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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 29, 2017

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CONTRIBUTION OF RANCHERS AND FARMERS

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should recognize that the ongoing contribution of ranchers and farmers as stewards of the land and conservationists is part of our history, proudly shared by all Canadians, and should consider establishing policies which would support and encourage the development of private farm and ranch land conservation and restoration projects.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege for me to rise today in the House of Commons to give the first speech on my Motion No. 108. I am looking forward to working with all my colleagues from across Canada, from every party present in the House, to pass what I believe is this important motion.

Canada has a long and storied agricultural history. Because of technology advances in Canadian agricultural practice, this country has become one of the biggest food producers in the world. That is one of the reasons that Canada has always played a very important role in the world, and why we will play an even bigger role in the future. There is a need for healthy, affordable, nutritious food. Having access to such things, along with clean drinking water, assures that the human body can meet its very basic physiological needs. Canada is a major contributor to ensuring that the world is fed. With the world population expected to grow by billions in the coming decades, the issue of meeting the global demand for nutritious food is going to become an even more pressing concern. Canada's farmers will be playing a critical role to ensuring that we can rise up to this challenge and meet the demands of a hungry world.

Canada's story would not be complete without talking about its agricultural history. Indigenous peoples have had a long history of agricultural practices in Canada. The first French settlers started agricultural practices in the Maritimes and in Quebec. With the British contribution, as their empire grew, so did their need for food. Wheat production ramped up in what was New France, and continued to grow after the British settled North America. Upper Canada had a significant wheat economy. Lower Canada even began

to import wheat from Upper Canada. There was discussion of a wheat standard, which would link the amount of money printed to the wheat holdings of the colony. It was a novel and unique idea at the time. Early settlers were efficient and able to produce more than they needed for their own needs.

The western part of Canada was populated in the late 19th century and early 20th century. It soon became a major producer of food. Palliser's Triangle, or the area of the Prairies in southeastern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan today, was named after the British captain, John Palliser. He explored the prairie region in the 1840s for the British government, and he was not impressed with the potential of the Prairies for settlement and agricultural practices. In fact, his report stated that no one should settle here. The Canadian government later built the railroad across the Prairies, and settlement expanded significantly. In one year alone after the turn of the century, 1.4 million immigrants arrived in Canada, and for decades many people homesteaded across the Prairies. If only Palliser could see what kind of society we have developed there now. The Prairies are often referred to as the breadbasket of Canada.

Today, we have significant agricultural sectors in many parts of the country. Many farms in southwestern and eastern Ontario are some of the lushest farmland in Canada. There are many crops grown there, like soybeans and corn, and there are many other farms, like dairy and poultry. Quebec is similar, with dairy farms being prominent. The Atlantic provinces were also very active in agriculture, both then and today. For example, we know very well that P.E.I. potatoes are among the best in the world, and Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick are well known for their cranberry and blueberry farms. British Columbia has an incredible variety of agricultural sectors. It is well known for its fruit orchards, as is Nova Scotia. The wine industry of Ontario and British Columbia have now expanded to other provinces. The industry is now coast to coast.

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With all of this in mind, I am presenting this motion today to my colleagues here in the House, and to all Canadians. It is important to recognize that our Canadian ranch and farm families are among the most environmentally minded people in any sector of the Canadian economy. Farmers will always have the environment as their number one concern. Some of the best conservationists are ranchers. Their ranches form a major part of the backbone of the economy of much of Alberta. They are also a major part of the Bow River riding, the constituents I am so humbled to represent here in Ottawa.

I would like to speak about some of the technology used by farmers in the area I represent. For example, one of the environmentally friendly technologies and practices used is called no-till agriculture. No-till agriculture means avoiding the old-fashioned way of disturbing the soil through annual tillage. This has numerous environmental benefits, and it can also greatly improve the sustainability of farming operations at limited cost to the farmer. Not only is it better for the soil, it saves the amount of water needed for farming, because soil that has been used through no-till farming has better water-retention qualities. This means less runoff and wasted water.

• (1110)

When it comes to wetlands on farm property, our Canadian farmers have been innovative and smart in dealing with the challenges of protecting these critical riparian habitats while at the same time continuing to farm their land. There is also the use of cover crops, which sole purpose is to enrich and rejuvenate the soil so that it can be used for years and years to come. These are just a couple of examples where our innovative Canadian farmers are leading the world in protecting our environment while ensuring that the Canadian agriculture and agrifood sector is sustainable, environmentally friendly, and economical.

Another technological advance over the last number of decades has been with the use of chemicals by farmers. They have become safer and they are used less. This means that everyone, from the farmer to the business to the consumer, and throughout the supply chain, is benefiting from these new technologies. Our ranch families are expert conservationists. They survive and thrive by ensuring that the land they use on a regular basis for their livelihoods is sustainable and healthy so that it may be passed on to future generations. This means that they are good stewards of the land that they tend to. Often on these pastures and ranch areas, there are significant varieties of wildlife and vegetation. Ranchers and farmers understand the biospheres of their land base and the surrounding land base. These are some of the challenges that are faced, often on a daily basis by our ranchers, which they handle so well.

One of the great tools that ranchers use in their land management plans is that of grazing. Grazing is an incredible conservation tool when used properly, and can ensure that grassland is environmentally sound and able to be used for generations to come. The Prairies were historically grazed by millions of migrating buffalo. The grasslands are kept as a healthy biosphere by the grazing animals of ranchers, as once was done by the free-ranging buffalo. These grazed grasslands provide habitat for native plants and animals.

All of these scenarios speak to the heart of my motion. Farmers and ranchers are conservationists and environmentalists. No farmer

or rancher wakes up in the morning dreaming of ways to wreck their land. They get up thinking of new ways that they can improve it. They do this because otherwise their land quality declines. It is in their best interest to consider how they can improve soil quality, improve the quality of the product they produce, and how they can do it while minimizing their impacts on the environment.

When it comes to conservation, I would like to speak about my experience serving as a member of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The committee does a lot of great work and has thus far produced two reports in Parliament. I am pleased to say that both of these reports were unanimous, meaning that they carry more weight with stakeholders and the government.

The last report that it had the honour of releasing in March was the report on protected areas and conservation within Canada. One of the opportunities that this study afforded committee members was the opportunity to travel to many communities, including some in southern Alberta. We met on the land with a rancher and farmer. He was able to discuss with us the extensive conservation projects they are working on. The ranch we visited is just outside of Cochrane and is called the Quarter Circle X Ranch. The owners and operators are John and Tracey Buckley. They, as many ranchers and farmers, have made a firm commitment to sustainability in how they deliver their product to the marketplace. They are a testament to how ranchers operate in communities across Canada. An important fact to remember is that over 98% of Canadian farms are family owned and operated, even today. These small-business owners are often the backbone of the economy, in countless rural economies across the country.

Canadians want access to affordable, nutritious food, and their preference will no doubt always be food that comes from Canadian farm operations. Ranchers play a major part in this work. They take care of the ever-important rangeland. Having healthy rangeland leads to a number of very positive outcomes and impacts on the natural environment. Our ranchers are able to manage the land, especially by the use of cattle, to ensure they are conserving this important land. One of the major benefits of having healthy ranchland is that they act as carbon sinks. I know there is some research that tells us Canada as a whole is a net carbon sink, and I hope we can capitalize and improve upon this research in the future.

Ranchers and farmers play a big part in this piece. This is one of the reasons this motion recognizes that ranchers and farmers are environmentalists and conservationists. This motion supports the fact that we have to tap into this valuable resource in the future. We need to protect this incredibly valuable rangeland, which delivers so many net benefits to our environment and well-being.

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•(1115)

One of the things that modern farmers realize is the growing consumer demand for information on where and how their food is grown, and whether it is grown or raised in the most sustainable manner possible. Thanks to many modern technological advances, Canadian farmers have ways to track this data. Many of the large food companies are following the lead of producers by being as transparent as possible with their clients.

This motion is one that I believe will resonate with Canadians from coast to coast, as well as from different age groups, backgrounds, and demographic groups. I also hope it will foster an important discussion on the rural-urban divide in Canada, whether real or imagined. Canada is a large geographic expanse with many different regions and ecosystems, and a vast area that is used for ranching and farming activities.

