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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, March 24, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, March 24, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand today to talk about what I believe is a very important piece of legislation. Many members of the chamber will recall the debate on Bill C-51. That is where I would like to start this morning, to give a bit of perspective on why we have this bill before us today.

It is important to note that the former prime minister, Stephen Harper, brought in Bill C-51, a bill that had some fundamental flaws. At the time, the Liberal Party was the third party in the chamber, and we felt strongly, based on the feedback we were receiving and the research we were doing on the bill, that it was important to vote in favour of it. As the debate continued, many hours of debate in the House on that issue, I, for one, must have talked about the need for a parliamentary oversight committee at least a dozen times, possibly 15 or 20 times. That was when I was on the other side of the House.

The point is that it was a very important issue a couple of years ago. It raised quite a commotion outside the House. Many members, I suspect all 338 of us, can relate to Bill C-51, because it was an issue that was constantly being raised at the time. I even knocked on a few doors where people talked to me about the bill and how, if the Liberal Party leader was elected prime minister, he would respond to Bill C-51.

There was a commitment made by all members of the Liberal team, in particular the Prime Minister, that we would bring in a parliamentary oversight committee. Whether it was during the

debates when Bill C-51 was in the House, in the lead-up to the campaign, through the media, in public meetings, or when we were going door to door throughout the last federal election campaign, Liberals were advocating how important it was to have an oversight committee made up of parliamentarians.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise to parliamentarians across the way that we are debating a bill that, in essence, captures the commitment the Prime Minister and every member of the Liberal caucus made as part of our election platform. No one should be surprised in the House of Commons, and I suspect that Canadians will look at this piece of legislation and see it as fulfilling an election promise.

I said yesterday that the Prime Minister says how important it is to him personally that when members of Parliament come to Ottawa they represent their constituents here. I can tell the Prime Minister and my caucus colleagues that this is something I believe the residents of Winnipeg North are behind 100%. I am convinced that this is good, solid legislation.

I would like to commend the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the government House leader for doing a phenomenal job in ensuring that this commitment is being fulfilled in such a timely fashion.

• (1010)

That is how I wanted to start my comments today. I know there has been concern among opposition members about how the bill would ultimately be passed. Maybe I could attempt to answer some of the questions they might have.

For example, we know that more than 40 members have been afforded the opportunity to give a 10- or 20-minute speech. Well over 100 have been afforded the opportunity to be engaged in one way or another on the floor of the House of Commons.

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I also want to compliment the excellent standing committee that dealt with Bill C-22. I would argue that this was a fulfillment of one of the other aspects the Prime Minister has talked about. As a government, we want to bring more life to our standing committees. We want members on all sides of the House to be more engaged in a positive way in terms of trying to improve legislation. That is exactly what we have done here. After second reading, the bill went to committee, and in that committee, what did we see? A number of witnesses came before the committee, from different regions of the country, and made recommendations on how the legislation could be improved. A good number of those expert witnesses were very complimentary to the government about the legislation as it was presented to committee. They were very supportive of that legislation.

They recognized, as many of us have, that there is always room for improvement. We have encouraged that, and what we saw was a series of amendments brought forward. The ideas were talked about. The standing committee did its job in terms of setting the agenda and inviting witnesses.

I look at the standing committees as the backbone of the fine work parliamentarians do. All we need to do is focus some attention on that standing committee. There was a great list developed for witnesses who presented their reports and came up with ideas. The committee took a number of those thoughts and presented amendments. It was not just amendments from the government side of the House. There were amendments suggested, and some were accepted, from the opposition side of the House. That demonstrates the changes we are seeing at the committee level. I bring that to people's attention, because it is worthy of note.

The legislation has come back to the House. The government has the opportunity to review some of the work that was done at committee. Yes, there was a need to make some changes to it. I will give an example of one of the changes.

The witness protection program is of critical importance. Canadians appreciate the importance of informants or individuals who might be testifying before a court of law, when their life or their family's lives may be put at risk. Because there is risk, we need to have a system that protects those witnesses. That is why we have a witness protection program.

●(1015)

The committee, for a number of reasons, felt that we should talk about the names of witnesses and drawing too much information from that. A caveat was put in, in the form an amendment, and the government, at this point, felt that we might have been going too far on that particular issue. That is one of the amendments and why it is that some amendments were made at third reading.

I raise that because I believe that is really what Parliament should be doing on its legislation. We had the opportunity to see the legislation through first reading. Members were able to be engaged. No one would have been surprised by the introduction of the bill, given the fact that it was something that was talked about. It was brought in for second reading. Dozens of members were able to speak to it. Even more were able to be engaged in that debate. It then went to committee. In committee, it received wonderful support, and a number of ideas that would improve it were incorporated into

amendments. Ultimately it went to report stage, at which point there were a few modifications. Now we are into third reading and we are debating it again in anticipation of the legislation being ready to pass.

We have a government that has made a commitment to Canadians. It brought in the legislation. The legislation has been improved through the process, and ultimately, we are getting into a position where we will be seeing it pass. I see that as a very strong positive. We should all take some pride in the manner in which it has actually gone through.

I know there have been some concerns among the opposition members with respect to the legislation, specifically dealing with what sorts of exemptions there will be. They are indicating that we could have done better in terms of not allowing as many exemptions.

I would like to address that point. It is important to recognize that this is somewhat historical in the sense that Canada will have a parliamentary oversight committee, among many other things. I like to think of it as an oversight committee that will protect the rights and freedoms of all Canadians in a very respectful fashion. That is one reason I am such a strong advocate for Bill C-22, because I believe in the rights and freedoms of Canadians.

It is the first time Canada is going to have a parliamentary oversight committee that is going to be looking at all of our security agencies and ensuring that there is a higher sense of accountability, whether it is border controls, corporations, or the RCMP. This is good news.

I want to be sensitive in terms of what the opposition is saying, but I want to assure members that it is very robust legislation. In fact, even though we might be the last of the Five Eyes countries, countries that move together in dealing with issues of this nature, immigration and so forth, I would suggest that we could be very proud of how robust our legislation is in comparison with the other countries' legislation.

●(1020)

Let me give an example. When we talk about the exemptions of what cannot be talked about, or what can be withdrawn from the committee, this is something that comes from the New Zealand act, which is one of the Five Eyes countries. In New Zealand, the act allows for the government to inform the committee that the documents or information cannot be disclosed because, in the opinion of the chief executive of the relevant intelligence and security agency, the documents or information are sensitive. In all fairness, I suspect that if we were to ask even the members of the opposition, one would think that our legislation is more robust than that. I would challenge the members across the way, who are concerned about that aspect, to indicate to this House whether they believe that the New Zealand legislation is more robust than ours. I do not believe it is, but that is an issue that is raised.

That is not the only country that we can draw a comparison to, but before I leave the subject of New Zealand, there is another point related to this. I want to talk about the Prime Minister, because a number of members across the way have talked about the influence of the Prime Minister. I will get to that right away, because there is another good example with respect to New Zealand.

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On the same thought, let us look at what is being done in the U.K. act. The government is able to inform the intelligence and security committee, which is the equivalent of what we are establishing, that the information cannot be disclosed because the secretary of state has decided that it should not be disclosed. Again, I would suggest that our legislation is more robust than that, yet this is a big issue that is being raised, in particular by the New Democrats, and other opposition members also. That is not to say that our legislation is 100% perfect. There is always room for improvement. That is one of the reasons we are saying that we will take another look at it in the years ahead, and that is within the legislation itself.

I made reference to the Prime Minister. The members across the way talk about the Prime Minister and the control from the PMO. I would encourage them not to be paranoid about that particular issue. In New Zealand, the prime minister actually sits on the security committee. In Canada, we have a parliamentary oversight committee where the government members of Parliament make up the minority of the committee. That is a fairly significant piece in the legislation. In fairness, the opposition should recognize that it reinforces that we have excellent legislation in comparison to other Five Eyes countries.

Not only that, but the good news continues. Within the framework, we have a Prime Minister who is obligated to work with the opposition to fill the opposition member spots on the committee. Let me suggest to members that if we were to talk to Canadians to get a better sense of what Canadians believe, I would like to think that our Minister of Public Safety has done a phenomenal job with respect to this legislation, in bringing it forward and defending it. If there is any doubt in the minds of members as to why or how they should be voting, if they read what the Minister of Public Safety has put on the record here, I am sure that their concerns will be addressed.

I would argue that this is one of those pieces of legislation that should be passed unanimously by this House, because I believe that all Canadians want to see a parliamentary oversight committee. Even under Stephen Harper, where there was some reluctance—actually there was a lot of reluctance—I know there are now many members across the way who understand the value of a parliamentary oversight committee. I hope that they will come on side and support this good legislation.

• (1025)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go into the question session, I want to remind the hon. members that I do not know what it is, but every time the hon. parliamentary secretary gets up, the opposition members want to help him out. I am sure that he appreciates the help, but if members do not mind, while he is answering maybe just keep it down.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. parliamentary secretary to the House leader for being able to make even an oversight committee sound exciting.

One of the concerns that we had with this, and perhaps it has been addressed in the amendments and I missed it, was that there is no independence to this oversight. The Prime Minister picks the chair, the Prime Minister picks who is on the committee, and the Prime

Minister gets to edit any of the reports that come out of the committee.

My question for the hon. member is this. What has been done to address that and keep it from being just a duplication of effort?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that this once again shows that the government takes what is happening in standing committees very seriously. We want to be able to see good, healthy discussions. One of the discussions that took place at this particular standing committee was the issue of the chair not being able to have a double vote, meaning that the chair does not precipitate a tie vote and then vote again as the chair. From what I understand, this is something that was raised at committee, and as a result we have improved the legislation.

The member asked how we ensure that there is a sense of fairness or balance. I would suggest that the best way to ensure that we have that sense of fairness and balance in this situation—I do not want my words to be exploited now—is that in fact on this committee, given its nature, we will see that a minority of the membership is made up of the government members of Parliament. That should provide some assurances to members, given the important role that this particular committee has on national security, and protecting Canadians' rights and freedoms, which, as I say, is one of my favourites.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with astonishment and exasperation to the member's speech on Bill C-22. It included everything from reminding us that this is the only thing the Liberals have to say about Bill C-51, which I have a bill before the House to repeal—they have not presented anything other than this bill—to him saying that if we have objections to stand up and speak about them, when this is under time allocation and the NDP gets exactly one speaker at third reading. I am a bit exasperated.

The final thing I would say is that the member is somehow proud of a bill that, when the committee provided teeth, as the Liberal Prime Minister said he would allow committees to do, then the government proceeded to take the teeth out of this bill and put them in a glass by the Prime Minister's bed. We have a bill here that has absolutely no ability to do what it is supposed to do.

I am exasperated and astonished to hear a speech like this, which would revise history and tries to recast this in a way that is completely false. What we have here is the government taking control of a committee, overruling what was done, and producing a committee that is very important to this country, without any support from the opposition parties. What does the member have to say about that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, having been a parliamentarian for a number of years, I know there is never a shortage of rhetoric from the New Democratic benches. At the end of the day, I disagree with what the member is saying. I would challenge the member across the way to stand in his place and tell the House how many times in the last 16 months, in which we have seen changes to legislation or votes inside the House, where we have had a higher sense of participation, where amendments were being proposed, where there were a different type of votes, where even opposition amendments were actually being accepted—

Government Orders

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to remind the hon. member that he should stop standing up and saying we should speak on this if we have opinions. When the government has introduced time allocation, we are not allowed that opportunity. Repeatedly he calls on me to stand up and speak on this. As the national defence critic, I would love to do that, but because of time allocation, it is not allowed.

• (1030)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member got his point across, but I think that was more debate than it was a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: I suspect you might be right, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day, the member knows full well that the New Democratic Party has had dozens of opportunities to get engaged in debate inside this House. To try to give the impression that the NDP only gets one speaker on this is wrong. The New Democrats have had dozens of engagements on this piece of legislation. If it were up to some members within this House, this bill would never pass. That is unfortunately the reality. At the end of the day, we believe this is something that Canadians want to see. I suspect it might be the case that even the New Democrats might vote in favour of the bill.

Once all is said and done, this is good legislation. It has been improved upon because it went through the committee stage, and it would be very timely to see this bill pass through the House of Commons.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for outlining and bringing back some of the thoughts we had during the campaign around Bill C-51. I can remember knocking on doors myself, making phone calls, and explaining why the Liberals wanted to adjust that legislation rather than remove it, the way the New Democrats were recommending.

Now with having an oversight committee, the New Democrats are also making comments that we do not need this. In fact, this committee would include members from the Senate, and New Democrats would like to get rid of the Senate.

I think the Senate brings some value to this. Maybe the hon. member for Winnipeg North could talk to us a bit about why we would like to engage the Senate in this discussion, as well as changing legislation, rather than removing all security legislation, the way the New Democrats are suggesting.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from my caucus colleague. There are many advocates who have proposed that the Senate would play a very positive role on this particular oversight committee. I believe it will, for a number of reasons. It could be everything from continuity, to the level of expertise that is within the other place. I think there is a great deal that can be offered.

We are seeing more and more that the Senate is becoming that independent, sober second-looking oversight body. I believe it can contribute positively to this particular oversight committee.

In regard to the legislation, I think it would be very tragic to see such good legislation not receive the type of support it deserves. At the end of the day, I believe that if we took 100 Canadians at random and we had presentations dealing with this, it would be virtually unanimous in terms of the need for Canada to have an oversight committee.

I am very proud of the government's ability to bring that into a reality, and that is what this legislation would do. I thank in particular the Minister of Public Safety, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, and most important, the Prime Minister, for having the foresight in making this election commitment. He understood what Canadians want when it comes to issues such as this which are so very important.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman somehow suggested that the opposition challenges the need for an oversight committee. I do not know how one could read the record of these proceedings and come to that conclusion. He commends the work of the public safety committee and fails to remind us that the government gutted that committee's recommendations.

Since this is a "somewhat historical bill", to quote the hon. gentleman, how is it that we will be proceeding when the opposition is unanimously opposed to such an historic initiative?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to emphasize that when the Conservative Party was on the government benches and we had that great debate on Bill C-51, we knew where the NDP were standing on that and we knew where the Liberal Party stood. We supported the legislation and indicated that if we became government, we would ensure there would be parliamentary oversight. We are fulfilling that commitment.

On the other hand, the Conservative Party, while it was in government, opposed having a parliamentary oversight committee. When I say that there are members of this chamber who oppose having an oversight committee, it is based on past voting records. I sit inside the chamber and I have heard a number of members across the way express concerns in regard to it. Hopefully I am wrong. Hopefully we do see that unanimous support. I would love to see it, because it would send a nice positive message. However, I am inclined to believe that the Conservatives are still out of touch with what Canadians really think on this particular issue. We will find out when it ultimately comes to a vote.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): A happy Friday to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all of my good friends.

I am very pleased to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill C-22. I will use my time to defend my point of view and common sense, which seems to be lacking across the way.

Before I get into the substance of the bill, I would like to comment on how the party in power always uses the same tactic when it knows the media and Canadians will take a dim view of its decisions. It sure likes to make itself look cute.

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Here is an example of the government's sneaky tactics: it introduced Bill C-22 on June 16 of last year during the dying hours of the session to ensure that neither MPs nor the public would have much opportunity to debate it.

Here is another example. The Minister of Finance tabled a report indicating that the deficit would be \$30 billion, not the modest \$10-billion deficit they campaigned on. Any deficit at all is hard to swallow. My children and grandchildren will have to pay for it, but apparently the members opposite do not have grandchildren, so they do not care.

Finally, here is the last example. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tabled a document stipulating that the Prime Minister should have to be in the House to answer questions only one hour a week, and that the House should meet only four days week in order to balance work and family. Now that is what I call being a part-time prime minister.

I will now get into the substance of the debate, specifically, Bill C-22. I have no objection to the idea of creating a committee whose members would be tasked with examining and reviewing the legislative, regulatory, strategic, financial, and administrative frameworks of national security and intelligence. What bothers me is how this committee will be formed. I have some concerns about that.

First and foremost, public safety is a non-partisan issue. The fact that the Prime Minister's Office decided way back in January who would chair that committee, before the committee was even struck, says a lot about the Prime Minister's attitude towards the members of the House of Commons.

That decision was made by the Liberal Party alone and not as a result of discussions with the other parties. What is more, the Liberals made this decision without consulting the House, even though hon. members expressed interest in being part of the discussion to select the chair of this important committee. Public safety is very important and should never be a partisan issue.

For its part, the Prime Minister's Office will also be tasked with selecting the committee members, contrary to the election promise made by the member for Papineau, meaning that the committee members will be beholden to him and the committee will no longer be able to do what it is asked to do. It will not meet the needs of Canadians, but rather those of the Prime Minister himself, as he sees fit. He will be lord and master as usual. Making the committee not as independent as it should be undermines its usefulness and legitimacy.

Under Bill C-22 the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness will have the authority to change or simply block any report drafted by the committee members. The Prime Minister will therefore yet again be lord and master of the committee. I think he rather likes being lord and master. He should consider the fact that there are members in the House who like doing their job.

• (1040)

Perhaps he does not like it, but we like to speak on behalf of our constituents. Is that not why we were elected to the House? There is a song about the world's kings being at the top, but alone. The Prime

Minister should think about that. Someone should buy him a mirror. I think he would like that.

