in order to maximize its impact on the ground.

At a conference in Ottawa last week, defence experts applauded Canada's wise and pragmatic decision to assess situations thoroughly before deploying troops.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I said earlier, this decision will also depend on an assessment of where Canada can optimize its military, security, humanitarian, and paragonovernmental contributions.

In accordance with the mandate Canadians gave us, we are committed to taking concrete action and playing a constructive role to make Canada safer. We are proud to demonstrate our renewed commitment to the United Nations and to being a responsible member.

•(1855)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's comments, I would like to remind him that Canada's experience in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa in recent history, like Rwanda and Somalia, have been terrible. There are reasons why so many of our NATO partners are no longer participating in UN missions. The command structures have continually fallen apart, populations are still left on their own to protect themselves, and the rule of law is always abandoned.

What comes back is that we are not getting transparency from the Liberal government. Just like Operation Impact in Iraq, we are not getting the right technical briefings. The minister said that he would tell us what was going to happen before the end of 2016. Here we are at the end of February, and still no details.

We have to ensure that before our troops are deployed on this mission, he comes into this chamber for a full debate and a vote to ensure our troops know that Parliament stands behind them. I demand the government do just that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, our government is determined to take concrete action and to play a constructive role in order to make the world safer.

Almost 70% of Canadians support the deployment of Canadian Armed Forces to conflict zones as part of UN peacekeeping missions. Almost 80% of Canadians believe that participating in such missions is a good or even very good use of the personnel and equipment of the Canadian Armed Forces. Canadians across the country support this.

Canadians understand the importance for Canada of supporting peace operations and being responsible members of the United Nations.

I will repeat that we are carefully examining all options to see how the Canadian Armed Forces can best contribute to maintaining peace and security.

I thank my colleague for his interest in and concern for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

YOUTH

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rose in the House two weeks ago, on February 6, to ask the government, and particularly the Prime Minister, who is also the minister of youth, if the government was going to urgently reinvest in Katimavik.

Katimavik is an organization that provides youth across Canada with an incredible opportunity to participate in community work, among other things. I will expand on that a little later.

The organization directors approached us to tell us that Katimavik will have to close its doors by March 31 because of a lack of funding. In his answer to my question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour said that helping young Canadians gain work experience was a government priority, but he made no mention of an imminent investment.

Since then, we have heard nothing. The Liberals have been in office for 18 months and they have not invested a cent in Katimavik. Meanwhile, the organization is celebrating its 40-year anniversary this year, in 2017. Unfortunately, this could be Katimavik's last anniversary, even though it has helped 35,000 young people in its 40 years of operation.

In less than a few weeks, in days really, the organization will have to close its doors because no announcement has been made. In 2012, the Conservatives reduced federal subsidies to Katimavik. The Prime Minister, who was the member for Papineau at the time, and still is, was outraged and asked the Conservatives to be honest enough to admit that they do not care about young people.

The Prime Minister promised to reinvest, to ensure that Katimavik is restored. In fact, to allow 1,700 young people to live the Katimavik experience every year, the organization needs \$11.9 million. During the election campaign, the Liberals promised \$105 million over five years. We have not seen a red cent for Katimavik since the Liberals came to power.

Katimavik's mission is to develop youth as engaged citizens and capable leaders and to foster respect, understanding, and reconciliation with indigenous peoples and with people from other cultures and regions.

Every day we hear the Liberals say that one of their priorities, if not their top priority, is to work on reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. This could be a concrete example of investing in that very reconciliation. One of the basic concepts of Katimavik is to provide young people with the opportunity to do an internship or volunteer in an indigenous community. Every dollar spent on Katimavik brings \$2.20 to the community.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 29, the age group most affected by unemployment and precarious work, participate in Katimavik. This program also serves young indigenous youth. We know that the suicide rate is five to seven times higher in indigenous communities and that Katimavik addresses recommendation 66 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada which calls on "the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation".

What will the Liberals do by March 31 to save Katimavik? We would need to have—

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1900)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague from the NDP for bringing this important matter forward. Again, I would like to reiterate that this government understands the significance, the importance, and just the role that Katimavik has played in the lives of so many young Canadians over the years, and so many communities have benefited from the program as well. I want to single out the efforts of my colleague, the member for Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, who has worked hard on this file. He has worked with the Katimavik organization over the last while to try to find a resolution to this issue.

My colleague mentioned something that was absolutely accurate in that the previous Conservative government put a cap on funding for Katimavik back in 2012. I know my colleague is an experienced member of the House now; I believe she is in her sixth year. She would know that, over the past Conservative governments, over that 10 years of governance by the Conservatives, funding for youth programs continued to decline, and Katimavik was one of those areas. If we look at funding for youth summer programs, we see that particular envelope was frozen in 2007. There was not any increase for student employment from 2007 until our last budget, when the Liberal government doubled the amount of investment that was made in summer students, and we almost doubled the number of jobs. Obviously, what we saw over the period of Conservative rule was that the pool of money stayed the same and minimum wage allocations grew in each of the provinces, so that pool of money was carved out and cut up differently with the minimum wage responsibility. Therefore, fewer and fewer students were able to benefit from that investment in student programming.

The other thing that we invested in, and I know the member would have seen the merit in this, was student grants. For low-income students, who struggle in this country, we saw a significant investment in student grants. Low-income students who were eligible went from a \$2,000 grant ceiling to \$3,000 for full-time students. For part-time students it went from \$1,200 to \$1,800, certainly making education more accessible for young people, because they are not getting work if they do not get the education. Therefore, we know that accessibility to education is key and central.

In this government, we believe in providing young Canadians with an opportunity to join the workforce, start that resumé off, and get the important skills they need to be a constructive member of the workforce. We are committed to that, and we will continue to make those key targeted investments so that young Canadians can benefit.

•(1905)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, my colleague did not answer my question about Katimavik at all. If the Liberals do not act, Katimavik will be shut down on March 31. It is now February 21, so there is just over a month left.

The Liberals have been in power for 18 months. They promised \$105 million over five years, but we have not seen any of that money yet. According to the people in charge of Katimavik, it costs \$11.9 million to give 1,700 young people this experience. What are they going to do? The parliamentary secretary in no way answered the question. If nothing is done, Katimavik will be shut down.

The Prime Minister once chaired the Katimavik program. Does Katimavik not matter to him at all? If it does, will he invest to save it?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, in the last election the number of young Canadians between the ages of 18 and 24 who turned out to vote to support this Prime Minister and his ambitious agenda increased by 20% because they believe that he understood what was important to those young Canadians. He absolutely does, and he is committed to them.

With regard to Katimavik, the NDP is yet to form government. The New Democrats had a cup of coffee in official opposition, but they have yet to form government. Things are being done on the file, and I guess my best advice for the member is to stay tuned.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:07 p.m.)

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