One of the issues of the past 150 years or so has been the rural exodus to cities. The vast majority of Canadians now live in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. I think this may lead to a certain divide in attitudes, ideals, and opinions. However, recognizing where our food comes from, who is growing it, or, in the case of live animals like cattle, raising it, we can help to show our friends and relatives in urban areas that our ranchers and farmers are sustainability focused and conservationists.

One of the great advancements that helps Canadian ranchers and farmers practise efficient and sustainable practices on their land is the advent of sound plant science. There are some innovative companies across Canada that contribute to this technological wisdom. There is an excellent company in my constituency for example, called Stamp Seeds. It is an expert in seed management for the agricultural sector.

A lot of this technology has had a major impact on how our farmers grow their product. It has led to a savings in water. The irrigation sector has become highly technologically advanced, which has created water savings, but has also created a tremendous environment for an incredibly varied biosphere.

Advanced agricultural practices have decreased soil erosion. It has meant that we can grow more food on the same land. It means we can use less fuel in the agriculture and agrifood sector. The advent of safe nutritious foods with increased production has meant that Canada can produce food for a hungry world without having to sacrifice our important land base.

When it comes to the conservation side of the equation, our ranchers and farmers are at the forefront of sustainability. In Canada, for example, we have a number of organizations that work with landowners to help them preserve important land. For our crucial wetlands, for instance, we have Ducks Unlimited, which is an organization that I am proud to support. Ducks Unlimited plays an important role in the preservation of wetlands. The Canadian wing of this international organization has projects throughout Canada. Ducks Unlimited is currently working with a number of organizations, both in industry and with ranchers and farmers across Canada, to create a plan to make Canada a world leader in sustainable agriculture.

Organizations that are participating are Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Croplife Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fertilizer Canada, Grain Growers of Canada, Soil Conservation Council of Canada, and the World Wildlife Fund Canada. This is a broad range of organizations which have come together with the goal of increasing our agricultural output while ensuring we do not need to use more land as one of the main objectives.

This is an excellent project, which will require a lot of know-how from our Canadian ranchers and farmers. They will be the ones doing all the work on the ground. Thanks to the support of the aforementioned organizations, it is my hope that this will become a reality. The study is being spearheaded by the Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Crops.

I believe that Motion No. 108 is a necessary display of support for our ranch and farm business industry, those who work in conservation every day. This motion is truly worthy of the support of dear hon. members, because I believe it is worded in a way that makes it universal. It applies to a variety of cereal crops and dairy businesses, to the woodlot stewards maintained as part of agricultural properties, to those who grow fruit and potatoes, and to those who work in wetland conservation and restoration within their agricultural operations.

This is an important way for us as Parliamentarians to recognize the people in our agriculture sector who play an important daily role in the work of conservation. I thank hon. members for listening to me, and I hope they will support me in this important motion here today.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Conservative Party colleague and friend for moving Motion No. 108. I would also like to congratulate him on his speech in the House of Commons today. I am always happy to talk to the House about agriculture and how important it is.

Not long ago, we had an NDP private member's bill that would have made it easier to transfer family farms. We know that the average Canadian farmer is getting older and starting to think about retirement. The bill would have enabled farmers to transfer their farms to their children for \$1. It would also have repaired a tax system injustice to facilitate the transfer of family farms. Unfortunately, the bill did not even make it to committee for detailed study.

I would like my colleague to comment on the importance of introducing measures to facilitate family farm transfers. I would also like to know if he is disappointed that all but a few Liberals voted against this important initiative to facilitate the transfer of farm businesses.

•(1120)

[*English*]

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, the hon. colleague's question is one of the larger ones out there in the sense of transferability of properties from generation to generation. Many of our farm operations are generationally transferred, and we should do anything we can to help.

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These are generational farms and ranches. People have cared for the property for generations and feel like they have been stewards of the lands for generations. They believe it is not their land, that it belongs to the country and they are just temporary stewards, so anything we can do to help the process for these stewards and conservationists in this small business backbone of our agricultural industry should be done.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for bringing this great motion forward. We never give enough recognition to farmers for what they do.

When I think back to my days in agriculture, I remember when we would work the field three or four times, and it would be dry and dusty, and the wind would blow the dust over the doorsteps and it would be all over the place. Now I look at the fuel consumption of tractors and the number of passes over the fields and I see how much that has changed.

Could the member give an example of what his area looked like in the 1960s and 1970s compared to what it looks like today?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, in my riding we have the four largest irrigation districts in the country. The technology has moved from flood irrigation to sprinklers that used a lot of power and wasted a lot of water. Now the sprinkling systems have underground piping to convey the water. The efficiency in water usage has increased by a minimum of one-third in the same property to increase crop productivity.

Farmers can use a computer at home to analyze their property's soil sampling and find that they need two inches on one part while on another piece they only need one-quarter of an inch because of the soil retention. The productivity change from the 1960s and 1970s when I was young and out there with a shovel in an irrigation ditch has come with the highly technical way that farms can use their lands. It is incredibly different. It is highly efficient and uses a lot less energy.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask how the provinces are seeing this issue in relation to the federal government. Farmers have some challenges in dealing with the provinces and with the federal government. How would Motion No. 108, which I will be speaking in support of shortly, cut through the provinces and the federal government in working with the farmers?

Mr. Martin Shields: Mr. Speaker, there are challenges in programs that are provincially supported and may be federally mandated, but if farmers are identified as conservationists and stewards of the land up front, in the sense that they are working together in the same process, it is easier to bring provincial departments of agriculture together with the federal government if they have a program they would like to implement. That co-operation, working with the agricultural sector provincially and federally, is a natural process. If we are all talking the same language and working together, it could be facilitated.

•(1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Bow River for raising the critical issue of

the link between agriculture and the environment. As we know, producers deserve our full support in making their farms even greener than they already are.

Farmers know how important it is to maintain soil, water, and air quality in order to support their farms and their livelihoods from generation to generation. They also know that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Our government knows this, and it also knows that farmers are excellent stewards of the land who take environmental conservation very seriously.

I would like to outline some of the investments we are making to help farmers capitalize on opportunities for sustainable growth, while adapting to climate change.

With the provinces and territories, the federal government is investing \$350 million over five years to support scientific research and environmental initiatives in the agriculture sector. This funding will support education and increased awareness of environmental risks on farms, and help put in place environmentally beneficial management practices such as planting rows of trees to reduce soil erosion, using fencing to protect streams and wildlife habitats, and improving farm equipment to better target the application of fertilizers and pesticides.

I want to point out that governments are working on the next agricultural policy framework, which includes programs that focus on environmental priorities on farms and are science-based in order to ensure the sustainable growth of the sector.

For example, we must better protect water quality, soil health, biodiversity, and air quality while implementing measures to adapt to climate change. We intend to better support the adoption of precision agriculture technologies, tools, and innovative products in order to help the agricultural sector enhance its contribution to Canada's climate change commitments.

The next agricultural policy framework will also support the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change with measures that enhance farmers' ability to store carbon in their lands.

The government is also strengthening its commitments by investing another \$27 million in its agricultural greenhouse gases program. This investment will support 20 new research projects to be carried out in partnership with Canadian universities and environmental groups.

These projects will study a variety of issues, ranging from the greenhouse gas emissions associated with blueberry, potato, and feed crop farming in British Columbia to the planting of willows in river-irrigated areas in Atlantic Canada in order to sequester carbon.

Overall, the renewed program seeks to help farmers reduce greenhouse gases and adapt to climate change in four main areas. These include a management and food strategy, carbon sequestering through land use and farming methods, agroforestry, and agricultural irrigation and drainage.

This \$27-million program supports research and development and raises awareness among farmers. For example, at the University of Alberta, a federal investment of \$3.7 million will be used to carry out three projects that will focus on the environmental footprint created by the farming of various grain crops, livestock grazing systems, and shelterbelts.

These projects will be led by scientists from the university with assistance from our scientists in Lethbridge. They will help farmers make their operations even greener than they already are.