I will elaborate. If the report contained information that the Prime Minister or the Minister of Public Safety considered to be sensitive, they would have the right to delete it from the report. That is unacceptable. By "sensitive information" I do not mean confidential information that would harm Canadians' safety if it were disclosed. I am talking about parts of the report that would reflect poorly on the Liberal Party because they would demonstrate its incompetence and bad judgment when making decisions. Our public safety critic gave a very good explanation of the situation.

[*English*]

He said:

If we are going to implement parliamentary oversight, we need to do it right. It needs to be real and substantial oversight. It needs to be parliamentary. Otherwise, this is simply a Liberal Party communications exercise, and this is not something the Conservative Party can support.

[*Translation*]

It is very important to remember that the Liberals want a committee of parliamentarians and not a parliamentary committee. There is a big difference. The committee should be an independent body that is not accountable to the party in power. Rather, it must guarantee Canadians that their safety is assured in a legal and professional manner.

I am extremely troubled by the fact that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety could have the last word on the reports of a so-called independent committee. Furthermore, it is truly important that the committee members already have experience handling secret information or experience with public safety, national security, intelligence, and defence issues.

That is one more reason why the leaders of all the parties should be consulted. They could ensure that we have the best parliamentarians for the important task they will be doing.

I would like to close by saying that I cannot support such a bill, unless some major changes are made. First, the opposition parties must be consulted before the committee members are chosen. Second, the committee's autonomy and independence from the Government of Canada must be respected in order to prevent the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety from interfering. Finally, I think that strict criteria must be maintained and that parliamentarians with extensive experience in the fields that I mentioned earlier must be selected so that the committee can provide top-notch service to all Canadians.

We are talking here about public safety. That is extremely important, and this committee must be independent. It must be specialized and non-partisan. However, the Liberal government took the liberty of appointing the committee chair in January without any consultation. The Liberals refused to consult with the opposition parties before the legislative measure was even drafted, despite the willingness of the Conservative Party and the NDP to discuss this important committee.

Government Orders

Like our Five Eyes allies, we think that the members of this committee should have significant experience in dealing with secret information, public safety, national security, intelligence, and defence. The chair who has been appointed does not have that type of experience. The committee members are appointed by and accountable to the Prime Minister's Office.

•(1045)

They should be appointed by Parliament and report to Parliament. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister advocated for a reduced role for the Prime Minister's Office, but no action has been taken in that regard.

Bill C-22 would provide for numerous exceptions, and it permits government departments and agencies to opt out of providing certain information to the committee. This undermines the committee's oversight responsibilities and prevents it from fully carrying out its mandate.

Here on the Conservative benches, as the official opposition, we see public safety as a priority and believe that protecting our security and intelligence officers must be a primary concern. We will examine the bill closely, but we remain concerned about the attempts being made by the Prime Minister's Office and the Liberal Part to make this committee another arm of the Liberal government.

The Prime Minister's comments are becoming increasingly totalitarian, despite his promises to be more transparent. Members across party lines are being silenced, even though we were sent here to represent Canadians. He wants to shut us up. The Prime Minister of Canada will never, ever shut me up. If he ever has the nerve to try, I will go straight to the media and shout at the top of my lungs that this prime minister has become a dictator.

We have a committee that is working so hard for the measures that the leader implemented. It is unacceptable to me that the Prime Minister, who was duly elected by the people and who knew what he was in for when he ran for his party leadership, should sit for just one hour a week. That is ridiculous. Do we have a part-time Canadian Prime Minister on our hands? When will he be accountable to Canadians? This is his job; this is what he is supposed to be doing.

What about the unfortunate Quebecers working on that side, the 40 members who have been skewered by the Quebec media because we never hear from them? Has the Prime Minister shut them up too? Are they expected to keep quiet about the things that bother them?

People can say what they want about Mr. Harper, they can love him or hate him, but he listened to his Quebec MPs. We sat down with him every day in the lobby. He was always asking us how things were going in Quebec.

Have you had that kind of conversation with your Prime Minister? I highly doubt it. Have you Quebecers on that side of the House ever sat down with your Prime Minister? Has he ever paid attention to what is going on in your ridings—

•(1050)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind the hon. member that she must speak through the Chair and not directly to other members.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I highly doubt that my Liberal colleagues have their Prime Minister's ear, otherwise yesterday's budget would have reflected what the Liberals from Quebec and all members from Quebec, from all parties, have been hearing in their respective ridings. It is sad to see. Even the Quebec National Assembly was unanimous in its disappointment with the budget.

The Quebec City region has two federal MPs, one a minister and the other a parliamentary secretary. Mr. Labeaume wants there to be a Quebec lieutenant like there was when the Conservatives were in power. We had a Quebec lieutenant who sat down with Quebecers every day to see what they wanted. I want to see my friends from Quebec stand up and tell me that they had a one-on-one meal with their Prime Minister. They will not, because it did not happen.

An hon. member: They could not afford it.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: True, Mr. Speaker. They probably cannot afford it. It costs \$1,500 after all.

The Liberals were elected on false promises and that is bad for Canadians. The Liberals promised more transparency, but we are in the dark. They turned off the light.

There is one thing about my former prime minister that I really miss. Mr. Harper had a great deal of respect for members of parliament, whether they were from Quebec, New Brunswick, Ontario, or Alberta. He listened to every member. How many times did we sit over there, on the other side, laughing with our prime minister? People did not know that side of him, but he treated us with respect.

What I find to be detrimental is that the Prime Minister that we have today is becoming a ball and chain, even in the House. His body language is so obvious that it is becoming off-putting to the opposition. What I want to see return to my Parliament is the collegiality we had in those days. Whether we like my former boss or not, we have to give him his due. He respected the institution and all parliamentarians, no matter what party they belonged to. I saw him speaking with Michael Ignatieff, Mr. Dion, and Gilles Duceppe, from the Bloc Québécois, many times. There was a collegiality that no longer exists today.

The arrogance of our Prime Minister is becoming increasingly noticeable, which is a problem, because he should not be that way. Whether we are Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats, or members of the Bloc Québécois or Green Party, we were all elected to speak on behalf of our constituents. As a member of Parliament and a woman, I will never, I repeat never, allow myself to be muzzled by the Liberal Prime Minister.

Elected officials must be respected, and respect must be earned. Right now, there is some work that needs to be done because I have lost all respect for the Prime Minister, since he does not respect me as an individual, a parliamentarian, or a woman. For me, that has become a critical issue. If he wants us to continue to work together in a friendly manner, he must let people on both sides of the House have their say.

I hope that my friends from Quebec will have the opportunity to speak to their prime minister, like we did.

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

•(1055)

We had a special relationship with our prime minister, and I hope that they will enjoy the same type of relationship and attentiveness that we did. The members for Quebec were heard and our party did a lot of things for Quebec, for the good of our constituents. In our ridings, we are no longer Conservative, Liberal, NDP, or Bloc Québécois members. We speak on behalf of all our constituents, whether they voted for us or not.

That is a vested right, and I expect my rights to be respected.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we proceed to questions and comments, I would like to remind the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix that she has 10 minutes. However, she will have four minutes before question period, and six minutes after.

The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for questions and comments.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her excellent speech. I have a lot of respect for her, especially when it comes to official languages.

I am having a hard time understanding her remarks on Bill C-22. I do not know if she was in the House in 2006, but I would like to remind her that the Conservative Party literally wrote the book on disrupting parliamentary committees. Mr. Harper's legacy was a set of instructions on how to disrupt parliamentary committees.

Now, back to Bill C-22. Does my colleague agree that creating a parliamentary committee is important? It will make for greater transparency in our security organizations. I would like her to comment on that.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the House from 2006 to 2011. I left when the orange wave washed over the House, but I came back stronger than ever.

As I said at the very beginning of my speech, I am not against Bill C-22, but nor am I in favour of it. There are some flaws in how it is being presented. I oppose the idea of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness leading the committee. For the sake of Canada's public safety, the committee should be independent and made up of people who have the necessary expertise. I do not want the committee to become the Prime Minister's puppet. That is not what an independent committee should be.

An independent committee, especially one dealing with Canada's public safety, should be made up of parliamentarians who have expertise in that area. Personally, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and I would not be the right person to sit on the independent committee we are talking about. I have no expertise when it comes to defence and public safety. In fact, I have no expertise in any areas as significant as that. We need to keep that in mind. I will never stand for such a committee to become the prime minister's puppet, no matter what party is in power.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The member will have 7 minutes and 15 seconds remaining after oral question period.

[*Translation*]**JEAN LAPIERRE**

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 29, we will be commemorating the one-year anniversary of the tragic death of the late hon. Jean Lapierre. I would like to pay solemn tribute to this hon. member and minister who sat in this place for many years.

We all knew him as the distinguished member who represented the people my riding, Shefford, from 1979 to 1992. He also represented the riding of Outremont. Many know about his affinity for his native Magdalen Islands. Jean loved life and he left his family and friends with lasting memories of good times in his company.

His generosity, his love for his family, his political flair, and his determination will remain a tremendous source of inspiration for all hon. members of this House.

* * *

•(1100)

[*English*]**HOCKEY IN CARIBOO—PRINCE GEORGE**

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I rise today to speak about two great hockey teams in my riding.

The WHL Prince George Cougars have done it. For the first time in franchise history, the Cougars have clinched the B.C. Division title and start their playoff run tonight against the Portland Winterhawks.

As well, my former team, which I coached, managed, won a provincial title with, and could not be prouder to be an alumni of, the Cariboo Cougars of the B.C. Major Midget League, start game one of their championship series tonight in Prince George against the Vancouver Canadians.

The Cariboo Cougars are also the host of the 2017 Telus Cup, Canada's national midget ice hockey championship, taking place in Prince George from April 24 through April 30.

True to our region, Cougars' hockey embodies the hard-working, never-say-no, can-do, pioneer spirit to the teams. Hard work beats talent when talent fails to work hard. This is their time. They should set to work and get it done.

Go, Cougars, go.

* * *

DENIS ÉTHIER

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life of former MP Denis Éthier. Mr. Éthier passed away last Thursday at the young age of 90.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

He served as a member of Parliament in the Trudeau government from 1972 to 1984. His brother Viateur was known for bringing post offices to the community, and Denis was known for bringing federal wharves to our shoreline communities. Denis always fought for agriculture both as an MP and later as chair of the Canadian Livestock Feed Board.

He devoted his life to the service of his constituents with justice and humility. Denis, you gave me your red scarf when I won my nomination and I will be sure to pass it on to my successor one day.

I offer my sincere condolences to his sons, Carl and Marc, and his entire family.

We will miss you, Denis. Rest in peace.

* * *

*[English]***SMALL BUSINESS**

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the importance of small businesses.

Recently Mayor Gerry Taft and I met with a group of dedicated small business owners in Invermere, British Columbia, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia.

These hard-working people came together to provide input on how federal, provincial, and municipal governments can better support small businesses in Invermere and elsewhere. Their feedback, and the feedback from other communities where I have hosted business forums, is invaluable.

According to Statistics Canada, there were 1.17 million businesses as of December 2015; 98% of these employed fewer than 100 employees, while over half employed fewer than five people. Seventy-eight per cent of the new jobs in Canada are created by small businesses. They are the lifeblood of their communities and they are key to Canada's economic stability and its future.

Today I would like to celebrate the hard work, ingenuity, and commitment of small businesses in Invermere, throughout my riding, and across Canada.

* * *

VERN NIELSEN

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Vern Nielsen of Kelowna, British Columbia, who passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family and friends, on February 11, 2017.

As a business person and philanthropist, Vern was a kind and generous man. A long-time Rotarian, Vern was the sitting district governor of District 5060 and kept up his volunteer work with the club even while undergoing his cancer treatments.

I am particularly proud to honour Vern in this place, as Vern stood as the Liberal candidate for Kelowna—Lake Country in both the 2004 and 2006 Canadian general elections. He was a mentor to me and contributed in many ways to my success in 2015.

I ask all members in this place to join with me in recognizing Vern Nielsen of Kelowna, British Columbia. Both his community and his country are better places because of his many contributions.

* * *

● (1105)

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, increasingly I hear from people who feel that political correctness is out of control. In Canada, the right to be offended is still enshrined in law. However, free speech is more and more under attack.

Yesterday we learned that a certain Mr. Grabher came face to face with the “I’m offended” buzz saw. For 25 years, Mr. Grabher has had a licence plate with his last name on it. However, now it seems, on the basis of a single complaint, the plate was cancelled.

I am asking all Canadians to consider this case. It has to do with free speech. I implore Canadians that if they hear or read something that is offensive, either ignore it or engage with it. Do not use authority structures to shut it down. Had the person who made the complaint simply asked Mr. Grabher, the individual would have discovered that the word on his plate was his last name.

I ask all Canadians to consider the right to be offended. It is fundamental to the principle of free speech. Let us nip this out-of-control political correctness in the bud.

* * *

SANDWICH PROGRAM

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have not lived today until we have done something for someone who can never repay us.

I was elected by the great people of Saint John—Rothesay to represent, advocate, and bring important priorities forward. We are a city of great business success, but also a city with many in great need. We lead the country in child poverty. We have 1,300 families on a waiting list for affordable housing, and many who are homeless and need a helping hand.

We have started a sandwich program for the hungry at our constituency office, and the response has been uplifting. We have families, seniors, and many others who are hungry drop by on a daily basis. My office is their office too.

One of the greatest things we can all do as MPs is to give hope and a hand up to people who need it the most. I am proud to have started this initiative, and I encourage all my colleagues to do the same across the country.

* * *

MCEWEN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am sharing news of an exciting new educational opportunity in my riding of Sudbury, a new school of architecture in Canada, the first in a generation: the McEwen School of Architecture of Laurentian University.

[Translation]

The School of Architecture features prominently against downtown Sudbury's skyline, and I had the honour of officially opening it in January. This building makes Sudbury one of the most innovative cities in Canada.

[English]

I am proud to say that there are already as many first nations students enrolled in the McEwen School of Architecture as there are first nations architects across Canada. What will this new generation of architects from Sudbury do? It will change the world one sketch at a time.

[Translation]

Congratulations to the president of Laurentian University, Dominic Giroux, and his team for their vision.

[English]

A special thanks to Rob and Cheryl McEwen for supporting education, students, and Sudbury.

* * *

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the public consultations on a new federal framework for Lyme disease have just closed.

For too long, the hundreds and possibly thousands of Canadians with Lyme disease have been largely ignored by our health care system. We have weak surveillance programs, and outdated and incomplete statistics. Our medical professionals do not have the critical training they need and therefore many cases go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Infected Canadians are not getting the supports they need and are suffering both in terms of their health and financially.

There are high hopes that a new framework will improve the situation, but many think this is just more talk. If we are to make progress against this disease, we need to do more than just write a report; we need to take action.

* * *

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Ms. Kamal Khera (Brampton West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Tuberculosis Day, and I would like to highlight how our government is working with provinces, territories, and key stakeholders to reduce the rates of TB in Canada, particularly in at-risk communities.

Through budget 2017, our government is providing over \$50 million to increase community-based infectious diseases programming, including TB and sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections.

To address the high rates of TB in first nations on reserve, Health Canada is partnering with first nation organizations, provinces, and communities to ensure access to culturally appropriate and timely diagnosis.

Statements by Members

We will continue to work with our national and international partners in the fight against TB, and to contribute toward Canada's efforts to completely eliminate TB as a public health problem.

* * *

• (1110)

[Translation]

CABANE PANACHE ET BOIS ROND FESTIVAL

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I will be in my riding enjoying a sweet treat at the annual sugar shack spring event in Verdun, the seventh Cabane Panache et Bois Rond.

For four days, 80,000 hungry visitors will be on Wellington Street, known to the people of Verdun as “the Well”, sampling the maple treats and celebrating our Quebec producers and local merchants.

The history of the maple syrup season precedes the arrival of the settlers in Quebec. The first nations discovered maple sap, a sort of sugar water that flowed from these trees. Centuries later, the sugaring tradition in Verdun is celebrated by the largest urban sugar shack in Montreal and perhaps the world.

Families, friends, and visitors, I will see you on “the Well”.

* * *

[English]

ALBERTA ECONOMY

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I attended the annual presentation of APEGA, which is the organization in Alberta that represents engineers, geologists, and geophysicists.

What I learned about the unemployment situation in this category was even more dire than I had realized. In Calgary, 20% of engineers today are unemployed, 30% of geophysicists are not working, and as many as 50% of geologists do not have jobs.

What did the federal budget do to help these highly trained professionals who work in the energy sector? The budget slashed the drilling incentive program, which encourages companies to hire these professionals and go out and drill new wells.

Combined with the carbon tax and the NDP policies in Alberta, we will have continued high unemployment. Remember that Alberta was the driver of the Canadian economy for the past decade. It is obvious the Liberals want to continue to drive the Alberta economy into the toilet, and the four Liberal members of the Liberal Party—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Whitby.

* * *

SLAVERY

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, March 25 is the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Oral Questions

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit Elmina Castle in Ghana. Seeing where my ancestors were kidnapped, tortured, and enslaved was devastating. Those who did not survive had their bodies thrown into the Atlantic Ocean and their humanity was never acknowledged. It broke me.

However, the experience has also empowered and strengthened me to ensure that the words “never again” have meaning, and that I live my life honouring the 305,000 slaves from Elmina and the millions of Africans who were brutalized during the transatlantic slave trade.

I encourage everyone in this chamber and around the country to educate themselves on this terrible time in our history and its ongoing impacts on the black community. I also encourage us all to commit to ensuring that these horrific injustices are never repeated and that modern-day slavery ends forever.

* * *

[Translation]

DRUMMOND ASSOCIATION FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise in the House today to acknowledge the 30th anniversary of the Association des personnes handicapées de Drummond, or APHD.

This organization plays a crucial role in the life of people with disabilities by helping with their social integration in many ways. Its efforts to obtain support from local stakeholders are guided by the desire to protect the rights of people with disabilities and to help them meet their needs and fulfill their aspirations.

We can be proud of the members of APHD, including executive director Daniel Mailhot, who work so hard to create an inclusive and supportive society that fosters equal opportunity for all.

In order to help APHD members in particular, once again this year I am organizing an information session on the disability tax credit to be held on April 25, at 7 p.m., at the Centre communautaire Saint-Pierre in Drummondville.

* * *

BUDGET 2017

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance may have worn his new shoes this week, but budget 2017 still has the same old Liberal stench.

Budget 2017 confirms that the Liberals are the worst fiscal managers that Canada has ever known. The deficit will reach \$28.5 billion this year and, by the end of their term, the Liberals will have racked up over \$100 billion in debt that will have to be paid back by our children. This was supposed to boost the economy, so where are the jobs? Where are the construction projects that were supposed to get people back to work? Even with our very low expectations, the results are lacklustre. All of Quebec is disappointed.

The government knows very well that access to the Internet and cellular networks is a major problem in our regions and that the measures announced in 2016 were insufficient, but there is nothing about that in budget 2017.

The government's inaction sparked a crisis in the softwood lumber industry, but there is nothing about that in budget 2017.

There is nothing in budget 2017 for farmers.

The Prime Minister promised to do everything in his power to expedite the rail bypass project in Lac-Mégantic, but there is nothing about it in budget 2017. All we are getting in budget 2017 are tax hikes.

The minister can put new shoes on over his old socks, but that won't cover the stench.

* * *

●(1115)

[English]

BANGLADESH

Mr. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 26, Bangladeshi Canadians across Canada will mark the 46th anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh. Canada was one of the first countries to diplomatically recognize Bangladesh in 1972, and we have enjoyed a bond of friendship that has only grown stronger over the years.

Our two countries are not only linked by a strong trade relationship, but Canada is home to over 100,000 people of Bangladeshi heritage, many of whom, I am proud to say, live in my riding, Scarborough Southwest.

From community work to business initiatives and more, the contributions of Bangladeshi Canadians play a significant role in making our communities great places to live, work, and raise a family.

I invite all my colleagues in the House to join me in offering our best wishes to the Bangladeshi community on this important milestone and look forward to many celebrations to come.

Shuvo Shadhinota Dibosh.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a troubling report in today's *Globe and Mail* says that during free trade talks currently under way, the Chinese government is asking Canada for unfettered access to all areas of the Canadian economy, including our telecom and natural resources sectors, and that the access needs to be granted to all Chinese companies, including ones owned by the state.

These reports are very disturbing. Can the Prime Minister tell us if these reports are accurate, and how his government is planning to respond to these alleged and very worrisome demands from Beijing?

Oral Questions

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member what John Baird said on February 27. He said that the direction in which the government is going in terms of our relationship with China is good news for western Canada. In this case, he is right. Already our efforts have resulted in market access for Canada's \$2-billion canola industry. We have made 39 shipments totalling \$850 million worth of canola.

The member opposite should be celebrating this success instead of trying to block access for Canadian farmers.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that response was very troubling.

The report in *The Globe and Mail* is disturbing, and the government needs to tell Canadians what its plan is. The report goes on to state that Beijing does not want Canada to use human rights or national security concerns as bargaining chips. Both of these should be at the top of Canada's list when having any discussions with China.

Again I ask the Prime Minister, is the government aware of these conditions? What is the government's response to this very troubling report and to these demands?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a Pacific nation, and we want to expand our trading relationships with the Asia-Pacific area, including China.

As announced by the Prime Minister in September, we are in exploratory talks. This is essential to determining whether there is sufficient interest on the part of Canadians and whether this is to our benefit.

Public consultation will be wide, broad, and deep, and we will pursue a truly progressive trade agenda that puts the middle class at the centre of our thoughts.

* * *

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, tensions in this House have risen. There has been a very high level of animosity between the Liberals and the opposition, and it is growing. It is all because the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons have insisted on ramming through changes to the rules of this House so that the Prime Minister can be less accountable.

They really have messed up this file drastically, but it is not too late to fix things. It is not too late for the Prime Minister to give his commitment that no changes will be made unless he has a consensus from all parties. It is not at all unreasonable, and we could all get back to working together.

Will the government commit that no changes will be made unless there is a consensus among all of us?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for us to recognize that we have a

Prime Minister who is committed to modernizing Canada's Parliament.

I have been a parliamentarian for more than 20 years. Many of those years—in fact, more than 20 of them—were in opposition. I understand the importance of modernization. This is actually a good thing for Canada. I would invite all members to be a part of that discussion.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question from the House leader of the official opposition yesterday, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said that “our Prime Minister will be more accountable, not less accountable.”

I can confirm that the Prime Minister and his disdain for people who do not share his views are responsible for the terrible week we had here. Basically, what the leader said is that the Prime Minister wants to take on all of the responsibilities of every MP from all parties.

Does the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons understand that her attempts to take control of the House will fail?

How can she believe her own words, when she turns around and does the opposite?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to read the discussion paper, and that is not how I interpret it. What I see is a Prime Minister who is genuinely trying to bring our parliamentary system forward. I would really encourage all members of the House to be part of that discussion. We can do better inside the Parliament of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand the government's disappointment. The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons worked hard to produce a document on how to make her job and that of the Prime Minister easier. The opposition will have less time to criticize their boss; ministers' offices will no longer have to answer written questions from the opposition, and members of their own party will be easier to control.

When will the leader understand that Parliament is not a branch of the Liberal Party of Canada? “Modernize” does not mean “muzzle and control”.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, modernization is and can be a very positive experience for the House of Commons. I would really encourage the hon. member, and in fact, all members of the House, to get engaged in this very important discussion. We can, in fact, improve the system.

Oral Questions

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal House leader keeps referring to her government's unilateral power grab as a discussion paper. Well, let us listen to some of that discussion. Don Martin said that the changes are aimed at strengthening the "elite Liberal advantage". John Ivison's response has the headline "Liberals latest attempted power-grab in Commons sure to fail again". Chantal Hébert said, "A majority government has already quite a lot of power without abusing it by changing the rules".

I have one simple question for the Liberals: How do they think this is going over?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government House leader has brought forward a discussion paper that is worthy of a good talk, whether it is inside this chamber or at the committee level. Most important is that we engage Canadians and the experts, because it is, in fact, time that we modernized Parliament. I believe the government House leader is on the right track in advancing that very important issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can we have a discussion when one party dictates everything? No party should be allowed to single-handedly change the rules for how our democracy works, no matter which party it is.

If the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons really wants Parliament to be more efficient, she should commit to working with all the other parties. Even Jean Chrétien sought unanimous approval for changing the rules when he was Prime Minister.

Will the Liberal government make a commitment here and now not to change the rules unilaterally, yes or no?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members need to realize that the government House leader has provided a discussion paper, which is the continuation of a great deal of debate that has been taking place for well over a year now, and in many different forums, including the PROC committee. I am an optimistic person, and I am hopeful that at the end of the day, we will see a more modern parliamentary system, if we get a higher sense of commitment from all sides of the House.

* * *

• (1125)

[Translation]

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): By using the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, Mr. Speaker? One thing we know for sure is that the Liberals are smooth talkers. This week's budget includes a nice bunch of announcements, but considering all of the 2015 promises they have broken, can we really trust them?

Canada's housing crisis is not letting up. Right now, 1.5 million households are in urgent need of housing. Waiting lists for social housing are longer than ever, and the social housing stock is in

terrible shape. Why is there nothing in the budget to help people with inadequate housing right away?

[English]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me enormous pride to stand here today and tell you about the historic investments in housing this government is making, the longest investments in the history of this country. It is not just \$11 billion over the next 10 years, but also a doubling of the base funding in last year's budget, which brings that to almost \$15 billion. We are going to work with our partners in the provinces and municipalities to deliver the best housing to as many Canadians as possible.

This is a historic agreement. We look forward to working with the provinces and territories over the next few months. Members should not forget that there is money for aboriginal housing, too.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the environment minister responded to the \$1.2 billion in cuts to programs fighting climate change by saying "the numbers are in there". Well, they sure are: page 150, 2017-18, cut \$750 million; 2018-19, cut \$500 million. To make matters worse, the Liberals are cancelling the public transit tax credit which will make it more expensive to ride the bus. If it is not the middle class and those working so hard to join it, who do the Liberals think take public transit?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has given me an opportunity to talk about the extraordinary green budget that we have that is going to implement the pan-Canadian plan on climate change. There is \$2.9 billion to address climate change and air pollution; \$2.2 billion invested in clean tech; \$364 million for Parks Canada; \$73.5 million for a new Canadian centre for climate services. With respect to the money the member is talking about, and we have met a number of times, it is the same amount of money, \$2 billion for the low-carbon economy fund, but we are responding to provinces that need additional time to flow the money. Money will—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

*Oral Questions***STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, throughout this week we have told the Liberals there can be no discussion on changing the Standing Orders without first an agreement on the need for consensus. Today, I want to point to the 1985 report of the McGrath committee. This was yet another special Standing Orders committee. It worked entirely by unanimous consensus. This is the sort of thing that is done throughout Parliament. I chaired the subcommittee on human rights for eight years and we always worked on the basis of consensus.

There are so many examples throughout this place of working by unanimous consensus. Why, when we come to the most important thing of all, our Standing Orders, does the government not want to do that? Why does it not want to work by unanimous consensus?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all questions relating to the Standing Orders, because it is a subject which I feel very passionate about. Having said that, I think that we have a wonderful opportunity before us. We have a discussion paper that has been put forward in advance by the government House leader. I would challenge all members to get engaged with that discussion. In fact, I would suggest that there are many individuals, stakeholders, and others who also have some thoughts in terms of how we can modernize Canada's Parliament. I see that as a positive thing and I would invite all members to get engaged.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader over there keeps saying that these proposed changes are designed to help MPs achieve work-life balance, but here is what is really driving the changes: the Prime Minister wants to sit just one out of five days, one whole, entire hour per week.

The Prime Minister has been in the House since 2008, so can he explain to taxpayers who work five days a week why his full-time job should turn into a part-time job for the same pay?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the discussion. I can assure members, and I am sure everyone can sympathize, that I work seven days a week. Some of those days I am in Winnipeg, and some of those days I am in Ottawa.

Here is an example. We only work a few hours on Fridays. If we could readjust those hours so that I could attend events on a Friday evening where my constituents would love to see me, I am open to that. The bottom line is that most Canadians actually start work before 10 a.m. Why not start at 9 a.m.? At least let us have that discussion. That is what the government House leader is asking us to do.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go to the next question, I realize the parliamentary secretary to the

government House leader is getting up quite often and I cannot get over how much help the opposition is trying to give him, but I do not think it is necessary. If you could keep your comments down, that would be very helpful.

The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is talking about Canadians working, and my understanding is that Canadians pay taxes for goods and services that they expect to work all the time. For example, Canadians would not pay for a sewer service that only allowed them to flush the toilet once per week. In the same vein, does the Prime Minister think that Canadians will continue to pay for his service if he rams through his undemocratic changes to Parliament and only shows up for work once a week?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the member. It is not undemocratic. I have been a parliamentarian for almost 25 years, most of those years, more than 20, on opposition benches. If the opposition members would like to take a look and get a better appreciation of what is being proposed in the discussion paper, they would see that there would be more accountability from the government benches and they would be seeing a Prime Minister who would be here more than once a week, as they know. The bottom line is I invite them, as the government House leader has done, to get engaged.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary is using Orwellian newspeak to try to explain why he is doing the Prime Minister's dirty work of permanently shutting down Parliament on Fridays, permanently limiting debate, and trying not to show up for work. The government House leader, in turn, is trying to get members of the procedure and House affairs committee to do her dirty work by ramming through these changes behind Canadians' backs.

I am very interested: will the member for Brampton North vote down this ridiculous proposal and stand up for her constituents right now, or will she vote to allow the government to muzzle her and them?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I look at this as a positive discussion. As I indicated, I work seven days a week, whether it is in Winnipeg or in Ottawa. When I am in Ottawa, like others, I work hard. When I am in my constituency, I work hard. This is a discussion paper that allows us to deal with important issues, and we cite Fridays just as an example. We can say that instead of coming in at 10 o'clock in the morning, why not come in at nine o'clock? Most Canadian workers actually do work before nine o'clock. Let us have that discussion. I think it is time.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be here on a Friday asking the government questions and holding it accountable on behalf of all Canadians. Of course, we know that if it were up to the Liberals, we would shut down the House of Commons on Fridays altogether, reducing their ability to be held accountable by 20% per week. The Prime Minister wants to go further. He only wants to be in the house for 45 minutes a week to answer questions from the opposition and the millions of Canadians we represent.

Why are the Liberals working so hard to make life so much easier for them in Parliament?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no Liberal recommending that the Prime Minister work once a week. The only ones who are recommending that seem to be the Conservatives. The bottom line is that what we should be doing is taking that discussion paper and entering into a dialogue that will modernize Canada's Parliament. Canadians expect that. This Prime Minister has made that commitment, and the government House leader has provided us the opportunity to really get engaged on this issue. Let us see if we can get some expert witnesses from across Canada who will also get engaged in the debate, along with other Canadians.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we were in government, the Conservatives worked hard to make life better for Canadians. Now that they are in government, the Liberals are working to make things easier for themselves and harder for everyone else. They want to cancel Friday sittings of the House. They want to limit debates in committee. They want to eviscerate debate here in this House, and the Prime Minister only wants to show up for 45 minutes a week to be held accountable.

We know that the Prime Minister has always had an address on easy street. Is that why he is working so hard to make Parliament so much easier for him?

• (1135)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already responded to a number of the accusations from across the way for the member. I would suggest that at the end of the day, what we are trying to do here is something that is very positive, something Canadians really want us to do. We recognize that there is a need for us to modernize Parliament. I challenge all members of this House, and even to go beyond that, I would like to see individuals from our constituencies come forward with ideas. I am very passionate about the Standing Orders, because I see their value. Whether in the standing committees or in the House of Commons, we can make a difference. The time is now.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? To distract from the ethics scandal over his trip to the Aga Khan's private island, the Prime Minister decides to go on a cross-country tour to beef up his image.

However, he went to Ontario and forgot about Franco-Ontarians. He then went to Quebec and forgot that there were anglophones in the Eastern Townships. These oversights are an affront to official language minority communities. That is why he was reprimanded by the Commissioner of Official Languages yesterday.

Does the government acknowledge that the Prime Minister violated the Official Languages act, yes or no?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our two official languages are at the heart of our history and our identity. The short answer to the hon. member's question is absolutely not.

Our very first action plan will be presented this year, but in the meantime budget 2017 includes investments that reflect our interest in this file, in the infrastructure of our official language communities, and in accessing justice in both official languages. Official languages are so important to our government—

Mr. Anthony Rota (The Assistant Deputy Speaker, Lib.): Order, please.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

* * *

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is baffling that someone who can blow \$1,700 on food for a three-hour flight cannot find help to understand the law. As a result, the Prime Minister is under two different investigations by the Ethics Commissioner and has violated the Official Languages Act. Let us quote the Prime Minister:

...when you make a mistake you admit it, you make amends, you ask for forgiveness and you make sure it never happens again.

Will he admit his mistake, make amends, ask for forgiveness, and make sure it never happens again?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the first things we did after taking office was ask the Clerk of the Privy Council to develop guidelines surrounding reimbursement for travel by sitting prime ministers, their families, and guests.

Prior to our government taking office, there was no such policy that existed. As per long-standing government policy, and for security reasons, the Prime Minister must travel on government aircraft—we all know that—whether he is on official or personal business.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, The Canadian Press confirmed that the Liberal government is strengthening its ties with Communist China. Canadian taxpayers' money will be funnelled to China's investment bank. In fact, \$256 million in taxpayers' money will be sent abroad.

Oral Questions

Is this how they will supposedly help the middle class?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government makes a significant contribution of \$5 million a year to development assistance and humanitarian aid. Yes, from now on we will be contributing to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This bank will support development and infrastructure projects that will benefit the poorest and most vulnerable people in that region.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not at all reassuring.

Let us remember that the Liberal government has a special relationship with China. Let us remember the sad statement made by the current Prime Minister who was fascinated by and expressed his admiration for China's dictatorial regime. Let us also remember that, although he denied it at first, the Liberal leader finally admitted to meeting and discussing affairs of state with representatives from China in order to fundraise for the Liberal Party.

I will ask my question again. How will this investment help the middle class?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to make a significant contribution to development and humanitarian aid around the world. My mandate is to refocus Canada's international assistance to help the poorest and most vulnerable people, and there are many such people in Asia.