At Dalhousie University, we are investing over \$1.7 million in a prospecting project on soil formation and evolution in order to determine the carbon and nitrogen content of the soil and assess each type of soil to determine its carbon storage potential.

• (1130)

We are also investing in excess of \$1.1 million in a project run by the Fiducie de recherche sur la forêt des Cantons-de-l'Est, a forestry research trust in the Eastern Townships, to find ways to reduce on-farm greenhouse gas emissions.

The agricultural greenhouse gases program is a nationwide program that will offer Canadian farmers practical and affordable solutions and help them continue to be leaders in sustainable agriculture.

Our government is working to make our agricultural sector more profitable, sustainable, and green. In the 2017 budget, we allocated an additional \$70 million to further support science and innovation that focuses on agricultural discovery. Research will focus on addressing emerging priorities, such as climate change and soil and water conservation.

All of this is in addition to our government's many other positive initiatives, including budget 2017's \$200-million investment in green technology and our \$5.2-million investment in the agricultural youth green jobs initiative, which will attract young Canadians to green jobs in the agriculture and agrifood sector.

This year, Canadians will celebrate our great nation's 150th birthday. We know that our world-class farmers are vital to feeding the global population and saving the planet. That is why our investments in the environment are essential.

I grew up on my ancestors' farm in La Prairie. Like all Canadian farmers, we understand the importance of protecting the earth, air, and water and making sure they are in good shape when our children take over. I was a fourth generation farmer, and I was very proud when my son took over the farm.

Once again, I thank the member for Bow River for raising the matter of how important farm-specific environmental programs are. We support this motion.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in support of Motion No. 108. I

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want to congratulate my colleague from Bow River on his initiative in moving this motion. I am very proud to rise and talk about agriculture and agrifood.

The motion before us today highlights the contribution farmers make to protecting our lands and the environment, and calls for measures to promote the conservation of agricultural land.

The motion proposes two extremely important concepts, namely, environmental protection and the conservation of Canada's agricultural heritage. This is very timely given that we are celebrating Canada's 150th birthday this year. We will have the opportunity to talk about the history and evolution of agriculture, as well as the investments that have been made and the changes that have taken place over the years.

The motion warrants special consideration because, despite how clear it is, it gives us the opportunity to raise several issues that are important to farmers and the future of agriculture in Canada. As agriculture and agrifood critic, I think it is important to talk about the extraordinary work done by Canada's agricultural producers when it comes to protecting our environment, improving our lands, and ensuring sustainable development. With that in mind, the government needs to continue to invest more to fight climate change, working closely and in partnership with farmers, providing them with the means to protect the environment and their lands using new technology.

Recently, private member's Bill C-274 was introduced in the House of Commons. The government needs to put measures in place to encourage the transfer of family farms. This bill sought to put an end to an injustice and make it easier to transfer farms. Canada lost more than 8,000 family farms over the past 10 years. In my riding, the regional municipality of Maskinongé has lost 146 family farms since 1979. Over \$50 billion in farm assets are set to change hands between 2016 and 2026. The government needs to be reminded that it missed a golden opportunity by failing to send Bill C-274 to committee for further study. The bill had the support of some 100 organizations across Canada. I would like to commend my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques for his initiative.

It is very important for family farms to be transferred to members of the same family, as doing so helps preserve agricultural land and ensure the survival of agriculture across Canada. As everyone knows, agricultural lands are not renewable, and we need to do everything that we can to protect them.

The NDP is the only federal party to have consulted stakeholders from across the country when developing an agriculture strategy. This bill, this policy, supported the conservation of agricultural land and raised the very important issue of our food sovereignty. The government announced that it will be holding consultations about this policy, and I will be following this very closely.

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Our vision connects Canadians from farm to fork. That is why we need to assess the whole situation and bring an integrated approach to federal policy that connects agriculture, rural development—we must not forget access to high-speed Internet in the regions—health, and income security. Adopting a pan-Canadian food strategy such as the one proposed by the NDP will ensure that young people and new farmers can access the capital and land they need to work in the agriculture sector.

• (1135)

Furthermore, a food strategy recognizes that the federal government has a key role to play in working with the provinces and territories to protect critical watersheds that cross provincial boundaries, to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to reduce food waste.

Essentially, a food strategy aims to ensure that everyone eats well and can access healthy and affordable food. It is important to ensuring that our agricultural communities are sustainable for generations to come and that Canadian products find growing markets both at home and abroad. We must protect our agricultural heritage because this is about food sovereignty.

I want to remind members about an issue that we debated at length in 2012. The previous Conservative Party eliminated the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration program in an omnibus bill. This was a really important program because it was responsible for rehabilitating lands affected by drought and erosion in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

We know that the previous government dismantled the program without the benefit of an environmental impact study. After it was dismantled, the pastures were transferred to the provinces. However, the problem is that, in some cases, the provinces sold the lands to private investors, and in most cases, they continue to lease them to ranchers, but at higher rates and with fewer services, all while ignoring the need to protect the environmental integrity of the Prairies.

This issue affects many stakeholders, including environmental groups, wilderness conservation groups, farmers, ranchers and young people who want to take up farming.

This issue is very important to the Prairies, but especially Saskatchewan, where there are still many pastures left to be transferred. We know that the transfers of these community pastures and lands will soon be complete, in 2018.

There is still time for the Liberal government to do something to save these prairie lands, and we are calling on it to do so.

I also want to touch on our supply management system. I think that, at one point, my most common utterances in the House of Commons were “protecting our supply management system” and “diafiltered milk”. We are asking the government to take action because concrete action is vital to protecting our supply management system. We know that the government has fallen short at times in terms of border control and protection, and that has led to financial losses for dairy producers.

Two weeks ago, the Auditor General of Canada told us that the Canada Border Services Agency should have assessed \$168 million

of customs duties on imports of quota-controlled goods. Producers suffered huge losses because the government fell down on border protection. Now our producers are paying the price and losing out on more revenue.

The federal government must implement concrete measures that will really make a difference and protect our supply management system to safeguard our family farms and ensure their long-term survival. Just recently, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food went to Washington. We met with a number of elected officials and explained to them why it is so important to protect our supply management system. Those were really important conversations.

We import between 8% and 10% of what we consume. The Americans import 2%. That is why it is important to have these meetings, especially with the prospect of NAFTA renegotiations looming.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the member for Bow River on moving today's Motion No. 108, which gives us an opportunity to talk about the importance of protecting agriculture in Canada.

• (1140)

We truly hope that the Liberal government will implement measures to facilitate the transfer of family farms and that it will invest more in the fight against climate change.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to support Motion No. 108. I am also very proud to represent the constituency of Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa, a major farming and ranching constituency. In fact, my constituency produces the most canola in Canada of any constituency.

Canada is a very large country; 10 million square kilometres. Within our 10 million square kilometres, there are just over 200,000 farms. They farm a very small part of Canada. They farm 680,000 square kilometres, or 6.8% of Canada's landmass. However, these 200,000 family farms, on 6.8% of the land area in Canada, provide a disproportionate contribution to Canadian society and the Canadian economy. They are also a repository of cultural and traditional ecological knowledge and values.

This constituency also has a very strong stewardship ethic and is blanketed with organizations known as conservation districts, where local people have gotten together to develop and promote conservation programming.

Right now, agriculture counts for about 8% of Canada's GDP and 12% of all employment. The food and beverage processing industry is the largest of all manufacturing industries in Canada. Overall, about 50% of Canada's agricultural production is exported, but in the west, where I come from, the number is 80%. Therefore, agriculture not only helps our Canadian economy, but it contributes very strongly to the balance of trade as well.

It is very clear that the relatively small number of primary agricultural producers in Canada sets off an enormous chain reaction of jobs, growth and employment that ripples throughout the entire Canadian economy. Not only that, but Canadian farmers produce the world's highest quality food and deliver extremely affordable food to Canadians.

In Canada, we spend about 10% of our disposable income on food. It is among the lowest in the entire world. The fact that low-income people can afford to eat well is one of the best social programs a country could ever have. In other words, we are all part of the culture of agriculture. Not only that, Canada's major cities are largely located within the agricultural regions of Canada, reflecting our country's settlement patterns.