This investment bank deals with development projects and infrastructure projects related to energy, for example. These projects will improve the quality of life of the poorest and most vulnerable people.

* * *

• (1140)

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals claim that the \$8.48 billion cut in this year's defence budget relates to the fixed-wing search and rescue and upgrades to the light armoured vehicles, but according to defence analyst David Perry, these two projects at most could account for \$2.84 billion.

Perry also says that finance officials cannot account for the \$5.6 billion shortfall, so what other equipment does the Prime Minister plan on taking away?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that when it comes to flowing the money, it is making sure that we have the money in the appropriate years for the combat surface combatant, the fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft—the contract we signed—that we finally can have for our search and rescue technicians, and a laundry list of other equipment as well. This is about making sure we have the right money in the right years to pay for the full life-cycle costs of these projects.

We are committed to the Canadian Armed Forces. We have a defence policy that is coming out shortly. I look forward to presenting that to this House and to the rest of Canada.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada must pull its weight internationally. With this budget's \$8.5-billion cut to military equipment spending, this is becoming less and less possible. The Liberals are not only putting at risk the livelihoods of tens of thousands of skilled industry workers, we are also pushing the schedules for our shipbuilding strategy further and further away.

Canada has a long, proud military history. Why are the Liberals gutting our defence capabilities to pay for their out-of-control spending?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have very good news for our men and women in uniform, including naval officers. Our government is committed to equipping the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard with the ships they need to serve Canadians. The strategy is a long-term commitment and will bring economic benefits to both coasts of our country, and indeed, to suppliers across this country. It will reinvigorate our marine industry, support Canadian innovation, and result in middle-class jobs for Canadians across the country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the idea of giving young and marginalized people access to the digital economy comes up several times in the Liberals' budget, and that is a good thing. However, there is nothing in the budget about new money for high-speed Internet service in rural municipalities. In my riding, young people, business people, and professionals in places such as Hemmingford, Saint-Anicet, Havelock, and Huntingdon have been waiting years for stable Internet access that does not cut out whenever it is windy or rainy. When will the Liberals ensure that rural communities get the same Internet access as everyone else?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. In the digital world, access to broadband service is essential to everyday activities, to work, and to staying competitive. For people in rural and northern regions in particular, high-speed Internet opens up a world of economic opportunity. Earlier this year, we announced the connect to innovate program, which will invest up to \$500 million between now and 2021 to bring broadband Internet access to 300 of Canada's rural and remote communities.

Oral Questions

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with this budget, the Liberals have yet again failed to deliver on their most crucial promise made to veterans during the election campaign: lifelong financial security for those who have served Canada and are now ill and injured. Instead, the Liberals, in their second budget, are still offering no clear commitment and no timeline. Those who have served to protect Canadians and our values deserve so much better.

When will the minister finally take action to ensure that veterans have the lifelong pensions they so rightly deserve?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2017 focuses on the overall well-being of veterans and their families by investing in mental health supports, educational opportunities, and career transition services. I can say we remain committed to a pension-for-life option, and this too will better serve veterans and their families.

This builds on the momentum we saw in budget 2016, when we delivered \$5.6 billion in new financial security for veterans, bettering our earnings loss benefit as well as our disability award. To that end, 67,000 veterans will be receiving more money in their pockets very soon and bettering outcomes for their families.

* * *

● (1145)

HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a strong commitment to re-engage the federal government in affordable housing. Last year, we made significant investments in affordable housing, and this week, budget 2017 announced a national housing strategy, which received praise nationally and by many stakeholders in Saint John—Rothesay, my riding.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development inform the House of the benefits of this strategy for Canadians?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint John—Rothesay for his tireless advocacy on reducing poverty in this country.

It gives me great pleasure to be talking about housing instead of just the House. Our government has made extraordinary investments in housing with this budget: \$11 billion over the next 10 years, which builds on the \$4-billion base that is there. Additionally, we have doubled, a 100% increase, the money focused on dealing with homelessness right across this country.

We know that a national housing strategy is long overdue. We know we can deliver it with this budget. We are proud to deliver affordable housing to Canadians, housing that is affordable to Canadians, and I am very happy to say this budget—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Sarnia Lambton.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have made a big show of adding gender considerations to the budget, but after forming a special committee to look at pay equity, there are four pages of rhetoric in the budget and zero dollars for it. The amount of money put towards addressing violence against women is four times less than was recommended. If the Prime Minister really wants to be seen as a feminist, he needs to put his money where his mouth is.

Will the Prime Minister pay more than lip service to addressing violence against women?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in budget 2017, our government has made gender equality a priority. We are the first government to provide a comprehensive gender statement in one entire chapter of the budget and measures in the budget that will help advance gender equality: \$100 million for a gender-based violence strategy, \$7 billion for child care, \$11 billion for housing, and better parental and care benefits.

I think the hon. member will agree that budget day was a very good day for women's equality in this country.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this budget and Alberta, we give on one hand and we take away more on the other. The budget provides Alberta with a one-time grant of a paltry \$30 million while at the same reducing the petroleum incentive drilling credit by up to \$140 million.

It is obvious that the finance minister was bullied by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Prime Minister, both of whom want to phase out the oil sands and phase out fossil fuels.

When will the Minister of Natural Resources start to stand up for Albertans and the energy industry?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands that the environment and the economy go hand in hand—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill asked a question. I am sure he wants to hear the answer. I would like to remind everyone to keep it down.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Catherine McKenna: Mr. Speaker, our government understands that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. I work extraordinarily closely with the Minister of Natural Resources.

Oral Questions

As the Prime Minister said very recently, there couldn't be a serious climate plan without pipelines, and there couldn't be pipelines without a serious climate plan.

We have committed to take action to protect our environment. We committed at the G20, with other countries, to reduce fossil fuel subsidies. We are doing that. We are also moving forward with pipelines.

We understand the need to get our resources to market and we understand the need to protect—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Calgary Signal Hill.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful that the minister will not stand up in the House to defend the energy industry of this country. If there is no drilling of new wells, what is going to go in those pipelines two, three, or five years down the road, when they are built?

Maybe I will ask an easy question that they can answer. Let us try this one.

The budget provides a \$30-million no-strings-attached grant to the Alberta government. We know that the Notley government took \$300 million of federal infrastructure dollars and put them into general revenue to pay down the debt for its uncontrolled spending.

Will the Minister of Finance stand in this House to guarantee unemployed Albertans that these dollars will be used for job creation and not to help the NDP—

• (1150)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the hon. member for giving me the opportunity to talk about jobs in the energy sector in Alberta, because if we were to total up the number of jobs created by the approval our three pipelines and the Keystone XL pipeline that the president of the United States approved today, that would be 32,000 jobs in the energy sector in Alberta.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage simply had to wave her magic wand and the criteria and objectives of the Canada 150 fund suddenly changed in the summer of 2016.

In question 50, part G, of the general application form, applicants must summarize their project and indicate how it meets the objectives previously mentioned in 20 lines.

However, the form magically changed in the summer of 2016, disqualifying hundreds of projects from organizations wanting to take part in the festivities.

Will the minister confirm that the criteria and objectives of the Canada 150 fund changed in the summer of 2016?

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the vision we have put in place for the Canada 150 celebrations and of the lasting legacy they will leave, based on four themes: youth, the environment, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and diversity. I am confident that my colleagues recognize the importance of those four themes and the importance of working together to build our future for the next 150 years.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seasonal workers who go for months without any wages or any employment insurance benefits have to wait even longer. At least 15,000 workers find themselves in this position every year, and nearly 40% of them are Quebeckers. The spring gap problem will be examined after the budget. The minister responsible for employment insurance said, “We will then get to work on a more thorough study, including the spring gap issue.”

Why should seasonal workers have to wait even longer for a solution? Have they not waited long enough?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through budget 2016, the government announced changes to improve employment insurance so that more Canadians can get the help when they need it and as they need it. Our government was elected on these commitments, and it is improving EI as we speak. In fact, this budget does several things to make it more flexible, in particular with respect to maternity leave.

We have focused on EI reform. We are delivering EI reform. We have undertaken the studies, and more changes will be announced as the year proceeds.

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[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is an emergency. Our cultural entrepreneurs, such as DEP, are going bankrupt. The industry and creators were hoping for a lot more in the budget, but they were not as lucky as cab drivers.

Every party that falls under the minister's portfolio has requested that foreign digital platforms for culture be subject to the same regulations as everyone else and that these companies no longer be given preferential treatment to the detriment of our entrepreneurs, who pay their fair share. Even the Government of Quebec has specifically requested this.

If I want to help save our cultural industries, do I need to ask my questions directly to the Minister of Finance since the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not seem to be making any progress?

Oral Questions

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we held consultations on this subject across Canada. Right now, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage is examining the issue. Next year, we will unveil a comprehensive strategy based on these consultations and this work.

* * *

• (1155)

[English]

ETHICS

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister's family travelled to billionaire island for a vacation, they spent \$1,700 on food and drink on a three-hour flight and stuck taxpayers with the bill. Of course, that does not include the cost of the first-ever ethics investigation of a sitting prime minister for violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

Everyone agrees that prime ministers can take vacations and need to travel securely. However, taxpayers need to know why they are paying more for food for a three-hour flight than most families of five spend in a month. Could the Prime Minister not have packed his own lunch?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been the case for previous prime ministers, including the former prime minister, for security reasons the RCMP always accompanies prime ministers, whether for business or for personal travel.

It is important to note that one of the first things we did after taking office was to ask the Clerk of the Privy Council to develop guidelines surrounding reimbursement for travel by sitting prime ministers, their families, and their guests. Prior to our government taking office, no such policy even existed.

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TAXATION

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I will be in Niagara Falls for a year-end hockey tournament with my Barrie Tuesday night hockey team. Unlike the Prime Minister and his champagne and caviar-loving highbrow friends, my beer league buddies do not have taxpayers paying for their booze.

After this week's budget, not only did the tax on beer and alcohol go up, but future annual increases are now tied to inflation. This means that the tax on beer will increase every single year.

Why are the Liberals taxing my beer league buddies and our One17 Marine team to pay for the Prime Minister's jet-set lifestyle and private island vacations?

[Translation]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Our government is committed to supporting the middle class and those working hard to join it. In budget 2016, we very clearly indicated that we would evaluate the tax system, and that is exactly

what we have done. We want to be sure that we are doing our fair share for Canadians, and we will continue moving forward.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep saying that they want to make this place work better. Well, I have a great idea: how about when we ask a question, they actually give us an answer? We have asked legitimate questions today, and nobody has given this side any answers.

We have asked about their secret negotiations and payments to Pékin. We have asked about the Prime Minister's abuse of taxpayers' money for his vacation. We have asked about his plan to permanently avoid accountability, his cuts to defence, his attack on the Alberta energy sector, his increased taxes on every hard-working family. If he wants to make our democracy better, why does the Prime Minister not start answering questions and quit trying so hard to make his life easier—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader is trying to assist all of us by providing a discussion paper that will allow us to make modifications to outdated standing orders. Most people would recognize that there is a need for us to modernize the Canadian Parliament.

I look forward to having more discussions over the coming days as we try to improve the working environment for all members on both sides of the House.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the release of budget 2017, Canadians have seen the first-ever gender statement on a budget. As a government, we know that all Canadians are affected differently by budgetary policies, and therefore how important it is to add a gender-based lens to these decisions.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Status of Women inform the House what this gender statement actually means for all Canadians?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to the parliamentary secretary, I just want to remind the front benches that even though they are just talking across and it does not seem like a lot, it makes it really hard to hear the answers coming out. I just want to remind them of that.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Status of Women.

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2017 is a historic first, not only for women but for all Canadians. In the budget one sees \$7 billion for child care; a staggering \$11 billion for affordable housing, as the parliamentary secretary has mentioned; \$100 million for a gender-based violence strategy; better EI parental benefits; and of course EI caregiving benefits as well. There are so many more that I do not have time to list them.

When we make gender—

● (1200)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Canadian business people travel to the United States, their cellphones could be seized and searched by U.S. customs officials. Their cellphones contain confidential client data. By handing over their cellphones, they are violating the confidentiality of their clients.

How can Canadian business people travelling to the U.S. ensure that their clients' data remains private?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the rules governing entry into the United States are set and enforced by the United States. We as Canadian citizens have the right to expect that our treatment at the border will be professional, consistent, and respectful. If there is a pattern of behaviour that seems untoward or counterproductive, then we will pursue those cases.

I would point out that 400,000 people cross back and forth across that border every day, almost always without incident.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under our government, Canadian agriculture is strong and growing.

There are significant investments in our budget that will help our agriculture and agrifood industry better position itself and become more and more competitive.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food explain how our budget will help Canada's agriculture sector become integral to Canada's economic growth?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to recognize the agriculture and agrifood sector as one of Canada's main economic engines.

Oral Questions

This budget will help the agriculture sector achieve its full potential and become an even stronger economic engine by growing our food exports by \$75 billion by 2025.

In addition, our investments in the agriculture sector, research and innovation, infrastructure, and clean technologies will help producers and processors grow their businesses, create good jobs, and ensure long-term economic growth.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government told the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association in 2016 that it would be receiving \$300 million in infrastructure dollars from the federal government. It was a one-third share each, so there was \$900 million on the table. The municipalities' budgets engineered shovel-ready projects in anticipation of the funding for 2017. Then they found out in February that the Alberta government had spent the promised \$300 million: stale-dated projects, engineering projects, and municipal money wasted. Will the Liberals commit that the next time they flow funding for infrastructure for municipalities that the amount flows directly to the municipalities?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, working with our provincial and municipal partners in Alberta, we are improving transit, roads, bridges, and water systems for all Albertans. We have approved 127 projects with over \$1.36 billion in federal funding, for total project costs of \$4.2 billion in combined funding. Since taking office, 70% of these projects are under way. These projects include the Yellowhead Highway extension, the southwest Calgary ring road, and planning and design funding for the next phase of the Calgary Green Line. There is much more. I could go on about it, but let me be clear. This government is delivering for Albertans, it will continue to deliver for Albertans, and we are very proud of this budget. We will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Monique Pausé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec has the best workforce training system in North America.

Unfortunately, Ottawa keeps trying to throw a wrench into the works. In his latest budget, the Minister of Finance said he plans to reopen workforce agreements. The worst part is that he intends to rip us off the same way he did with pensions and health.

Oral Questions

Will the minister change his approach and pledge once and for all to fully respect Quebec's jurisdiction and Quebec's workforce development agreement?

• (1205)

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that, yes, we enter into agreements with the Province of Quebec, as we do with all provinces, and there is an amount agreed upon. What we understand from Quebec, for example, is that it stands alone with its student loan program. In the last budget, we increased the amount for loans and grants for the students of Quebec by \$80 million, which they were very pleased with. That went straight into the pockets of Quebec students. This government will do what is best, not just for the students of Quebec but for the people of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec and Canada co-operate so well that Quebec's National Assembly unanimously condemned the recent budget. That says it all.

Ottawa has nothing to do with training in Quebec, and everything is fine. Ottawa is involved in other provinces, and everything is messed up. The problem seems obvious to me. We have been asking a simple question for three days now, but we cannot seem to get an answer.

Can the minister confirm, once and for all, that the government will adhere to its workforce development agreements with Quebec, yes or no?

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of helping Canadians get the training they need so they can find and keep the good jobs we are helping to create with this budget. Budget 2016 invested one-year funding of \$125 million for labour market development agreements to support these skills training programs, and it will help Canadians succeed regardless of what province they are in. As it relates to Quebec, yes, we have begun conversations with provinces, territories, and stakeholders, which of course includes Quebec, on ways to improve the labour market development agreements so we can target our future investments even more precisely, so the people of Quebec, in fact people right across the country, get the training, the jobs, and the support they need to join the middle class. If they are working hard to get there—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

* * *

[*Translation*]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES, AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am calling on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to suspend the deportation of young José Pinedo Pella and his parents, which is scheduled for Monday. Without the minister's intervention, the health of young José Pinedo Pella, who has heart problems, will

be jeopardized. The family is well established in Quebec City. Both parents work here. This is their home.

Will the minister step in to prevent this deportation that will jeopardize the life of Jose Pinedo Pella and his parents?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the hon. member across the way that the government is aware of the case.

It is currently under review. As the hon. member surely knows, every case is different and Canadian privacy laws prevent us from commenting on specific cases without the permission of those concerned.

We are aware of this case and it is under review.

* * *

[*English*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): *Qujannamiik uqaqti.*

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, who is wearing an awesome tie.

Community leaders of the Kivalliq region of Nunavut and northern Manitoba make up the Hudson Bay Regional Round Table. They have been exploring the possibility of constructing an all-weather road, complete with hydro and fibre optic infrastructure, to supply their regions respectively.

My question is this. Would the feasibility study for this project qualify for funding under any or all of the following: the national trade corridor fund, the Arctic energy fund, and/or the connect to innovate fund?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nunavut for the advocacy he does for the people of his riding. He omitted to mention that both ties we are wearing today were made by the wonderful people in his riding.

Our government, in budget 2017, recognized that rural and northern communities have distinct infrastructure needs. We will help to address these unique pressures in these communities by investing \$2 billion over 11 years. An additional \$400 million will help address energy security in remote and northern communities, including indigenous communities. We will work with the Government of Nunavut as we finalize the details of these programs.

Qujannamiik uqaqti.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1210)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to six petitions.

* * *

VETERANS WELL-BEING ACT

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-42, An Act to amend the Canadian Forces Members and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act, the Pension Act and the Department of Veterans Affairs Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

AN ACT RESPECTING A PAYMENT TO BE MADE OUT OF THE CONSOLIDATED REVENUE FUND

Hon. Ralph Goodale (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-43, An Act respecting a payment to be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund to support a pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, entitled Main Estimates 2017-18, Votes 1 and 5 under Office of the Coordinator.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, entitled Taking Action Today: Establishing Protected Areas for Canada's Future. The committee is very pleased to be tabling our protected areas report after many months of testimony and discussion. I want to thank all of those who took the time to inform the committee through testimony, briefs, and spending time during our trip. Those efforts have added significantly to the recommendations in the report.

I also want to thank all the members of the committee for working co-operatively together to produce a unanimous report. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

Routine Proceedings

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present this petition in the House. It is a petition about hospice palliative care, which is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illnesses. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to specifically identify hospice palliative care as a defined medical service covered under the Canada Health Act, so that the provincial and territorial governments will be entitled to fund it under the Canada health transfer system and will provide accessible and available hospice palliative care for all residents of Canada in their respective provinces and territories.

●(1215)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and submit a petition in relation to community television and media. Dozens of New Brunswickers have signed a petition which asks the government to enable community-operated media centres that would ensure the survival of community television. It also calls for the availability of local media in small towns and neighbourhoods that are not served by private or public media. The petitioners also call upon the government to ensure that Canadians have access to multimedia platforms, multimedia skills training, content distribution capacity, and the digital economy.

ORGAN DONATION

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition in support of my private member's bill, Bill C-316. The bill asks that Canadians be able to register as organ donors through their annual tax returns. While 90% of Canadians support being an organ donor, only 25% are registered.

April is BeADonor month, which aims to raise awareness of organ and tissue donation. Ironically, April is also the deadline for filing taxes.

Becoming an organ donor is the easiest way to save a life of a fellow human being. By raising awareness and making registering easier, we can save more lives.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 837 and 840.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 837—**Mr. Romeo Saganash:**

With regard to the announced launch of the negotiations toward a national resolution to the Sixties Scoop litigation: (a) what parties are negotiating with the government; (b) what terms has the government set for the negotiation process; (c) who will act as a mediator during the process; (d) will the government continue to litigate ongoing cases during this negotiation process; (e) has the government considered survivors' wants and needs in the negotiation process; and (f) what is the timeframe and schedule of the negotiation process?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Sixties Scoop is a dark and painful chapter in Canada's history.

On February 1, 2017, the government announced the launch of a national process to resolve these claims in a compassionate, respectful, and fair manner, as a way forward towards reconciliation and healing. On February 28, 2017, Canada met with counsel representing all of the class actions as a first step in negotiating an agreement in principle to resolve Sixties Scoop litigation.

A negotiated settlement could allow the parties to go beyond the remedies that can be granted by the courts by exploring concrete ways to also address the culture, traditions, and customs that have been lost. We believe this is the best way to achieve healing and reconciliation.

Negotiation rather than litigation is the government's preferred route to settle differences and right historical wrongs. This commitment is demonstrated by the settlement of the Anderson class actions and the recent appointment of Thomas Isaac as ministerial special representative to lead the exploratory discussions in the Gottfriedson class action.

The government is committed to working together to achieving a constructive national resolution to the painful legacy of the Sixties Scoop.

Question No. 840—**Mr. Bev Shipley:**

With regard to the NEXUS program, since January 27, 2017: (a) how many NEXUS card revocations have there been for (i) Canadian citizens, (ii) Canadian permanent residents, (iii) in total for Canadian citizens and permanent residents; (b) how many revocation decisions were made by the (i) Canadian government, (ii) United States government; (c) what were the reasons for each revocation in (a); (d) for dual Canadian citizens who have had their NEXUS card revoked, what is the breakdown of their other country of citizenship; and (e) for Canadian permanent residents who have had their NEXUS card revoked, what is the breakdown of their country of citizenship?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), between January 27 and February 10, 2017, the CBSA revoked the Nexus cards of 44 Canadians and five permanent residents, for a total of 49.

With regard to (b), both Canada and the United States make independent decisions regarding Nexus eligibility and revocation, and there is no obligation to report these decisions to the other country. The Canadian government made 49 of these decisions; the number made by the United States government is not available.

With regard to (c)(i), of the 44 revocations of Nexus cards for Canadian citizens, 17 were due to seizures at the port of entry under the Customs Act; 14 were due to program violations under the

Presentation of Persons (2003) Regulations, such as travelling with commercial goods, facilitation of a non-member, and travelling with restricted, controlled, or prohibited goods; and 13 were due to criminality when new criminal information was found in law enforcement databases. With regard to (c)(ii), of the five revocations of NEXUS cards for Canadian permanent residents, three were due to seizures at the port of entry under the Customs Act and two were due to program violations under the Presentation of Persons (2003) Regulations, such as travelling with commercial goods, facilitation of a non-member, and travelling with restricted, controlled, or prohibited goods.

With regard to (d), there is no obligation for an individual to self-identify as a dual national. The statistics provided reflect cases where the CBSA was aware of a secondary citizenship. The countries of citizenship were Brazil in one case, China in one case, and the United States in one case.

With regard to (e), the breakdown of the country of citizenship for Canadian permanent residents who have had their Nexus cards revoked is as follows: Japan, one; China, two; and India, two.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government's response to Questions Nos. 838 and 839 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 838—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:**

With regard to payments made by the government during the 2016 calendar year: (a) how much money was given to the (i) Education Quality Improvement Project in Afghanistan, (ii) Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, (iii) World Bank; and (b) under which specific allotment in the Main Estimates for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development did the funding for each of the payments in (a) originate?

(Return tabled)

*Government Orders*Question No. 839—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:**

With regard to the HMCS Haida National Historic Site (HHNHS): (a) since the HHNHS was transferred to Parks Canada what are the annual totals since 2002, broken down by (i) total visitors, (ii) total operating costs, (iii) maintenance costs, (iv) profit or loss; (b) what are the line item details for (a) (i), (ii), and (iii); (c) what are the details of the costs to relocate the HHNHS to Hamilton, Ontario, broken down by (i) purchase price, (ii) administrative costs, (iii) towing costs, (iv) promotion or advertising costs, (v) salaries, (vi) repairs, (vii) other costs, including for each a description of the expense; (d) since 2002, on an annual basis, how many Full-Time Equivalents have been assigned to the HHNHS, broken down by (i) historians, (ii) marketing and advertising professionals, (iii) curators and preservation professionals, (iv) groundskeeping and maintenance staff, (v) volunteers, (vi) summer students, (vii) gift shop employees, (viii) other employees, specifying for each their title; (e) what are the planned disbursements and estimates for the HHNHS for the 2016-2017 fiscal year and what are the projected costs for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 fiscal years, broken down by (i) marketing and promotional costs, (ii) maintenance and repair costs, (iii) salaries and wages; and (f) since 2002, broken down by year, what is the number of days the HHNHS was (i) open to the public for visitation, (ii) closed for private functions or events, (iii) closed for maintenance and repairs, (iv) closed for the season or holidays?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, an act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix has seven minutes remaining.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to disappoint the member across the way, so I have a question for her.

The Conservative Party has been a little out of touch on this issue, and I am curious to know this. Does the Conservative Party support the need for Canada to have a parliamentary oversight committee? I understand the Conservatives have come up with the rationale that will see them vote against the legislation. However, this is the principle of having a parliamentary oversight committee. I know Stephen Harper and the Conservative government did not support it,

but has the Conservative Party, in principle, changed its position and does it recognize that Canada does need to have one?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that the party currently in power is the Liberal Party. Personally, I have nothing against such a committee per se. What bothers me is that it has become the Prime Minister's puppet. That is unacceptable. Since it will deal with public safety, the committee must be independent. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety should not be the ones to lead such a committee.

If the government does not change its approach, I will be forced to vote against the creation of this committee, since it will become just another arm of the Liberal Party. Enough is enough; this is not a dictatorship. It is appalling that the Prime Minister wants to usurp all the power.

This committee must be independent and made up of resource people and parliamentarians who have solid, relevant knowledge of defence and public safety matters. It should not be influenced by the Prime Minister of Canada. No, thank you. Enough is enough.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the 2015 election, the Conservative bill, Bill C-51, was of major concern to constituents in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia. Rallies were held across the riding, and a lot of concern was expressed, particularly on its impact on personal privacy, and the lack of parliamentary oversight. Therefore, it seems to me that a very small Band-Aid is being put on a very large wound.

My question for the member is this. Clause 8 of the bill would let a cabinet minister halt an investigation into his or her own department for security reasons, but offers no way to test whether in fact he or she would be merely covering up sloppy management or even a scandal. In the member's view, is this adequate to ensure Canadians get the facts on the government's handling of security?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I want this committee to be independent so that we have that kind of protection. This committee must consist of people who are knowledgeable about public safety.

As the official languages critic, even though I would be capable, I could not sit on such a committee because I know nothing about this subject. I do not want the committee to be the puppet of the Prime Minister, who wants to be lord and master and thumbs his nose at his own MPs.

He wants control of the committee, but he should not have it. He is the Prime Minister of Canadians—he is not lord of his domain. We must have an independent committee to examine national security issues, but we do not want it to be the puppet of the Liberal Party. I will never accept that.

Government Orders

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague opposite for her extraordinary contribution to the Standing Committee on Official Languages. She does outstanding work there.

Allow me to set the record straight. We are talking about a committee of parliamentarians. Many countries have this type of oversight committee made up of parliamentarians, elected officials, so I am having a hard time understanding my colleague's concerns. This committee is way overdue.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am not opposed to setting up this type of committee. What I am opposed to is the Prime Minister having the last word. The committee needs to be independent and made up of parliamentarians with a certain degree of knowledge.

I completely understand, but some things still have me worried. Imagine for a second that Stephen Harper had had control over such a committee. How would the Liberals have reacted? They would have publicly ranted and raved.

Today, I, the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, am the one ranting and raving. I have had enough of a Prime Minister who thinks himself lord and master of the House of Commons. The House of Commons does not belong to him. It belongs to Canadians.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to address Bill C-22 at third reading stage. Unfortunately, this is the final day of debate on an issue of national security that has divided the government from every opposition party.

Government members have remarked on the extraordinary nature of the proposed committee. They note that it would end our laggard status among the so-called Five Eyes, that it would allow some parliamentarians extraordinary access to classified information, and that it would enjoy a whole-of-government mandate. These claims are all true, but they are also the bare minimum requirements. They are simply the essential features of an oversight committee.

I hope government members are unsettled when they notice that every opposition party, and respected experts from across the political spectrum, are all pointing to the same flaws in the government's bill. I have spoken about these flaws in detail in the public safety committee and in this chamber. My colleagues and I have consulted with non-partisan experts to craft more than one dozen amendments to resolve them.

Let me summarize these flaws as succinctly as I can for Canadians.

This committee's job is to oversee the functioning and classified operations of every government agency linked to intelligence and national security. This 11 member committee will face a multi-billion dollar array of some 20 government departments and agencies, some of which have never yet been subject to any oversight. When these 11 members sit down together for the first time, all they will have to

rely on is a dedicated staff, a limited budget, and the powers laid out in black and white in the bill. That is where they will begin to hit roadblocks.

Despite their top secret security clearances, this bill would bar those parliamentarians from accessing certain operational information. They would find themselves unable to summon witnesses or order documents. Instead they could only request information from cabinet ministers, who are permitted to withhold it.

While it clips the committee's wings at every turn, the bill bestows sweeping powers on cabinet and on the Prime Minister. Ministers can shut down investigations. The Prime Minister can appoint every member of oversight committees and censor its reports.

Canadians might well ask this. With such little power for Parliament and so much power for the cabinet, can this oversight body actually do its job? It is precisely in that context that the government has now shut down debate, after barely one-tenth of Canadians' elected representatives have been permitted to participate. That is the context for today.

I want to focus on what I see as the essential question for each member now, and that is this. Are the powers granted by this bill sufficient to create the degree of rigorous operational oversight that Canadians expect in the era of Bill C-51, and the extraordinary powers now granted to our security services? That is the important question because the test for this committee is not whether it can monitor uncontroversial activities. The true test is whether it can stand up to a government that is violating the law in certain circumstances, failing to protect Canadians, or encroaching on their hard-earned rights and liberties.

Let me be clear. I cannot support this bill in that context, in its current form. I believe it would fail that test and it would fail Canadians. At the very moment when they need it to be strong, independent, and effective, it would fail the test because it chooses to sacrifice transparency for secrecy, and favour executive authority over accountability.

In the wake of an intelligence failure that cost thousands of innocent lives, the American 9/11 commission report warned as follows: "Secrecy stifles oversight...current organizational incentives encourage overclassification. This balance should change...". It also warned, "So long as oversight is undermined...we believe the American people will not get the security they want and need."

• (1230)

That is what this is all about: giving Canadians not just empty assurances but hard proof that their security is protected and their rights upheld. Does this bill meet that standard when it comes to operational oversight?

Government Orders

In arguing against strengthening the committee, the public safety minister compared it to counterpart committees in the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. He correctly noted that each of those allies allows the government to withhold sensitive information from the oversight committee, but he left out an important fact, and that is that none of them is an operational oversight committee. Canada's would be, and it would be only second among the Five Eyes.

How would its powers compare to those American congressional committees? What do the Americans require for the same kind of job we are asking our committee to do? In the United States, special committees of the House and Senate are kept informed in real time of all intelligence operations. They can cut funding and even overrule the White House to order the release of previously classified information, if it serves the national interest. This goes far beyond even what the opposition parties have proposed for Canada.

If we passed this bill without fixing it, we would be giving the committee a mandate but not the tools required to get the job done, yet the government resists all calls by the opposition and non-partisan experts to grant these tools to the oversight committee. This gets to the central question of trust.

To justify cabinet's sweeping powers to obstruct oversight, the government has hidden behind a straw man, the one limit to which nobody has ever objected, and that is the safeguard to protect individuals in the witness protection program. We heard all about that earlier today. One government member referred to the need to segregate especially sensitive information. With respect, this misses the point. Everything this committee would work on is, by definition, especially sensitive. Nothing should leak, and I am confident that nothing will leak, just as it has not in Britain in the 22 years that it has had a similar committee under way.

If the identities of protected witnesses were this committee's only blind spot, I would welcome it, but alongside the others, it has begun to serve as a litmus test for the government's trust in this committee. I say that because there is no meaningful distinction between that information and anything else within the committee's unique mandate. All of it is potentially damaging to national security and individuals' safety. It makes us wonder, if the government cannot trust the committee with the names of witnesses, why would it hand over operational details? The answer, I fear, is that it will not. If we passed the current bill, we would give the government the power to withhold that information at every turn. We would give the government the power to deny Canadians the operational oversight they were promised, and we would fatally undermine Canadians' faith in this new institution, because if cabinet does not trust the committee, why should Canadians?

Of course, the government insists that it would use these powers sparingly and only with the best intentions. The Liberals' faith in their own good intentions I believe is sincere, but it blinds them to the actual wording of the bill. Take clause 21 as an example. Several amendments have targeted cabinet's power to filter the flow of information from this committee to Canadians. No fewer than six government members have repeated the claim that the sole purpose of that power is to screen out classified information. Again, if that were true, I would support it, but it is simply not true. In fact, the relevant clause does not even use the word "classified". In fact, it

empowers the Prime Minister to censor any information he believes may be injurious to national security or defence, or even international relations. All he has to do is believe it and it is so, and it is not available.

A similar claim, repeated by five government members, is that this revision power could not be applied to the committee's findings. Again, I would support that clause, but it is not in the bill.

This has become a theme. Too often, government members assure us of the good intentions of this bill's authors and simply forget that legislation must be built to outlast the authors of the bill. We are making law not just for this regime but for the future.

● (1235)

The current Prime Minister may not intend to use his powers to suppress embarrassing committee findings, but another one may. The current cabinet may not intend to use its power to quash investigations or to hide mismanagement or scandal, but another one may. The current government may not intend to ban the official opposition from the committee or use appointments to control the agenda or hide illegal surveillance by withholding operational details on security grounds, but another government may.

Consider, for instance, the investigations taking place right now south of the border into President Trump's ties to Russia and his wiretapping claims. If Bill C-22 were the law there, President Trump could revise the reports of congressional intelligence oversight committees to remove information he felt could harm foreign relations. His cabinet could obstruct, and even shut down, investigations simply by asserting security privilege.

That is why Canadians are demanding that this committee be built to a higher standard of strength and independence, so that when the time comes, it can stand as a genuine check on the executive overreach and end operations that violate Canadians' rights or mismanagement that undermines their security. As it stands, it is simply not built to that standard.

However, I do want to recognize the progress that has been made and acknowledge the good work done by the members of the public safety committee. Because of an amendment from the NDP, the new oversight committee would now have a legal duty to alert the Attorney General to any potentially illegal activity within the entire national security apparatus.