However, we tend to take agriculture for granted and we all expect this flow of high-quality, abundant, and low-cost food to continue indefinitely, which is a good thing. However, society is now placing new environmental demands on farmers and ranchers and they have responded, utilizing techniques that were described earlier, such as zero tillage, where crops are grown without disturbing the soil.

I recall during the dry 1980s in Canada's Prairies when there were horrific dust storms in the spring. Much of the land was bare and high winds developed. These dust storms are no more, thanks to conservation farming techniques.

I know modern agriculture has been criticized in some corners, but I am a strong proponent of high-tech modern agriculture as an environmental benefit to all of society. The fact that we can grow more food on less land means we can also reserve certain lands for conservation purposes.

Let us look at ranchers like my colleague did. Ranchers have developed grazing techniques such as rest rotational grazing and remote watering that improve cattle weight gain, enhance water quality, and conserve biodiversity.

Regarding cattle ranching, I vehemently disagree with those who criticize the environmental performance of the beef cattle industry. Quite frankly, if we care about the environment, we should eat beef.

Well-managed grazing not only conserves and protects vital grasslands, but is critical to the survival of many endangered prairie birds. In fact, the Audubon Society, undoubtedly North America's most prestigious bird conservation organization, has launched the conservation ranching program. It works with ranchers to improve conservation outcomes. I will quote from one of its documents:

To combat these negative impacts and to keep grass on the landscape throughout North America, Audubon has developed the Conservation Ranching Program. This program is a collaboration with local ranchers within the North American Grasslands, ensuring that grazing regimes produce healthy habitats for target grassland bird species....cattle are an essential management tool for the prairie which led to Audubon's decision to promote their presence on grasslands.

Again, those of us who strongly support the cattle industry should speak loudly and proudly about the conservation benefits of the cattle industry.

• (1145)

The NAFTA Commission for Environmental Cooperation essentially said the same thing. The CEC is a commission of Canada, Mexico, and the United States created under NAFTA. It has released

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a series of reports underlining the importance of sustainable ranching and beef cattle trade to the grasslands and to the societies and economies of North America.

The crux of the issue, when it comes to conservation programming on private land, is that there is a mix of property rights on private land. The soil is privately owned, but the wildlife belongs to the crown. These rights often come into conflict. Farmers and ranchers by necessity change the landscape to continue agricultural operations, but quite frankly, the public has a legitimate interest in the management and conservation of public resources, such as wildlife, on private land.

The big question is how to manage the public interest while at the same time maintaining farm and ranch profitability. We can emphasize the enforcement approach or the incentive approach. Motion No. 108 talks about the incentive approach.

In most cases, the enforcement approach, which is telling farmers and ranchers how they must run their operations, has been a dismal failure. I recall the actions under the pre-2012 Fisheries Act and the current Species at Risk Act.

I am a member of the fisheries committee. In testimony before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, when we were reviewing changes the government wants to make to the 2012 Fisheries Act, which our government brought in, there was testimony from Ron Bonnett, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. On November 21, 2016, he said:

The experience that many farmers had with the Fisheries Act, unfortunately, was not a positive one. It was characterized by lengthy bureaucratic applications for permitting and authorizations, and a focus on enforcement and compliance measures taken by officials coupled with a lack of guidance or outreach on the purpose of these measures or information on how to navigate through the process.

Many farmers were then relieved when the changes that were made just a few years ago drastically improved the timeliness and cost of conducting regular maintenance and improvement activities to their farms as well as lifting the threat of being deemed out of compliance. That being said, I think we could find ourselves with an important opportunity to look at how protection can be enhanced in a way that works on the ground for those who earn their livelihood from productive natural resources.

The Species at Risk Act is problematic as well. It has a very strong enforcement role. Currently, it is actually a disincentive to have an endangered species on one's farm.

On the other hand, the incentive approach to dealing with conservation on private land has delivered real conservation outcomes. Again, from Mr. Bonnett's testimony:

I'd like to take this opportunity to share just a few examples from my own farm of growing stewardship actions that have improved fish habitat outcomes. Through Growing Forward 2 and species at risk funding, we were able to access incentive programs that contributed to the improvement of fish habitat. More specifically, through the provincially delivered environmental farm plan and the Species at Risk Act, we put fencing in to keep our livestock sufficiently away from water courses, which has increased water quality and fish population.

Private Members' Business

In order to provide fresh water for our cattle, we installed a solar powered off-stream watering system. This has led to the rehabilitation of the stream that runs through our pasture areas. These are just two examples from a single farm in northern Ontario that illustrate how stewardship approaches have improved fish habitat in agricultural landscapes through means other than a regulatory-based approach under the Fisheries Act.

When the committee reviewed the Fisheries Act, it unanimously approved recommendations 8 and 9. Recommendation 8 stated:

That Fisheries and Oceans Canada put sufficient protection provisions into the Fisheries Act that act as safeguards for farmers and agriculturalists, and municipalities.

Recommendation 9 stated:

That Fisheries and Oceans Canada work with the farm community and rural municipalities to provide incentives and expert advice to conserve and enhance fish habitat and populations and utilize the enforcement approach as a last resort.

It was made clear to the fisheries committee by the farm community that the enforcement approach simply does not work and that the incentive approach is the one we must take.

Under the Species at Risk Act, there is a really good program in place called the species at risk partnerships on agricultural lands program, or SARPAL. In Manitoba right now, the Manitoba Beef Producers are delivering the SARPAL program, which is as it should be, with the people who know what is going on on the land delivering actual programs.

• (1150)

However, Canada lags far behind the United States and Europe in terms of incentive-based agricultural programs. I hope Motion No. 108 will go a way toward changing that. I strongly urge all members to approve Motion. No. 108, which would not only improve the environment but also improve the lives of Canada's farm and ranch communities.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Bow River for raising the issue of land conservation and restoration on our farms.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food, and also having been born and raised on the Prairies, I know that Alberta farmers, and Canadian farmers, are responsible stewards of the land. Their goal is to leave the land in better shape for the next generation.

Farmers and ranchers have always been innovators. They still lead innovation as it relates to productivity and sustainability.

Last month we celebrated Earth Day. On the farm, every day is earth day. Across the country, Canadian farmers are taking action to safeguard their soil, air, and water resources. We know that our farmers are part of the climate change solution. Their sustainable practices have offset part of Canada's emissions by increasing the amount of carbon stored in agricultural soil. They continue to make great strides in reducing agriculture's environmental footprint through higher-yielding crops, more effective use of inputs, such as fertilizers, and the adoption of technologies that use water efficiently.

They use practices like zero tillage, which keeps carbon in the soil and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Twenty-five years ago, zero tillage was basically unheard of on Canadian fields. Today, according to Statistics Canada, almost 60% of Canada's farmers

leave the plough in the shed. Not disturbing the soil through tillage, and leaving plant material on the ground, reduces soil erosion, maintains moisture, and captures carbon in the soil.

Farmers apply nitrogen fertilizers in more efficient ways that safeguard the environment and improve the bottom line. Over the past 20 years, wheat producers have reduced their fuel consumption per tonne of wheat harvested by 40%.

Cattle producers have also reduced their environmental footprint. Over the past three decades, farmers have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 15% per kilo through innovative advancements in genetics and feeding. At the same time, they are increasing their production by over 30%. These numbers are unreal. If they were in manufacturing, they would be in every headline in every paper in the country. Canadian dairy farmers can now produce the same quantity of milk as they did 20 years ago with close to half the number of cows and with 20% less in greenhouse gas emissions.

The Canadian agriculture sector has a solid track record in innovation and the adoption of new technologies that have reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Innovations in land management, feeding, breeding, and genetics mean that while Canadian agricultural productivity has increased, emissions have remained stable. Producers are reducing their environmental footprint through new crop varieties and technologies that allow for higher yields on the same land base.

Clearly, Canada's farmers are up to the challenge of harnessing innovation to find affordable and practical solutions to feeding the world sustainably.

When it comes to programs to support environmental action on farms, our government supports Canadian farmers and will continue to do so. Through our solid investments in innovation and sustainable practices, we are making a real difference in the lives of farmers and farm families across the country. We understand that science and innovation are the keys to driving the sector forward sustainably while at the same time growing our exports and creating job opportunities in the agriculture sector.