Government Orders

While future prime ministers would still be able to censor reports on broad grounds, Canadians could now see exactly how much text had been revised in a particular report and the reasons the revision occurred. While cabinet ministers unfortunately retain the power to withhold information and even shut down investigations, Canadians could now monitor the use of those powers each year.

I want to personally recognize the hard work of every member of the public safety committee. They showed that progress is possible when the government is willing to work with opposition parties. However, before the government congratulates itself for accepting a handful of ideas from other parties, let us be clear about what it rejected.

The plan we proposed gave the oversight committee full access to information and the power to summon witnesses and order documents. It offered freedom to investigate any issue without interference by cabinet ministers. It let the committee choose its own chairperson from among the membership that would actually match the partisan balance of the House. It allowed the free flow of insights back and forth within the existing expert review bodies. Every last one of those proposals was rejected by the government.

While progress was made at the margins, the government is now asking Parliament to approve an oversight committee with only partial access to the information it needs to do the job for Canadians: a committee that can only request information from cabinet, not order it directly; a committee whose entire membership is selected by the Prime Minister, with no requirement that it even include members from the biggest opposition parties. This committee would not be out of place in Australia, New Zealand, or France, where there is no expectation of operational oversight, but it is entirely inappropriate in Canada.

I cannot accept the design set by the government for two fundamental reasons: first, it tilts the balance too far toward executive power at the expense of parliamentary accountability; and, second, it fails to meet the high standard of operational oversight that the Liberals made necessary when they joined with the Conservatives to dramatically expand security powers through Bill C-51.

It is against these two standards that the government's attitude toward this bill is so very disappointing. The government has adopted an approach which says that something is better than nothing insofar as parliamentary oversight is concerned, and that we should just be happy we got a little bit. It suggests to me the belief that national security is the exclusive domain of the executive branch and that Parliament is somehow an ungrateful guest on the government's turf. That is dead wrong.

● (1240)

Members will remember this question was addressed and answered by Speaker Milliken in 2010 when he ruled on the government's attempt to deny Parliament documents relating to the Afghan detainee affair. In denying Parliament's role as a watchdog for Canadians, the executive claimed that Parliament's general right of inquiry was limited by the executive's countervailing interest in protecting national security. Parliament, the government argued, was overreaching by demanding information on security matters and threatening the constitutional separation of powers. The parallels to our current debate are clear.

What was the outcome? After an exhaustive analysis, Speaker Milliken ruled that Parliament's right to access information, to do its job, to perform its duties is "absolute". In fact it was the executive that jeopardized the proper separation of powers by attempting to censor information provided to Parliament.

The Canadians' elected representatives in Parliament must be named the ultimate watchdog in our system. That should be a point of unanimous agreement for everyone in this place. We all recognize, as Speaker Milliken did, that special safeguards must be put in place to allow Parliament to exercise that oversight role in sensitive domains like national security and intelligence.

That is why New Democrats supported many safeguards to protect sensitive information. For example, we supported security vetting for every member. That was a step that was rejected by the British Parliament. We agreed. Similarly, we think it is reasonable that members waive parliamentary immunity from prosecution should they leak information. We think that is entirely reasonable. That step, however, was rejected by another of our Five Eyes allies, namely, New Zealand.

These additional safeguards should be used to facilitate the greater flow of classified information required for operational oversight, but the bill turns those safeguards into shackles. It asks Parliament to accept that oversight cannot be exercised through a parliamentary committee, but only through an adjunct to the executive, the Prime Minister's Office. It asks Parliament to grant the executive veto power over its access to information against the advice of experts and the Speaker's analysis of parliamentary procedure as well. It asks Parliament to legislate limits on its own authority to investigate how well the government of the day serves the security interests of Canadians and defends their civil liberties.

Because we believe in upholding Parliament's place as the final watchdog, and because we cannot accept inadequate operational oversight of the powers that Liberals and Conservatives granted to our security agencies in Bill C-51 over the protests of so many Canadians, the New Democratic Party cannot support Bill C-22 as it stands.

However, we have everything we need to fix the bill. We have consensus among the opposition parties. We have the willingness to work together to compromise. We have all the tools we need. We just need the time.

Government Orders

I am asking all members to do what the members of this committee will soon be asked to do, and that is to set partisanship aside and consider whether this bill, with all the flaws agreed upon by so many security experts, meets the standards of operational oversight that Canadians rightfully demand in the context of Bill C-51, and if they have any doubt that it might fail to meet that test for Canadians, I would ask them to support the following amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be not now read a third time but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for the purpose of reconsidering Clauses 8, 14, and 16 with a view to assessing whether the investigatory powers and limits defined in these clauses allow for sufficiently robust oversight of ongoing intelligence and national security activities."

•(1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The amendment is in order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will ask a direct question related to one of the comments made by the member in just a moment, but I want to express a bit of disappointment. Bill C-22 is a piece of legislation that has received accolades, even before it went to committee. Experts said it was good, solid, sound legislation.

Once it went to committee, a number of amendments were made that were accepted by the government as a whole, making the legislation that much stronger. Not all amendments were accepted, and I think that should be no surprise, but that is what took place. We have very robust legislation. I would compare this legislation to that in other jurisdictions.

The specific question I have relates to some comments the member expressed during his discussion. I want to make sure I get as close as I can to interpreting what the member said. During his speech, the members stated something to the effect that the committee should have operational control of police and intelligence agencies. Does the member across the way truly think the power to direct security and intelligence operations is a good idea? That is how I interpreted what the member said.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, how the member across the way concluded that I have no idea. To suggest that a committee of Parliament should have operational control over police or intelligence is, admittedly, absurd. If I confused the member, I apologize for doing so. What I have been saying is that any oversight committee that is supposed to look at the operational activities of police, national security, and intelligence services needs the tools to do its job.

The member said earlier that somehow experts thought that what happened was just fine. In January of this year, four leading experts wrote an article in *The Globe and Mail* congratulating the public safety committee for the report it produced, saying that it got it right. The New Democrats did a press conference confirming that we supported the bill as it read.

Then, when we were away a week or so ago, the government came in at the last moment with a bunch of amendments that basically gutted this bill. It is so disappointing. It is disappointing to Canadians, who thought we could get it right.

We could hold hands around that committee report and finally say, yes, we have it right. We would have access to the information we would need. We could summon people, and the level of scrutiny we would need to do the job would be available.

The government decided we should not have those tools. That is why all opposition members, as I understand it, are not going to support this bill, which is bad for Canada.

•(1250)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as I can see, the Prime Minister already has control over all the essential departments. I did not hear in the debate or see in this bill anything that would really provide the kind of independent oversight people need. I think the government is trying to make it look like there is real oversight, even though it has refused all the amendments that would have fixed the bill. That is misleading to Canadians.

I wonder if the member could say whether he agrees that Canadians will be misled.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, whether Canadians would be misled or not, the facts are the facts. The facts are that we would not be giving this committee the tools it would need to do operational oversight. I do not know the intentions of the government. The Liberals are putting a happy face on what they are doing today, seeming to ignore the fact that everyone else in this place but the government members does not agree with them.

Today's *Toronto Star* has an article by Paul Copeland, probably one of Canada's leading experts in national security law, appointed by the hon. member for Niagara Falls, when he was Attorney General, to be a special advocate. He wrote about the report by the public safety committee and talked about the proposals of the government that are being debated today: removing the oversight committee's power to subpoena witnesses and documents, allowing cabinet ministers to withhold information from the oversight committee, and stopping the committee from receiving information about all active law-enforcement investigations, all the time.

The experts, including Ron Atkey, Craig Forcese, Kent Roach, and Wes Wark, have all agreed that the committee got it right. At the eleventh hour, the government brought in this bill, imposed time allocation on this place, and expects us to be happy with what it has achieved. This is too important to turn into a partisan football between opposition and government. This is the national security oversight committee for this country, and that is why this is so bitterly disappointing.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have heard time and again from the government that it wants to respect the role of committees and that it wants to respect the work of its backbenchers and opposition MPs. When it comes to this piece of legislation, the Liberals are not doing that.

There was a good working relationship in committee. The committee came up with good amendments for what ultimately really needs to be a nonpartisan venture.

Government Orders

On a parallel track, the government members are saying that they want to have a discussion about the Standing Orders of the House and that we should just trust them to engage in good-faith discussions, and not ram things through, and that they will operate under a sunny model to make laws better here in Parliament. Does the behaviour of the government with respect to Bill C-22 not give members of this place cause to worry that perhaps the government is not acting in good faith when the government members say they just want to have a simple discussion about the Standing Orders of the House?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend and colleague from Winnipeg for connecting the dots between what is happening here with Bill C-22 and what is happening all this week, as Canadians have observed, as the government decides to change the rules of democracy in this place on its own. The Liberals are calling it a discussion paper, putting a happy face on it, and using words like “modernization”, as if somehow Canadians will miss the fact that they are changing it without the support of other parties.

I never thought we would be here. I honestly did not think we would be here on Bill C-22. I cannot believe that a compromise that was achieved in a committee to say yes to this would somehow now be the subject of 11th-hour changes that take away our ability to agree to this. I was so hopeful that we could get this together as Canadians and put together a committee, security-cleared, in a non-partisan way, to review classified information and other information and get to the bottom of operational activities of some agencies that have never had any oversight whatsoever, yet here we are, and that is why we are so disappointed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passionate, thoroughly fact-based speech.

Given that he was the only NDP member to speak, how does my colleague respond to the assertion that this bill will enable members to participate in the conversation and improve security? My colleague from Victoria is an excellent MP, but that is not a very democratic way to start things off. What is more, that is the only time we will get.

With respect to security, one of the government's last-minute proposals for Bill C-22 was to remove the committee's power to subpoena witnesses and documents even though Kent Roach, Craig Forcece, and the first chair of the Security Intelligence Review Committee recommended the committee have that power.

Another proposal would let ministers refuse to disclose information simply by citing national security privilege. I named just two, but there are at least three more that are very serious. In effect, these proposals would strip the committee of some of its powers.

What does my colleague think of that? Does he think this enhances or undermines oversight over Canada's security services?

• (1255)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable colleague for her excellent question. She put her finger on something that has not been said enough. It is not so much that the operational

oversight would be solely about making sure, if you will, that the agencies stayed within the rules, and therefore Canadians' civil liberties would be protected. She pointed out that it is also about improving safety. If the committee has the tools to do the job, it might find mismanagement of certain agencies and that we could do better in protecting the safety of Canadians.

That is one reason that the idea of having a parliamentary committee was put in place. Just as Parliament oversees the executive generally, we have a specific focal point within Parliament to get the job done.

The hon. member also pointed out what this government, for reasons that absolutely escape me, does not want to do, which is to give the committee the power that every standing committee has, namely to subpoena information and get people to come with the evidence the committee needs to do its job. They do not even want to do that.

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

I am very pleased to stand in the House today in support of Bill C-22, an act to establish the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain acts. Bill C-22 fulfills the commitment made by our government to Canadians that it will bring forward legislation to create a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, otherwise known as NSICOP.

Throughout this speech, I will highlight three key points that outline the importance of the creation of NSICOP, namely: first, strengthening the accountability and transparency of our government; second, providing a comprehensive and reactive security framework through a wide-ranging mandate; and third, having extraordinary access to classified information in order to closely examine intelligence and security operations.

Bill C-22 is an essential component in the Government of Canada's efforts to ensure our country's national security is not beyond parliamentary oversight while simultaneously respecting the rights and freedoms of Canadians. This, I believe, is one of the most important fundamental duties our government can perform.

Many western democracies, including our Five Eyes allies—the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand—have parliamentary oversight bodies on national security similar to what is being proposed in the bill. Just like those parliamentary bodies, Bill C-22 permits an examination of the national security work of federal departments and agencies, and holds them accountable as concerns their actions and responsibilities.

Government Orders

Canada currently has several oversight bodies that examine the activities of government organizations and agencies involved in national security operations. While each body does important work, they are organization specific and do not engage parliamentarians directly with their reviews.

The creation of NSICOP would strengthen transparency, accountability, ensure the possibility for government-wide reviews, and warrant greater effectiveness and efficiency throughout the larger review framework. In addition, it would allow for the complete independence of a parliamentary body in reviewing matters while not impeding on national security.

I would also like to point out that our government remains committed to addressing the problematic features and concerns of Canadians surrounding Bill C-51, which was introduced by the former government, and present new legislation that better balances our collective security with our rights and freedoms. Bill C-22 is one step towards addressing that.

The first key message that highlights the importance of the creation of this committee is that it would fill the accountability gap that has been outlined for more than 10 years by private sector experts, commissions of inquiry, and the Auditor General regarding the lack of an independent parliamentary body to scrutinize security and intelligence operations.

To give the committee the time and opportunity to learn the serious task it is undertaking and to get to know and understand the security and intelligence context on both a national and international level, our government has built an automatic review of NSICOP after five years to ensure it can accurately instill all the lessons it has learned in a timely and appropriate manner. This shows that our government understands the ever evolving nature of security threats and shows that we are remaining vigilant, responsive, and accountable to our security framework.

The government put forward the bill. The bill was studied at committee and amendments were proposed. The government, after careful consideration, has agreed to accept a majority of what the standing committee has requested.

One of these amendments is to add a whistle-blower clause, clause 31.1, which requires the committee to inform the appropriate minister, as well as the Attorney General, if it uncovers any activity that may not be in compliance with the law. I believe that this amendment adds to Bill C-22's already strong legislation, as it ensures Canadians that we are remaining vigilant to further enhance our capacity to keep Canadians safe through increased responsibility and accountability.

• (1300)

Second, the committee itself would have a broad government-wide mandate to scrutinize any national security matter.

The committee would also have the power to perform reviews on national security and intelligence activities, including ongoing operations, and the ability to conduct strategic and systemic reviews of legislative, regulatory, policy, expenditure, and administrative frameworks under which such activities are conducted.

Additionally, the committee would conduct reviews of matters specifically referred to it by a minister.

Given its broad mandate to review any operation, including an ongoing operation, the minister would have the authority to stop a review if it was deemed to be detrimental to national security.

It is important to note that the minister would have discretionary authority to withhold special operational information on a case-by-case basis should it also be believed that disclosure would be injurious to national security.

While these ministerial powers are within reason, I want to stress that ministers would not be able to withhold just any information. They are only permitted to do so in special and specific circumstances involving legally defined categories involving the most sensitive national security information where disclosure would have harmful national security implications for Canada.

Our government has recently agreed to adopt the amendment put forth by the public safety committee regarding the narrowing of the minister's authority to determine that a study of the committee is injurious to national security, which applies only to ongoing operations. The minister would have to explain that decision to the committee and would need to alert the committee as soon as the decision changed or as soon as the operation was no longer ongoing.

Third, our government is also supporting amendments to clause 14, which is the section that lists the type of information to which the NSICOP would not have access. This amendment expands the level of access to the different types of information available to the committee. We have removed from this exclusions list information about ongoing defence intelligence activities supporting military operations, privileged information under the Investment Canada Act, and information collected by the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada.

I believe the bill is stronger as a result, and I thank the members of the public safety committee for suggesting this amendment.

The committee will also decide on which national security and intelligence matters it will review. Additionally, the government may also refer matters for discussion at the committee.

The government is committed to protecting Canadians from national security threats. Bill C-22 would ensure that our national security framework will be working effectively to keep Canadians safe while not overriding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Such an accountability mechanism is crucial to Canada, and it represents what Canadians asked for. That is exactly what our government is delivering. Canada is taking a step forward so that Canadians can see real and positive results on the serious issue of national security.

Bill C-22 would provide parliamentarians with extraordinary access to classified information and bring Canada in line with similar parliamentary oversight bodies that are already in place in the countries of our national security allies.

Bill C-22 represents a promise made and a promise kept.

Government Orders

•(1305)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for his speech, but I am puzzled by one of the statements he made.

He said that Bill C-22 had gone to committee and that the majority of the amendments had been adopted. That is exactly opposite of what the member for Victoria just said. He said that the committee had come together and amendments had been proposed and accepted by all committee members, but at the eleventh hour the bill had been gutted and all those things had been taken away, such that the opposition could not support it.

Would the member explain, please, why there is such a difference in those stories?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, the most important thing is that the bill would provide a closure to a gap that existed. That gap existed because of what the previous government proposed in Bill C-51.

What the government, through the committee, will be able to accomplish is to provide a balance between security and rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear the member opposite explain how the bill currently before the House, Bill C-22, can be transparent and require more accountability, given that the last minute changes made by the government seek to do the following: take away the committee's power to subpoena witnesses and documents; exempt ministers from the duty to disclose information—so much for accountability and transparency; and, among other things, give the Prime Minister the power to redact the committee reports and the discretion to compel the committee to revise its reports, to take out sensitive information without requiring the final report to specify which passages have been redacted or what kind of information was erased, where, or to what extent.

How can the Liberals talk about transparency and accountability when it is adding these measures, which totally undermine the effectiveness of the oversight committee?

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, let me take a step back and try to position what the bill is all about. I would like to remind the hon. member and all her colleagues that the mandate given to the committee, under clause 8 of the NSICOP, is to review: first, the legislative, regulatory, policy, administrative and financial framework for national security and intelligence; second, any activity carried out by a department that relates to national security or intelligence, unless the activity is an ongoing operation and the appropriate minister determines that their view would be injurious to national security; and third, any matter relating to national security or intelligence that a minister of the crown refers to the committee. This is the focus of the committee, and that is the right focus.

•(1310)

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that Canada's strongest allies all have some form of civilian oversight for their intelligence networks. Indeed,

from a democratic perspective, a Charter of Rights perspective, and on the basis of the rule of law itself, Canadians must be assured that their rights are being respected.

Therefore, does the member believe it is imperative that there be a parliamentary committee created and tasked with ensuring the rights of Canadians are protected in the operations and activities of Canada's security and intelligence entities?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, after hearing the voices of individuals and experts from coast to coast, I truly believe the creation of a parliamentary oversight committee for the scrutiny of national security and intelligence operations will significantly strengthen the transparency and accountability of our government, while ensuring our national security framework keeps us safe while protecting our rights and freedoms.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak at the third reading of Bill C-22, which will create a committee of parliamentarians to oversee Canada's security bodies.

In Canada, our security apparatus and oversight must be constructed in ways that protect our freedoms and rights. Our Canada, strong and free, is the best country on the planet, and these are mutually reinforcing qualities that make our country. The recent terror attacks in Quebec, Strathroy, and indeed here on Parliament Hill in 2014, remind us that no country is immune to actions by those who would seek to challenge that freedom and security. While our strong global relationships, solid crisis response plans, and interconnected law enforcement networks are among the world's finest and meet rapidly changing global threats, we must guarantee independent parliamentary oversight to stand on guard of Canadians' individual rights and freedoms.

Canada is behind our international allies in this regard, and has been for far too long. Bill C-22 will help us catch up, better inform the public on crucial national security issues, and eliminate a weak link in the national security chain of accountability. In fact, the version of this bill introduced last June would already have put us far ahead of many other countries in terms of parliamentary oversight of national security. With the amendments adopted by the House earlier this week, Canada is poised to become a world leader in the area of national security and accountability.

It is worth remembering the history that accompanies the inception of this new committee of parliamentarians and the spirit of debate that has brought us to this point in its creation. We have certainly come a long way. Thirty years ago, the McDonald commission proposed an independent security review committee, in part as a result of public demands to make sure that mechanisms were in place to enforce the enforcers. There was widespread and growing concern that law enforcement operations carried out in secret but left unchecked could result in an above-the-law mentality and illegal activities by our paramilitary policing and security agencies. However, neither did the public want any parliamentary or government body with powers that were too broadly defined.

Fast-forwarding to 2005, only a few years after the tragedy of 9/11, an uncertain and changing environment meant growing demands for increased protection and stronger security measures. Prime Minister Paul Martin's government introduced legislation to create a parliamentary committee on national security and intelligence, reflecting renewed public demand for stronger oversight. That bill, as we know, died on the Order Paper.

In the last decade, the public and parliamentary debate in this area has intensified, and the issue of how to protect our security and our rights has become a major point of interest and now a driver of public policy. In recent years, we have discussed and debated stronger accountability for national security and intelligence agencies, following internal judicial inquiries and events surrounding the Maher Arar case.

Various bills have come and gone, including one introduced by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, which was rejected by the Conservative government of the day mere months before Bill C-51 was introduced.

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to thank the hon. member. Unfortunately, I will have to cut it short there.

[Translation]

It being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, March 20, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, April 3, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m. so that we can move on to private members' business.

Private Members' Business

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Do we have the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 1:30 p. m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

* * *

DESIGNATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBER FOR PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the honourable member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue may provide written notice to the Clerk of the House of her desire to seek leave to introduce a bill standing in her name on the Order Paper and designate another Member to move the appropriate motions on her behalf; the designated Member may move the motions for the introduction and first reading of the bill provided that: a) the designated Member is eligible to participate in Private Members' Business pursuant to Standing Order 87; b) the notice is received not less than one sitting day prior to the introduction of the bill; and c) the Order for second reading of the bill shall stand in the name of the honourable member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has now heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I suspect that if you canvass the House now, you would find consent to see the clock at 1:30 p.m.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1320)

[English]

ROLE OF CO-OPERATIVES

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of the motion.

*Private Members' Business***Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):**

Mr. Speaker, I believe co-ops are really important to Canadians, and I have had the opportunity to address the House on this issue previously. I have found over the years, and this even predates my first election back in 1988, that co-ops play such a critical role in the development of our economy.

Let me give a specific example. My first experience in co-ops was back in the mid-eighties. Our community of Weston, which is in the north end, and some would argue the west end of Winnipeg, wanted to bring life back to the community. We looked at the concept of a housing co-op. We started off on something as simple as revitalizing a community, which is not as simple as one might think but for all intents and purposes for the argument, it was a wonderful policy that could truly make a difference.

We recognized that co-operatives had a role to play in the grassroots of our community, not only in large communities but in different sectors. Whether it is financial housing or agriculture, we have co-ops throughout. We identified that one of the ways we could advance the community of Weston was to incorporate a housing co-op.

The number of units we were able to establish was truly amazing. If people talk to individuals who have lived in co-ops for any length of time, there is a different attitude toward co-ops, one of being a resident as opposed to being a tenant.

I have had the good fortune over the years to represent different forms of co-ops. We can find the oldest housing co-op in Canada in Winnipeg North, and I am not 100% sure of this, but arguably it could even be the oldest North America. It is the Willow Park East Housing Co-op. It has been around for decades now. I applaud the amount of effort and tremendous goodwill that has gone in to the development of that co-op, which has become community within itself. It is within the Shaughnessy Park area, which is a wonderful place to live. I live on Pritchard Avenue, just a few blocks away from the co-op.

Winnipeg North also has well over a dozen co-ops, and they range. I think of the Arctic Co-op on Inkster Blvd. It provides all sorts of goods and services up into rural and northern communities and reaching into Canada's territories.

The Red River Co-op is an insurance company to co-operatives that provide banking services or financial services. In fact, one of the more active co-ops in which there has been some expansion in recent years is in the area of supplying groceries. When other stores have closed down, co-ops have established grocery stores in the city of Winnipeg.

One of the busiest gas stations in Winnipeg North is likely the Red River Co-op gas station, which is located in Keewatin and Kimberly. It is very well attended by consumers purchasing gas.

Whether it is housing, financial needs, groceries, they benefit our rural communities, and I really want to emphasize this. I would like to think we should even start talking more about rural Canada. One of the strongest economic factors in rural Canada are the co-ops. Many of our smaller communities have developed co-ops, and they play a vital role in providing all forms of services.

•(1325)

I stand in support of Motion No. 100, recognizing the need for the House to have an ongoing discussion and dialogue. I truly believe that if people genuinely understood the economic and social advantages of co-ops, we would probably see more co-ops established. It is a great way to cultivate the economy and to see our communities develop.

I could have made reference to our United Housing Co-op, which is located in Meadows West, or I could have talked about the Seven Oaks Village Housing Co-operative, which is located in The Maples, or the M.A.P.S. Housing Co-op, which is located in the traditional north end, not to mention the many other non-profits that provide so many forms of shelter to financial needs.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand and speak to the motion that the government look into how co-ops have been developed and how they are developing and set some goals for developing co-ops for the future.

In my community of Neerlandia, Alberta, there has been a co-op for 95 years. It started out purely as a grocery store and has grown to be a \$50-million-a-year business today. It sells everything from fertilizers to groceries. It has a liquor store, a lumberyard, a hardware store. It sells seeds, fertilizer, grain augers, grain bins, and all those kinds of things. It is a very large part of our community. In fact, it is the only commercial interest in the town centre of our community. There is a restaurant as part of the co-op as well. It has been a source of pride for our community and a great source of employment as well. I have several family members who work there. My Uncle Jan works in the hardware department, and I have several cousins who work there as well.

Without the co-op, it would be a significantly different community. When people drive into Neerlandia, they are struck by the sheer size of our co-op. The hamlet of Neerlandia, the community that I claim to be from, has 30 houses. It is not a very large community. There are two large churches and the co-op. The co-op is probably the first thing people notice as they drive down the highway. I am from Alberta, which is a reasonably flat place. From a long distance people can see a church steeple and they can see the elevator leg on the side of the co-op's fertilizer building. People can also see the red lights of the giant co-op sign on the front of the co-op. That can probably be seen for 10 miles before arriving in Neerlandia. There is no doubt that our co-op is the identifying feature of our community.

The co-op, as I said, is 95 years old. My ancestors who came from the Netherlands were dirt poor. They were 150 kilometres from Edmonton, and 25 miles from the nearest town, and it was always labourious to get basic supplies. They thought that rather than compete against one another for the very basic things they needed such as feed for their animals, groceries, basic clothing, and some farm equipment, they would get together and build a co-op so they would have the buying power to bring those things in. They hired an employee and they built a small shop. That is how it started in 1922. From there, we are where we are today, but it took some vision from my ancestors to bring it to fruition.

Private Members' Business

I am proud to say that I am a member of the co-op. In my community, if individuals are not a member of the co-op, people will take their temperature and say, "What's wrong? There must be something wrong with you. Why aren't you participating in our co-op?" People get dividends, after all, at the end of the year. It is a great way to participate in a community, but they also get back some dividends from it at the end of the year. In addition, members gain equity in the co-op and when members turn 65, the co-op pays out their equity. For a small fry like me, that probably will not amount to \$25,000, and will probably be less than that, but for some farmers who spend nearly \$1 million every year at the co-op, when they decide to retire, there might be a nice cheque for their retirement. We are all participating in this venture and it has been very successful to this point.

The same community that started that initiative also started a funeral initiative. I think that when one of the first deaths occurred in our community, people said they needed a graveyard so they took a plot of land and made it into a graveyard. Then they wondered how they would manage the graveyard.

• (1330)

What they put in place was a co-op. The Neerlandia Funeral Association is what it is called. Being a member of that co-op provides the privilege of paying for the upkeep of the graveyard, but what also ends up happening is that when there is a death of a member of the co-op, the costs of the funeral expenses, the plot, and those kinds of things are shared among all of the members. I think it costs about \$110 for each member. Believe me, we are continuing to sign up more people all the time so that our membership does not continue to dwindle, as anyone could imagine would be the case.

We have a thriving, young community. In fact, the Alberta government just built a brand new school there to accommodate the growth of the community. We outgrew our old school and saw that we needed a new school. After the recent census, we saw that the population growth in the area was going to demand a new school, and one was built.

The co-op is very much one of the pillars of the community, so I would like to take a moment to recognize some of the guys who work very hard in my community keeping the large commercial interest called the co-op running.

Mr. Richard Krikke is the president of the co-op in Neerlandia. I have met him on several occasions. I know Mr. Bruce Wieringa as well. He is one of the board members. I rode the school bus with his kids and went to church with him. Mr. Wayne Visser has also done an incredible amount of work in my community. These guys are also supporters of mine, for which I am truly grateful. I know Mr. Wes Nanninga well. He is a great advocate for the community and works very hard keeping the co-op operating.

These people have shown immense vision in taking the co-op in new directions with the new cardlock. I know the member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies knows very much about co-op cardlocks, as all of northern B.C. is covered by co-op cardlocks. I know that the co-op is branching out into other communities with the co-op cardlock for sure. I know that Wes Nanninga has been working hard on that as well.

Seth Olthuis is another one of the board members. I think I rode the school bus with back in the day. The board members all work hard all the time, making sure that the co-op continues to flourish. I would also like to recognize Mr. Jim Greilach. I drive by his place all the time and wave when I go by, and that is very much another feature of my community. If people do not wave when they pass others on the highway, they will get phone calls fairly quickly, asking what is wrong and what they did because they were not waved at. That's the way it is in small-town Alberta, for sure.

There is also Mr. Craig Tiemstra, who is actually my neighbour. He farms the land all around my house. He has done amazing work. He was the past president of the co-op as well. I would like to thank these guys for their work in my local co-op. I know that they will be very appreciative of this motion that recognizes the strong work that co-ops do in our communities all across the country. There is no doubt about that.

I will address one more thing. In my riding, there are six Hutterite communities, and they are co-operative communities. I had the privilege of touring a couple of them last week with my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable. These are thriving communities and economic powerhouses in our region. They own thousands and thousands of acres of land. They buy the latest equipment to farm this land. They are really an icon on our landscape for sure.

• (1335)

I want to talk about REAs, rural electrification associations, that we have in northern Alberta, but it looks like my time will be taken away.

I would say one more thing. The Co-op brand has a big refinery in Alberta and Saskatchewan. I know they do great work there as well.

Let us support—

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this motion calling on the government to recognize the important role co-operatives play in the economy and ensure that they continue to thrive.

Co-operatives provide economic strength to our regions. They have contributed tremendously to the economy in the past and will continue to contribute greatly in the future. A federal strategy is important for strengthening co-operatives while encouraging their creation and longevity.

I recognize the co-operatives' important contribution to the economy. The co-operative movement was the impetus to collective entrepreneurship in Montérégie in many fields. In my riding, there are excellent co-operatives that provide essential services and strive to offer the best service and products at all times.

Private Members' Business

My personal experience with co-operatives began when I was very young because I come from a village where there is an electrical power co-operative, the Coopérative de Saint-Jean-Baptiste. When I got to cégep, one of my first commitments was to become president of the student co-operative. That is when I came up with my signature, because I had to sign 1,000 membership cards in one evening for the first day of school the next day. I still use the same signature today.

After that, when I entered the job market, I was the president and founder of a housing co-operative, where I lived for several years. I was also the vice president of a food co-operative. I am still a member of the Coopérative funéraire de Saint-Hyacinthe, and I hope to remain a member for a very long time.

In my riding, Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, co-operatives are well established and make a significant contribution to the vitality and pride of my riding. I would like to give a few examples.

The first one, Coop fédérée, is very important for the agrifood sector. People often do not realize that they are doing business with this co-operative. People know that it is in the agricultural sector, but it is also involved in the retail and innovation sectors. For example, when people fill up at a Sonic service station, or buy propane from it, or when they shop at a BMR or Unimat hardware store, they are doing business with Coop fédérée.

When people buy Olymel meat products at the grocery store, whether they are pork or poultry products, they do not realize that they are supporting a co-operative. We are very proud that Olymel's headquarters is in Saint-Hyacinthe. This co-operative has a sterling reputation. It now has about 100 affiliated co-operatives that are owned by 108,000 people.

Many other co-operatives in my riding are affiliated with the Coop fédérée. For example, there is also Coop Comax, which resulted from the merger of the following seven agricultural co-ops in my region: La Présentation, Saint-Barnabé-Sud, Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Denis-sur-Richelieu, Saint-Antoine-sur-Richelieu, Verchères, and Sainte-Rosalie.

There is also Coop Sainte-Hélène and Coop des Montérégiennes, which resulted from the merger of the following three co-operatives: St-André-d'Acton, Saint-Damase, and Coop Excel. It is one of the 10 largest agricultural co-operatives in the province and a major social and economic driver in our region.

Of course, in my riding, we also have the well-known dairy co-operative Agropur, which has the Damafro plant in Saint-Damase, which it bought, and another plant in Saint-Hyacinthe.

I know that many of my colleagues from Quebec and elsewhere travel through Saint-Hyacinthe as they take the Trans-Canada Highway between Montreal and Quebec City. I invite them to visit because Agropur has a distribution centre. The co-operative bought an old car dealership, which has a lovely showroom where people can buy fine cheeses from Agropur and other Quebec cheese factories for a really good price. I invite all members to go there.

The Coopérative aux P'tits Soins was created as a result of a need for services for seniors and people who are losing their autonomy. It is an in-home support co-operative, a wonderful socio-economic

project that provides seniors and those losing their autonomy with help at home, including high-quality housekeeping services.

We can see that co-operatives have had an extremely positive impact on the local economies in Quebec. I see it in my riding. We are proud of the success of our co-operatives.

● (1340)

The economic benefits of co-operatives are significant. In the Montérégie area, this translates into more than 200 non-financial co-operatives, more than 7,000 jobs, and more than 80,000 members. However, there is one co-operative that I would like to talk about in more detail today. I did not know about this co-operative, but it presented a very important and innovative project for my riding. CoopTel is located in the riding of my colleague from Shefford, which is right beside my riding.

It was established 70 years ago. Its mission is to provide diversified and reliable telecommunications products and services, which evolve along with the needs of customers and their community, at competitive prices, thanks to the contribution of an evolving technology and competent and engaged partners. This sector has major stakeholders. It is truly amazing that one of our co-operatives provides this service.

I decided to actively contribute to the rollout of fibre optic throughout my riding in order to have high quality and affordable Internet access throughout the region. This project is not just CoopTel's and my doing: it is the result of the determination of all the stakeholders in my riding. When they attended the economic forum of the greater Saint-Hyacinthe chamber of commerce, stakeholders talked about how crucial a fibre optic network is to co-operatives and all SMEs. I would add that it is also very important for families.

The CoopTel project is a major project aimed at bringing five RCMs online, over hundreds and hundreds of kilometres. Such a project will help our co-operatives excel, as well as be more productive and more competitive. This major infrastructure project will be submitted for funding under the “connect to innovate” program. This project is very important to my riding. It will help bring fibre optics to many municipalities, including the Saint-Édouard sector in Saint-Liboire, the Saint-Barnabé-Sud sector, the rural part of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, the countryside surrounding Saint-Barnabé, and the Saint-Jude, Saint-Hugues, and Sainte-Hélène-de-Bagot sectors. In those municipalities, many businesses depend on reliable Internet access. Small and medium-size businesses face challenges that other, larger businesses do not have. Businesses owners must first have vision and leadership, and they also have to reassure us that they have the tools they need.