Budget 2017 committed to ongoing support for farmers through investments in research, innovation, and science infrastructure. The University of Guelph has been a proud recipient of many grants for research in these areas. That includes an investment of \$200 million in support of clean technologies in the natural resources sectors, including agriculture. We are also proud to be investing \$70 million in agricultural science and innovation, focusing on priority areas such as water and soil conservation.

• (1155)

I would like to take a moment to highlight our \$27-million investment in the agricultural greenhouse gases program, which will help create technologies, practices, and processes to help the sector adjust to climate change and to improve soil and water conservation by developing new farming practices and methods.

Government Orders

Environmental farm plans are another tremendous success story in our industry. Supported by federal, provincial, and territorial investments, farmers make individualized plans for environmental improvements on their farms. Environmental farm planning brings industry, the provinces, the territories, and the federal government together to take concrete action on the environment. They deliver practical solutions farmers can use to help the environment while boosting their bottom line.

Over the past quarter-century, more than 70,000 Canadian farmers have developed environmental farm plans. They have invested untold hours and dollars in environmental improvements, supported by investments from the provinces, territories, and the federal government.

Canada is showing global leadership on the environment. We reaffirmed our strong support for international action on the environment a year ago, when the Prime Minister signed the Paris climate agreement of COP 21.

Our investments are supporting on-farm action on the environment. Through these investments, we are supporting science to help producers reduce their environmental footprint through higher-producing crops; the effective use of inputs, such as fertilizers; improvements in animal genetics and nutrition; and technologies that use water more efficiently.

We are now looking ahead to the next agricultural policy framework that will replace Growing Forward 2 in 2018, something we have been discussing extensively at the agriculture committee. Governments agree that one of the priorities of the framework will be to help the sector capitalize on opportunities for sustainable growth while adapting to climate change.

Farmers are faced with the challenge of increasing production to feed a growing population while protecting land and water resources. Our government is committed to ensuring that farmers have the tools and the support they need to grow, to innovate, and to improve on their excellent land conservation and stewardship record.

It is great to see that the member for Bow River and other members of the House are as concentrated on this as the government. I thank the member for Bow River for initiating this discussion and for bringing forward the motion for us to discuss today.

● (1200)

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it truly is an honour to rise today in support of my colleague from Bow River and of Motion No. 108.

Canadians, especially those in urban centres, do not understand the environmental impact our farmers and ranchers have on their communities. My riding of Foothills, which is in southwestern Alberta, is in the heart of cattle country. Alberta beef comes from my riding, for the most part, and I am proud of the efforts of our farmers.

It is unfortunate that often our farmers and ranchers are overlooked for their environmental stewardship and the efforts they have made to ensure that their land is protected not only for themselves but for future generations. The member for Bow River talked about how important it is for farmers and ranchers to protect their land because it is part of the country, but they also want to

protect their land because they know they are going to hopefully pass it on to future generations. I have several farms in my riding that have been in the same family for more than a century, and that is something we are extremely proud of.

Those farms and ranches would not remain viable and successful businesses if farmers were not able to innovate, be efficient, and ensure that they were run as businesses. When it comes to running a farm as a business, every efficiency possible has to be found. A lot of that goes hand in hand with ensuring that they use every environmental technology and innovation that arises as technology changes.

Let us look at zero tillage. A generation ago, farmers in my riding, I am sure, were tilling their fields on an annual basis, but now we would be hard pressed to find even one who would be doing that. That shows how they have changed their methods and their technology to ensure that they protect the land not only for themselves but for future generations.

Many of the farmers and ranchers in my riding use wind turbines and solar power to heat their barns to ensure that the troughs remain thawed throughout the winter.

These are some of the things our farmers and ranchers are doing each and every day to protect their land for future generations.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1205)

[English]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, commencing upon the adoption of this Order and concluding on Friday, June 23, 2017:

(a) on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the ordinary hour of daily adjournment shall be 12:00 a.m., except that it shall be 10:00 p.m. on a day when a debate, pursuant to Standing Order 52 or 53.1, is to take place;

(b) subject to paragraph (e), when a recorded division is demanded in respect of a debatable motion, including any division arising as a consequence of the application of Standing Order 61(2) or Standing Order 78, but not including any division in relation to the Business of Supply or arising as a consequence of an order made pursuant to Standing Order 57, (i) before 2:00 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of oral questions at that day's sitting, or (ii) after 2:00 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, or at any time on a Friday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of oral questions at the next sitting day that is not a Friday;

(c) notwithstanding Standing Order 45(6) and paragraph (b) of this Order, no recorded division requested after 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 22, 2017, or at any time on Friday, June 23, 2017, shall be deferred, except for any recorded division which, under the Standing Orders, would be deferred to immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on Wednesday, September 20, 2017;

Government Orders

(d) the time provided for Government Orders shall not be extended pursuant to Standing Order 45(7.1) or Standing Order 67.1(2);

(e) when a recorded division, which would have ordinarily been deemed deferred to immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on a Wednesday governed by this Order, is demanded, the said division is deemed to have been deferred until the conclusion of oral questions on the same Wednesday;

(f) any recorded division which, at the time of the adoption of this Order, stands deferred to immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on the Wednesday immediately following the adoption of this Order shall be deemed to stand deferred to the conclusion of oral questions on the same Wednesday;

(g) a recorded division demanded in respect of a motion to concur in a government bill at the report stage pursuant to Standing Order 76.1(9), where the bill has neither been amended nor debated at the report stage, shall be deferred in the manner prescribed by paragraph (b);

(h) for greater certainty, this Order shall not limit the application of Standing Order 45(7);

(i) no dilatory motion may be proposed after 6:30 p.m.;

(j) notwithstanding Standing Orders 81(16)(b) and (c) and 81 (18)(c), proceedings on any opposition motion shall conclude no later than 5:30 p.m. on the sitting day that is designated for that purpose, except on a Monday when they shall conclude at 6:30 p.m. or on a Friday when they shall conclude at 1:30 p.m.; and

(k) when debate on a motion for the concurrence in a report from a standing, standing joint or special committee is adjourned or interrupted, the debate shall again be considered on a day designated by the government, after consultation with the House Leaders of the other parties, but in any case not later than the twentieth sitting day after the interruption.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to government Motion No. 14. For the benefit of members, the motion would extend the sitting of the House until we rise for the summer adjournment.

We have much to accomplish in the coming weeks. Our government has an ambitious legislative agenda that we would like to advance in order to deliver on the commitments we made to Canadians in the last election. Let me reflect on our recent legislative achievements before I turn to the important work that lies before us over the next four weeks.

In our last sitting week, the House and Senate were able to reach agreement on securing passage of Bill C-37, which would put in place important measures to fight the opioid crisis in Canada. I would like to thank members of the House for the thoughtful debate on this bill and for not playing politics with such an important piece of legislation. In particular, I would like to thank members of the New Democratic Party for co-operating with the government to advance this bill when it was in the House and for helping us dispense with amendments from the Senate. This was a high watermark for the House and I hope that we can take this professional and courteous approach forward. I would also like to thank senators for their important contributions to this bill.

• (1210)

[Translation]

I would also like to point out the passage of two crucial bills related to trade. The first, Bill C-30, would implement an historic trade agreement with the European Union. The second, Bill C-31, would implement a trade agreement with Ukraine, a country that is dear to many members.

I am proud that our government continues to open the doors to trade and potential investment in Canada to grow our economy and help build a strong middle class.

[English]

In looking forward to the next four sitting weeks, I would like to highlight a few priority bills that our government will seek to advance. I will start with Bill C-44, which would implement budget 2017. This bill is about creating good middle-class jobs today while preparing Canadians for the jobs of tomorrow.

I will provide some examples of the initiatives that will contribute to building a strong middle class. The budget makes smart investments to help adult workers retain or upgrade their skills to adapt to changes in the new economy and to help young people get the skills and work experience they need to start their careers.

[Translation]

The budget also provides for investments in the well-being of Canadians, with the emphasis on mental health, home care, and health care for indigenous peoples.

Bill C-44 would provide financing to the provinces for home care and mental health care. It would also create leave for those who wish to care for a critically ill adult or child in their family. These initiatives help build stronger communities.

[English]

I would also like to point to initiatives in the budget that deal with gender equality. The first-ever gender statement will serve as a basis for ongoing, open, and transparent discussions about the role gender plays in policy development. Our government has other initiatives that aim to strengthen gender equality. For example, Bill C-25 encourages federally regulated companies to promote gender parity on boards of directors and to publicly report on the gender balance on these boards.

Another bill, which I will discuss in greater detail later in my remarks, is Bill C-24, a bill that would level the playing field to ensure a one-tier ministry. The bill has a simple premise. It recognizes that a minister is a minister, no matter what portfolio he or she holds.

Our government has committed to legalizing and strictly regulating the production, distribution, sale, and possession of cannabis. I look forward to the debate on this important bill tomorrow. I will note that the bill would provide strong safeguards and deterrents to protect young people from enticements to use or access cannabis.

The government has taken a responsible approach in seeking to legalize cannabis by ensuring that law enforcement agencies have approved methods to test the sobriety of drivers to guard against cannabis use while operating a motorized vehicle. This afternoon, the House will continue to debate this bill, which, I will happily note, has support from all opposition parties in the House. I hope that we can agree to send this bill to committee on Wednesday.

Government Orders

Now I would like to return to our government's commitment to improving gender equality. Bill C-24, which stands in my name, seeks to formalize the equal status of the ministerial team. This bill is very straightforward in its nature. It is fundamentally about the equality of all ministers. We strongly believe that the Minister of Status of Women should be a full minister. We believe that the Minister of Science and the Minister of Democratic Institutions should be full ministers.

I am disappointed that the Conservatives do not share this fundamental belief in equality. I think we should send this bill to committee for a detailed study of what the bill actually does.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

I would like to draw members' attention to another piece of legislation, Bill C-23, regarding an agreement with the United States on the preclearance of persons and goods between our two countries.

This bill is currently being studied by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. The principle of the bill is simple. It is about ensuring a more efficient and secure border by expanding preclearance operations for all modes of transportation. This will increase the number of trips and the volume of trade, which will strengthen both of our economies.

As members may know, preclearance operations currently take place at eight Canadian airports, and immigration pre-inspection is also conducted at multiple locations in British Columbia in the rail and marine modes.

Once that bill comes back from committee, I hope that we can work together to send it to the other place.

[*English*]

In our last sitting week, our government introduced comprehensive modernization of our transportation systems. A strong transportation system is fundamental to Canada's economic performance and competitiveness. Bill C-49 does just that. The bill would enhance the utility, efficiency, and fluidity of our rail system so that it works for all participants in the system. Freight rail is the backbone of the Canadian economy. It moves everything from grain and potash to oil and coal, to the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, and the food we eat.

I would also like to draw to the attention of members provisions in Bill C-49 that would strengthen Canada's air passenger rights. While the precise details of the air passenger rights scheme will be set out in regulations, the objective is that rights should be clear, consistent, transparent, and fair for passengers and air carriers.

Finally, our government committed to creating a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. Bill C-22 seeks to accomplish two interrelated goals, ensuring that our security intelligence agencies are effective in keeping Canadians safe, while at the same time safeguarding our values, rights and freedoms, and the open, generous, inclusive nature of our country.

I appreciate the work that was done in the House committee to improve the bill. The bill is currently before the Senate national security committee, and I look forward to appearing before that

committee with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Sitting a few extra hours for four days per week will also give the House greater flexibility in dealing with unexpected events. While it is expected that the Senate will amend bills, it is not always clear which bills and the number of bills that could be amended by the Senate. As we have come to know, the consideration of Senate amendments in the House takes time. This is, in part, why we need to sit extra hours. I know that members work extremely hard balancing their House duties and other political duties. I expect that extending the hours will add to the already significant workload.

I wish to thank members for their co-operation in these coming weeks. As I reflect upon my time as government House leader, there were examples where members of the House came together, despite their political differences, and advanced initiatives that touched directly upon the interests of all Canadians. I hope that over the four remaining sitting weeks before we head back to work in our ridings, we can have honest and frank deliberations on the government's priorities and work collaboratively to advance the agenda that Canadians sent us here to implement.

In the previous Parliament, when the government decided to extend the sittings in June of 2014, Liberal members supported that motion. We knew then, as we know now, that our role as legislators is a privilege, and we discharge our parliamentary functions in support of our constituents.

There will be initiatives that the government will bring forward over the coming weeks that will enjoy the support of all members, and there will be issues on which parties will not agree. Our comportment during this time will demonstrate to Canadians that we are all in this together, despite our differences, for the good of this great country. Let us not lose sight of that.

I believe the motion before the House is reasonable. I hope opposition members can support sitting a few extra hours for four days a week for the next few weeks to consider important legislation for Canadians.

● (1220)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it is going to take more than extended hours to get the current government to keep its promises, since it has broken so many of them already.

Government Orders

If the minister is seeking partisan co-operation, she did not really start on a strong note by completely misstating the opposition's position on Bill C-24. Bill C-24 is about the government wanting to pay its junior ministers more. It has nothing to do with gender equality. The minister claimed it is about gender equality. The Prime Minister happened to choose to appoint women to junior ministerial portfolios. That was a choice he made, not a choice anyone else made.

I want to ask a really simple question for the minister about Bill C-24. Under that bill, are these junior ministers now empowered to bring a memorandum to cabinet? That is an important part of the powers of senior ministers. If we have real ministerial equality, then they would have that power. Would Bill C-24 empower junior ministers to bring memoranda to cabinet, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, this is fundamentally about equality. This government believes that the Minister of Science, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, and the Minister of Status of Women are full ministers.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Then answer the question.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: The work they do is important work, and that is why we believe that all ministers should be treated like ministers. Let us co-operate.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Is that a yes or a no? What is the answer to the question?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: We know we can work better in this place, and that is why it is important that ministers be able to make important decisions. Let us advance this legislation. Let us let the committee do its important work so it can study the bill. We look forward to continuing to deliver to Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Todd Doherty): The hon. colleagues are putting me in a difficult spot. We have asked the question and we will wait for the answer and respond accordingly.

With that, questions and comments, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we thought we might take some liberties while you are in the chair, it is only because we know you are so capable and can handle it so well.

I am going to resist the temptation to get into substantive debate on the bills that the House leader mentioned in her speech and instead ask about the motion.

We know that the government has some legislation that it has not passed yet. It actually does not have very much legislation at all, but it wants to get the balance of the legislation passed before summer. Part of that is because of the government's ineptitude. It is because the Liberals refused to honour a long-standing parliamentary tradition of seeking all-party consensus before making changes to the Standing Orders. Their failure to honour that principle cost them a lot of time in the House, but that was their decision, not ours. They had another problem, interestingly, on a bill that had to do with preventing genetic discrimination, which was that they had over 40 members of their caucus vote against them. It created a bit of a

disciplinary problem, because they can maybe kick one person out of their caucus, but they cannot kick over 40 out of their caucus.

This motion is not just going to put increased strain on opposition members; it is also going to make the Liberal backbench pay for the ineptitude of cabinet, who, by refusing to acknowledge that simple principle of parliamentary tradition, wasted time in the House and did not get the Liberals' legislation through, and now they are asking their backbench to modify their schedules to spend more time away from their family when the government has professed a commitment to a family-friendly Parliament.

Could the minister tell us if this is really the Liberals trying to kill two birds with one stone? Are they trying to get legislation through that earlier they could not, because they were refusing a long-standing parliamentary principle, and also trying to punish over 40 members of their caucus for not toeing the line on other bills? The seals are going to clap anyway, and the ones who are going to be really disappointed and frustrated are the 40 members who voted against that bill.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, members of the Liberal caucus are my colleagues, just like members on the opposite benches are my colleagues, and no member in the House will refer to my colleagues as seals, first of all.

Second, we are people. We are here to represent Canadians, and that is what we will do. Regardless of political stripe, we know that we represent Canadians to make tough decisions. We work in the House every single day. Let us sit a few more hours so that we can have meaningful debate.