Although the government has invested \$100 million a year for Canada as a whole and the Government of Quebec launched its “Québec branché” initiative, which also has an envelope of \$100 million, that is not nearly enough to meet all the needs.

Private Members' Business

It is 2017. High-speed Internet is a basic service. That is according to the CRTC, not me. The CRTC is calling for universal access to reliable broadband Internet service via fixed and mobile wireless networks in communities of all sizes. Will the government give people in Quebec's regions the means to achieve their ambitions? It is our duty to create the right economic conditions for that.

I am very proud of the co-operatives in my riding. Their reputations are well-established, and their contribution to our economy is vital. Our co-operatives are known nationwide. They are innovative and an undeniable economic force in my region. They create good jobs with good working conditions. They are our pride and joy.

I think we have a duty to help co-operatives thrive in our ridings. We must take advantage of the unique opportunity provided by the connect to innovate program. We in the House must understand and acknowledge that fast, reliable Internet access is critical to our businesses and to the vitality of our regions. The program needs more funding so that all communities, all businesses, and all co-operatives can thrive and achieve their full potential. It all starts with fast, reliable Internet access.

• (1345)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the essential role that co-operatives play in Canada's economy and recognize the significant contribution that they make by creating jobs and growth for the middle class across Canada.

With approximately 9,000 co-operatives and mutuals in operation, this sector controls assets estimated at \$415 billion and employs close to 200,000 Canadians. Co-operatives are a business model that has a track record of success in providing economic benefits to Canadians. They generate jobs for middle-class Canadians and growth in communities across the country.

According to recent data, Quebec has the highest share of incorporated co-operatives, followed by Ontario and Saskatchewan. Because of their ability to fulfill the collective need of individuals through pooled skills and resources, co-operatives have also proven to be an important tool for economic development in Canada's official language minority communities.

In 2012, co-operatives had almost eight million memberships and paid out \$607 million in dividends to their members and communities. In addition, there were over 26,000 volunteers involved in the day-to-day operations of co-operatives.

It is clear that co-operatives offer many advantages to communities across Canada. The flexibility of the co-operative business model allows them to operate as a not-for-profit organization or a registered charity. It also means that co-operatives work in many sectors in Canada's economy.

According to recent statistics, 42% of co-operatives surveyed were in the real estate sector, 14% were in wholesale and retail, 8% were in the agriculture, forestry, fishery, and hunting sectors, and 8% were in the health care and social assistance sectors.

Co-operatives are also active in the financial sector. For example, the Mouvement des caisses Desjardins, of which I have been a

member since I was eight years old and which has more than 10 branches in the riding of Sudbury, as well as Vancity play a very active role in a solid financial system by providing choices to consumers and offering healthy competition.

[English]

The vast majority of financial co-operatives are provincially incorporated and regulated. This sector is made up of more than 600 credit unions and caisses populaires serving approximately 11.3 million Canadians. On the insurance side, there are approximately 100 insurance mutuals.

Some of our country's most recognizable and successful businesses are co-operative enterprises. The list of the top 50 non-financial co-operatives in this country includes a variety of businesses operating in a range of sectors.

Canada's co-operatives make a significant contribution to our economy, whether it is the Federated Co-operatives Limited; a petroleum refinery based in Saskatchewan; La Coop fédérée, an agrifood enterprise located in Quebec; the Red River Co-op, a gas bar and retail outlet in Manitoba; Mountain Equipment Co-op; the Eat Local Sudbury Co-operative in my riding; or the Co-operative Régionale de Nipissing Sudbury in northern Ontario.

One noteworthy example that many of my colleagues will recognize is the Agropur Dairy Cooperative, based in Quebec, mentioned by my colleague. This organization represents dairy farmers not only in Quebec but also in southern Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador. This co-op processes an incredible 5.7 billion litres of milk annually in its 37 plants spread throughout North America.

Agropur's success is reflected not only in its economic impact, with an impressive \$5.9 billion in sales, but also in the well-being of the people it serves, including nearly 3,400 dairy farmer members and their 8,000 employees.

While these co-operatives operate in different sectors, they all share the same common principles, including voluntary and open membership, democratic member control, economic and democratic participation by co-op members, autonomy and independence, education, co-operation among co-operatives, and sustainable community development.

These organizations are addressing critical needs, whether it be economic, social, or cultural, in the communities in which they operate. Perhaps what is most encouraging is that Canada's largest co-operatives continue to thrive, as demonstrated by consistently growing revenues and total memberships and employment.

In addition, the 2014 small business financing survey conducted by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada revealed that co-ops have a higher survival rate than private sector small and medium-size enterprises. Their longevity can be explained in part because they operate with a strong connection to their communities and have a long-term and purpose-driven vision that looks beyond purely economic growth.

Private Members' Business

● (1350)

As some of Canada's most successful co-operatives have demonstrated, the model is flexible and innovative and has the potential for further growth here in Canada. That is why I believe it is important to support Canada's co-operative sector and to help co-ops access the business supports they require.

Through federal departments such as the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and its regional development agencies, financial support is available through a range of programs and services that help co-ops start up, as well as in their growth and expansion.

[Translation]

As some of Canada's most successful co-operatives have demonstrated, the model is flexible and innovative and has the potential for further growth here in Canada.

To sum up, I recognize the value that co-operatives provide to the economy and I continue to support them. Accordingly, I support Motion No. 100 moved by the hon. member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert, from Quebec, in memory of Mauril Bélanger, who was a staunch defender of the co-operative movement.

[English]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today in support of Motion No. 100. This motion from the hon. member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert proposes that the government recognize the important role that co-operatives play in the economy, and ensure they continue to thrive.

It is no secret that the cost of housing is extremely high and continues to break records across Canada. The average price for homes around my riding of Yellowhead is approximately half of the national average, which is still affordable for hard-working Albertans. However, this low average does not mean that access to affordable housing is not an issue in my riding.

In my riding of Yellowhead, multiple towns rely on funding from the province to provide housing to low-income families and seniors. Housing co-ops make a valuable contribution to affordable housing by providing lodging to approximately 250,000 Canadians across Canada. The town of Rocky Mountain House has two housing co-ops, serving 28 families. The town of Hinton has 47 unit complexes. The town of Edson has 24 units. The town of Drayton Valley has 26 units, with another 20 to be built. Even in Jasper National Park, co-operative housing units exist.

Our party supports a multi-pronged approach to affordable co-operative housing, involving provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. Motion No. 100 attempts to do just that. It calls on the government to develop a federal co-operative strategy to promote and support Canada's co-operative sector through consultations with provinces, territories, municipalities, indigenous communities, and co-operative groups.

Our previous Conservative government worked with all governments and indigenous groups to develop and implement affordable housing solutions by committing close to \$2 billion to build new units, and to repair and update existing social housing. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, better known as CMHC, has

largely been the government's tool by which financial aid programs have been delivered. Our party spent almost \$19 billion on housing through CMHC since 2006, a lot more than in the present budget.

Through initiatives such as the investment in affordable housing, the IAH, and the Housing First initiative, we empowered Canadians and fought homelessness at a fundamental level. Our Conservative Party also sought to minimize difficulties by equipping CMHC with a wide range of tools to enable home providers to plan for the end of funding, and to allow for flexibility in specific programs, especially in regard to renovations and capital repairs.

If federal funding agreements end, tens of thousands of low-income households across the country, including seniors, newcomers, lone-parent families, people with disabilities, and others, are in danger of becoming homeless without the government's reinvestment in co-op housing.

Co-ops and other community housing programs built under federal programs are aging, as all of us are, and have to devote more of their revenues to covering rising maintenance and other operating costs. Most will have to re-mortgage their properties to carry out major renovations and upgrades in the near future. This is why a renewed commitment from federal and provincial governments to support affordable housing for low-income residents in co-ops and other housing communities is necessary.

All Canadians should have a reasonable opportunity to own their own home and have access to safe and affordable housing.

In his mandate, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has been tasked with renewing federal leadership in housing and prioritizing investments in affordable housing, including construction and renovation as well as community financial aid for financial initiatives. This is just one reason that I hope all parties will support the motion.

There are other kinds of co-operatives besides housing. The Canadian co-operative sector includes close to 8,000 incorporated co-operatives, and it employs over 90,000 Canadians in urban, rural, and remote communities across Canada. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others. They can apply this co-operative business model to almost any type of enterprise: agriculture, utilities, finance, education, housing, retail, and more.

•(1355)

Most of the debate on this motion has revolved around the financial co-operative sector, which includes credit unions and insurance co-operatives. Owned and democratically controlled by their members, these co-ops provide affordable lending and insurance services to Canadians.

Perhaps one of the oldest types of co-ops in my province of Alberta is that of the agricultural sector when farmers got together to sell and purchase grain.

In fact, many of these co-operatives have grown over the years, as the member for Peace River—Westlock mentioned. For example, the largest retailer in the town of Rocky Mountain House is the co-op, which sells food, clothing, hardware building supplies, chemicals, feeds, petroleum products, and much more. There are many of these throughout Canada, including in my province.

My learned friend earlier mentioned the Neerlandia co-op, which I felt was one of the biggest in Alberta until I saw the one in Rocky Mountain House. What he forgot to tell people is the pride of his community. He is very humble and so is his community. They built that building. It is a massive structure, almost the size of this one. They put their rubber boots on and built it with shovels and laid the cement. Everybody in the community participated. It was a great co-operative action in that community.

Many of these old co-operatives are still active, such as United Farmers of Alberta.

Electricity and gas distribution co-operatives have also been quite successful in Alberta. At one time, the rural electrification program carried out by the co-operatives accounted for about 90% of the electricity supplied to Alberta farmers. In 2007, rural electrification associations represented more than 45,000 electrical users in the province. In the 1990s, these co-operatives accounted for over 54% of the total sales of energy to co-operatives in Canada.

There are also co-operatives in the service sector. Communities form child care co-operatives when they want to have some control over the involvement in their children's care and education. They range in size and include pre-school co-ops, day care co-ops, baby-sitting co-ops, etc.

Clearly, co-operatives come in all shapes and sizes and are valuable to many communities across Canada. The co-operative sector has a positive impact on our economy and helps to create jobs. I urge all parties in this House to recognize the important role that co-operatives play in the economy and ensure that they continue to thrive.

In closing, it is paramount that all parties in this House co-operate to support this motion.

•(1400)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak in support of Motion No. 100, which was put forward by my colleague, the member for Brossard—Saint-Lambert. I want to applaud my friend for the hard work she has done in regards to this motion, and add that

Private Members' Business

my riding, LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, is home to many co-operatives.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the work previously done by our late colleague, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger. He worked tirelessly for Canada's co-operative sector to establish the all-party caucus on co-ops. His hope was that all-party awareness will, one day, translate into full support for Canadian co-operatives across this country. This motion seeks to recognize the significant impact of Canada's co-operative sector and take steps to ensure it continues to thrive.

Today, I want to talk not only about the success of co-operatives in this country but also to highlight ways that this business model can be used to directly address a number of important government priorities.

There are approximately 9,000 co-operatives and mutuals in operation in Canada. They exist in all provinces and territories, in urban and rural areas, and in all sectors of the Canadian economy. These flexible and innovative organizations create employment opportunities for some 190,000 Canadians.

Co-operatives can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of financial co-operatives, and these include deposit-taking credit unions, caisses populaires and mutuals involved in life, property, and casualty insurance. There are more than 650 of those co-operatives, serving over 11 million Canadians. Second, the non-financial co-operatives, which count an estimated 8,000 organizations. The second group, non-financial co-operatives, counts an estimated 8,000 organizations. They operate in all sectors, from agriculture and retail to health care and social services, from professional services and manufacturing to high-speed broadband and clean energy.

The co-operative model also has a strong track record in providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to Canadians, demonstrating that this collective entrepreneurship business model can work on behalf of everyone. It is an inclusive business model that allows citizens in communities across the country to come together to address common economic, social, environmental, or cultural needs. In essence, co-operatives are examples of democracy at work. Plus, as anyone in the co-operative sector will remind you, these organizations are incredibly resilient and often demonstrate an ability to thrive even during challenging economic times.

Further to this idea, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development has been leading the development of Canada's Innovation Agenda. We see Canada's co-operatives as important players in the implementation of this agenda. This agenda aims for a sustainable path to growth.

Canada is competing against leading nations in a race to grow talent, technologies and companies. At its core, the Innovation Agenda is about ensuring that all Canadians have the opportunity to benefit from a growing economy.

Private Members' Business

Whether it is about identifying ways for Canadians to acquire the skills and experience required in the global economy, harnessing the potential of emerging technologies, or encouraging more Canadians to start and grow businesses, there are a number of emerging opportunities for Canadians, communities, the co-operative sector and this government to tap into the potential of the co-operative model.

• (1405)

Co-operatives have obvious links to particular areas of the Innovation Agenda including clean technologies, women and youth entrepreneurship, and indigenous economic development. As well, the model itself provides important lessons on how to innovate in today's economy. In fact, according to a 2014 study, Canada's co-operatives are demonstrating product, process, organizational and marketing innovation at a rate higher than traditional SMEs.

Like all small and medium-sized businesses, co-operatives are fundamental to creating jobs across Canada. With co-operatives operating in a number of key areas of the Innovation Agenda, the potential exists to identify actions to accelerate co-operative economic development and job creation in key sectors such as social enterprise, encouraging a transition to a low carbon and clean economy, indigenous economic development, and women and youth entrepreneurship.

Given their proven track record and their history of innovation, not only at the community level but also on an international scale, co-operatives are well-positioned to be key players in the future of innovation in Canada. The co-operative model also has the potential to be an important lever for promoting indigenous economic development. This is because of an indigenous focus on community participation, consensus decision-making, and addressing community challenges holistically.

There are an estimated 120 indigenous co-operatives currently in operation in Canada including a large retail distribution network in the North which has expanded into multiple business lines. Given the ability of co-operatives to combine both social and economic objectives, they are also actively engaged in the development of the social innovation and social finance strategy led by Employment and Social Development Canada.

The consultation on the development of Canada's national housing strategy has also highlighted the importance of the co-operative housing model in terms of increasing access to affordable places to live. In budget 2017, the government announced additional details about the inclusive national housing strategy, which will be a roadmap for public administrations and suppliers of housing across the country when they decide on the best way to support the renewal of housing in their communities.

I would now like to talk about some of the support the government provides to help co-operatives thrive and continue to provide important economic benefits to Canadians.

Government programming aims to ensure that co-operatives have equitable access to business supports and that they are well-positioned to contribute to business and community needs.

The regional development agencies provide financial support to co-operatives through a range of programs and services for start-up,

growth, and expansion, with over \$51 million provided in the last 10 years.

In conclusion, I would like to thank my colleague for coming forward with this motion and helping to shine a light on the important role co-operatives are playing in Canada's economy. This government strongly supports Motion No. 100, and we look forward to working alongside members in the House to explore ways in which this innovative business model can help address the priorities of Canadians.

• (1410)

[English]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of my motion is to highlight the importance of the development and implementation of a strategy to strengthen the co-operative sector, which is so important for our economic growth, as the parliamentary secretary so richly enlightened us. During the first hour of debate, I said that co-operatives are inherently innovative. They are created to meet people's needs and to serve these same people.

[Translation]

The flexibility of the co-operative model and its proven track record of success in creating jobs, filling market gaps, and meeting needs in Canadian communities make co-operatives an important player in long-term, sustainable economic growth.

I would like to thank all my colleagues who spoke in support of the motion, the members of all parties who told me that they would vote in favour of the motion, and all those who are calling on the government to continue to recognize the important role that co-operatives play in the Canadian economy and ensure that Canadian co-operatives continue to thrive.

[English]

I would also like to thank the co-op sector for its support. Special thanks to Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada and the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité for their assistance along the way. I firmly believe that beyond being a model for economic growth, the co-operative sector has the potential to support a number of government priorities, including the government's inclusive innovation agenda, social innovation and finance, a transition to a low-carbon economy, and indigenous economic development. Motion No. 100 would give the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development the mandate needed to fully explore the opportunities and synergies that a stable and locally based co-operative economy could create in all parts of Canada.

[Translation]

Parliamentarians are elected by Canadians to meet our collective needs. Co-operatives and mutual companies are never imposed on communities. They are created to address common needs and are democratically accountable to their members for their own management.

Private Members' Business

It is up to MPs across party lines to give the public service a strong mandate so that this plan can take shape and become a reality.

In closing, I would like to quote my esteemed friend, the late Hon. Mauril Bélanger:

I remain committed to supporting the co-operative model as a means of mitigating the adverse effects of growing economic disparity.

The co-operative model is a proven structure that greatly empowers each member, resulting in a wonderful combination of business success and social responsibility, which plays an important role in the economy and in our communities.

I thank the hon. members for listening and for the attention they have given to this debate. I look forward to working with everyone to promote economic growth, increase our competitiveness, and create jobs.

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 5, 2017, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

It being 2:16 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 3, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:16 p.m.)

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