The member might be a stranger to having debate and might not be aware of what free votes look like. We committed to free votes. We made a commitment to Canadians about an open and transparent government in which members of Parliament could represent their constituents. This is something I have been looking forward to. We have not seen it in over a decade from the previous government.

Obviously the member has forgotten when he was in the opposition benches, but we are okay with Canadians representing Canadians. We are okay with members of Parliament representing their constituents. If that means we cannot always vote together, that is okay, because we want diversity of thought and we want those perspectives to be represented. That is part of our democracy, and that is why Canada has one of the strongest democracies.

Let us work a couple more hours for Canadians. That is what the motion is about. Let us get the agenda that Canadians sent us here to deliver on. Let us advance it for them so that they can have the opportunities they deserve and that we owe them.

I am just saying we should work a little harder together and co-operate a little bit more. I know we can do it. As our Prime Minister said, better is always possible, and each of us has a responsibility to our constituents.

Government Orders

•(1225)

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. House leader mentioned she would like to see certain bills moved from the House to committee. The two that I referred to were Bill C-24 and Bill C-46, which do deal with fundamental principles of gender equality and impaired driving.

Could the member explain to the House why she feels it is important to get these bills to committee for study?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, that is a fabulous question, and it is part of the work that we do in this place. It is important in the debates that we have in this chamber that members of Parliament be able to represent their constituents, to have the tough conversations that Canadians sent us here to have, but what is important about the committee process is that committees can hear from experts. They can bring in witnesses, hear from stakeholders, and scrutinize legislation in a way that is not possible in this place. That is why we are saying to send it to committee. Let us let the committee do the important work they do.

Part of the commitment we made to Canadians was to empower committees to do that important work. That is why we increased resources to committees. Let us send this important legislation that affects everyday Canadians to committee to scrutinize the legislation. Then let us bring it back here to ensure that it is in its best form.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we say, “Bring it.”

We are the party of hard-working Canadians. Canadians do not work nine to five. Many constituents work beyond normal hours, so we welcome this motion coming forth.

However, as was said earlier, there are some questions about squandered time. Opposition supply days give us a voice to argue things that are important to all of Canada, but they will now be seen as half-days, half supply days. We will not get the full time to argue those comments and those issues that are important to the opposition.

My question, then, is why do we get extended time to debate the issues the Liberals feel are important, but not so much the extended time to debate the issues that the opposition members and those who elected the opposition members feel are important?

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I know that the previous government referred to itself as a Conservative government and felt that it represented only Conservatives. This government is the government of Canada. We represent all Canadians. That is why we are having the tough conversations we committed to.

When it comes to the member's question, we appreciate opposition days because they bring important issues to this place, and the member will have the same number of hours that the member would normally have had for opposition days.

Let us extend sitting hours so that we can advance important legislation that Canadians sent us here to debate, which is the mandate that Canadians gave this government, a mandate that every single member in this Parliament, in this House of Commons, knows is important to everyday middle-class Canadians. Let us talk about this important legislation, have meaningful debate, and work in the

best interests of all Canadians. I know we can work better together. That is the underlying principle of this motion.

When the previous Conservative government brought forward a very similar motion in 2014, Liberal members recognized the importance of working hard at that time. We work hard. Every member of Parliament and every Canadian works hard. This is not a competition about who works harder. Whether I am here in this place or in my riding where my constituents elected me, I work hard every single day, and I am confident that every single one of my colleagues does the same thing.

•(1230)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today in my capacity as opposition House leader to speak to the Liberal government motion, Motion No. 14. The motion before us essentially proposes to do one thing, the end result of which is to extend the sitting hours in the House of Commons until midnight Monday to Thursday until the end of the parliamentary sittings in June.

I would say on the face of it that with respect to working longer hours, the Conservatives absolutely support working as hard, as long, and as much as we need to. As one of my colleagues has already mentioned, we are the party of hard-working taxpayers. The people who support us in every election are the people who work shift work, in factories; who work on farms, planting, harvesting, building; who drive trucks, which haul the great things that we manufacture and grow here in Canada. We understand that there are Canadians who work long hours. For some, it is shift work, but for others it is working 12 to 16 hours a day, many times away from their families, and many times making huge sacrifices. We have men and women in the military who are away from their families for months at a time, and who make that sacrifice for Canadians because they have made a commitment to do a certain job.

On this side of the House, as Conservatives, that is what we ascribe to, and it is why we believe we are representing our constituents so well. We have no problem being here. People talk about being family friendly. Sure, we would all love to be with our families every day. However, when we decided to run for this position, our families and those people who love and support us knew what the price would be.

Government Orders

Therefore, I think that whatever an individual does, we have to take the costs into consideration and then go forward positively, without complaining about how hard we have to work or how we have to be away from our families. That can be difficult, but what an honour and privilege it is to work here every day. I think our families, on every side of the House, are proud of what we do. They have many opportunities that the families of those who are not working as members of Parliament do not get. Therefore, as much as I support doing things so that we can be together with our families, I believe that our job here is to represent Canadians and to work as hard and as long for them as need be.

Our issue with Motion No. 14 is not about the extended hours, as we are okay to work and we will be here. In fact, I need to mention that it was this party that rose on a multitude of occasions over the last few months to ask for emergency debates to sit longer, to be able to talk about some important things, such as the jobs crisis in Alberta, or things going on in other parts of the country. I know there have been a number of issues that have been requested as topics for emergency debate, many of which were denied. However, it is not we, as Conservatives, who do not want to work late. We like to be here debating. That issue in and of itself is something we understand.

The problem is that the Liberals have squandered an amazing opportunity that they had. They came into government with a majority, and with a House leader at that time who was working with the House leader at this time. It was a big opportunity that was squandered. I will talk about that in a few moments. Members will recall it as Motion No. 6. However, we pressed the reset button and a new House leader was put in place. This new House leader was supposed to be coming with a new tone and a mandate to respect Parliament and the work we do here. Unfortunately, the goodwill that we had been working together very well on was squandered when the Liberals decided to push ahead and change the Standings Orders unilaterally, and I will talk a little more about that. However, they have squandered an opportunity, which was the desire to work here to do things.

We all understand that when legislation is put forward by the government, it believes it has a mandate to fulfill that. We are using all the tools available to argue against that legislation and to bring our perspective forward. However, as we have seen, day in and day out, week in and week out, the Liberals have the majority, so at the end of the day when a vote happens, we lose the vote, and they get their legislation through.

• (1235)

Even with that, they have blown and made a mess of a whole bunch of opportunities that we have had, and I will give an example. Our Conservative government under Stephen Harper had an aggressive legislative agenda, and we worked very hard to get it done. We recognize that as government there is an agenda and we have to work to get it done.

The Liberals on the other hand, though, since they have come into government, seem to care more about the perks of being a government rather than getting things done through the passage of legislation. The Liberals have a lot of time for travel. The Prime Minister has lots of time to travel abroad. Many, many holidays are required, lots of photographs needed, lots of staged photographs

needed, and then more staged photographs. It is actually a bit embarrassing to watch when we have so many—

An hon. member: It's working well so far. It's got you where you are today.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Can you stop the heckling, Mr. Speaker? He is heckling me.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe there was heckling on both sides, but I would ask the whole House to maybe show some respect for people who are speaking.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it seems that the Liberals and the Prime Minister have a lot of time for staged selfies and office renovations. The minute that the Liberals were elected, there were millions of dollars spent on office renovations. I think one television set was \$15,000. That was one television set for a very important minister, I am sure, who really needed a very expensive television. The Minister of Infrastructure spent \$800,000 on massive renovations to his office. The Minister of Status of Women spent another million dollars.

There were Snapchat filters, more photo ops, and a lot of work trying to get Fridays off. That was another big priority for the Liberals. Instead of working on legislation and getting things passed, the Liberals had and continue to have other priorities. That seems to be the perks and fun of being in government, as opposed to the hard work of debating and getting legislation through.

To highlight this, one only needs to compare our Conservative government record against the current Liberal record. Our 2006 Conservative minority government, compared to the current Liberal record with a majority government, in the same amount of time, managed to pass more than twice as many bills. Lest anyone say it was because we used time allocation, the Liberals have used time allocation on virtually every single one of the bills that they did manage to get passed.

The fact is, we were more serious about governing. Members of Parliament sit here day after day and see only one member get up to ask questions. There are other members who participate in actually giving a speech, but when it comes to questions and answers, we do not see the Liberal members on the other side getting up and asking questions. I guess they are busy doing other work. The Liberals do not seem to understand what it means to be in government. When we were in government, the entire team was up asking questions, debating, and listening. That was our job. We could not just come in here and ponder other things going on in our lives. We asked questions, and we certainly did not let one member dominate day in and day out.

Therefore, I challenge my Liberal colleagues on the other side. It is time that they start standing up and asking questions and not letting the member for Winnipeg North take all of their glory and, more importantly, abdicating their jobs to him. They are good at what they do. They need to stand up and participate. They need to stand up before the member for Winnipeg North. We need to hear questions from everyone on that side of the House. That is not in my notes. That is just a bit of free advice for the members opposite.

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I am very proud that we managed to pass twice as many bills in the same amount of time, and in a minority Parliament no less. It is a striking difference, and it speaks volumes about how little the Liberal government is focused on results.

It is also interesting that last year the Liberals did not extend the hours at the end of the session. One can only guess that perhaps it was because they were not getting as much media coverage and some pressure in regard to the lack of legislation they have passed.

While we are more than ready, willing, and able to work extended hours, we do have some concerns with Motion No. 14. Therefore, I want to take a few minutes to talk about those concerns.

The motion would primarily extend the sitting hours, but it is interesting to see what is not included in the motion. Opposition days remain exactly the same. The government wants to have more time to debate its legislation. It feels it needs more time, and it wants to give us more time. I understand that. We are willing to be here and to do that. However, if that logic holds true, then the opposition also needs that extended time to counter and debate and talk about issues that the opposition has to talk about. It is only logical that if the government needs a certain amount of time and needs extended time, then the one day we have set aside for opposition day, we should also have, in relative terms, that same extension. That is not asking for anything unreasonable. That is a very reasonable and logical request.

Supply motions are categorized as government business and play an important role in our system of government. That is important to note. It is actually part of government business; it is part of how Parliament works.

• (1240)

We do not believe that opposition motions should be exempt from extended debates, making for opposition half-days, about which my hon. colleague talked. The opposition should not be punished for the government's mismanagement of its own agenda.

O'Brien and Bosc, at page 850, states:

The setting aside of a specified number of sitting days on which the opposition chooses the subject of debate derives from the tradition which holds that Parliament does not grant supply until the opposition has had an opportunity to demonstrate why it should be refused.

It stands to reason that if the time allotted to the government is extended, then the time allotted to the opposition to perform its important role to scrutinize the government should also be extended.

There are 128 sitting days in this calendar year. Just 22 of those days are allotted to the opposition, and there are two oppositions. That leaves 106 days to the government. The length of these sitting days is the same for both government and the opposition.

Motion No. 14 distorts this balance and is keeping with the government's agenda, unfortunately, of proposing changes to the rules that offer less, and less, and less time for the opposition to do its job and scrutinize the government. If the government feels it needs more time to consider its agenda, then obviously the opposition needs more time to scrutinize what the government is doing.

The hon. House leader for the government just spoke moments ago and said that Canadians elected the government to do something, that Canadians elected the Liberal government.

Well, Canadians elected each one of us on this side of the House as well. Canadians elected us to do a job. Although the Liberals may want an audience and not an opposition, Canadians have asked us to be the opposition. We take that job seriously, and we will do that job. It really bares the motives behind the Liberals cutting off all the tools we have, even with extending sitting days, not allowing us to have our extended opposition days. That is a big problem with the motion, and one that we seriously ask the government to reconsider; that it would allow us an opposition day to go to until midnight as well. It only makes sense.

Another issue we have some problems with stems from the government's previously stated threat to systemically use closure to shut down all debates from now until the end of June, when the House adjourns for the summer.

The threat of shutting down debate on all government business is particularly egregious, given that this would presumably include shutting down debate on any debates regarding changes to the Standing Orders, which the government House leader has previously stated she intends on doing by passing a motion to implement changes to the Standing Orders before we adjourn in June. We have a problem with this. Let me explain why.

The government continues to offer up the threat of making changes to the Standing Orders and it does with the threat that it is going to do it unilaterally. These changes are tailored to benefit only one side of the parliamentary equation.

Someone once said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. If the government House leader does indeed proceed with her threat to propose a unilateral motion changing the Standing Orders, she will be repeating the mistake her government made just a month or two ago at the procedure and House affairs committee.

For everyone's benefit, let me briefly review how all of this started and how all of this bad faith and all of this poison entered the House just a few months ago.

The Liberal House leader published proposals that would undermine the opposition, but she published them in a so-called discussion paper. Within hours of the discussion paper coming out, the Liberal member of the Standing Committee of Procedure and House Affairs submitted a closure motion, proposing an end to all discussion on the discussion paper. We have heard over and over again that it was a discussion paper, that we were supposed to have a conversation, that we were supposed to have a dialogue, that it would open and transparent, mom and apple pie. Except it was none of that because no discussion would be happening at that committee. Now we are hearing from the House leader that there will be no discussion happening in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

•(1245)

Let us remember exactly what the Liberals want to change. We know they want Fridays off and we know it is a big deal to them. They do not want to be working Fridays. They do not realize that Canadians work five days a week, and many times it is more than five days a week.

Then, and I think this all boils down to the Prime Minister, he only wants to be here to answer questions for 45 minutes, one day a week. Last Wednesday, nothing was answered. The Wednesday before that, nothing was actually answered again. We we asked the same question 19 times, and it was a very simple question. How many times has the Prime Minister met with the Ethics Commissioner? As members know, the Prime Minister is under investigation by the Ethics Commission for his ethical lapses and for breaking the rules around travelling in private aircraft.

The Prime Minister was supposedly here for 45 minutes to answer questions. We asked him a really simple question. He could have said that he would not answer that, that he thought it should be private between him and the Ethics Commissioner. That is one option. We might not have liked it, but it would have been an answer. He could have said that he had met with her once. If that was true, that would have been wonderful. He could have said that he had met with her three times. If that was true, that would have been refreshing. He could have said that he had not met with her, but he planned to.

There were a lot of options. The Prime Minister had 19 times to formulate an answer, but he did not answer. The fact that he only wants to be here 45 minutes, one day a week, to give us that kind of a performance, to slap Canadians in the face by not answering a very simple question is something we absolutely cannot accept on this side of the House. However, it is key to the reforms and the changes the Liberals want to ram through.

The Liberals also want to ram through changes on omnibus bills and proroguing. Again, it is so ironic. We just saw time allocation on an omnibus bill that they just rammed through. We cannot make it up. It is hilarious, but it is actually very sad to see. It is so disingenuous.

When this first happened and the government House leader said the government was going to ram these changes through, there was filibustering at the committee. We were intent on not letting that happen. When that happened, we sat down and wrote a letter. When I say “we”, it was the House leader of the NDP, as well as Conservatives. Together, we sat down and offered a better way. We wanted to offer a solution. We are still open to a solution and finding ways to fix this.

I want to talk a little about some great examples of the way Standing Orders rules can be changed so everybody agrees. I want to quickly explain why it is so important that everybody agrees.

When we change the Standing Orders, we change the way we operate here. However, it does not just affect us now, it will affect all governments and all oppositions. Therefore, when we come together on these changes through consensus, that means each side has to explain that the change it is proposing is not just for its own benefit. Each side needs to make the argument. For example, as an

opposition member, I need to make the argument to my colleagues in government that the change I have proposed is not just to benefit our party but it is to benefit all of Parliament and all democracy.

Just like when the government wants to make changes or feels it needs to make changes, it needs to make the argument to all of us that it is a rational thing to do and that in the in the future all of those changes are for the greater good. That is why a consensus had been primarily reached in the past and really why we wanted to reach a consensus.

I want to go through some really good examples from both Liberals and Conservatives, with some great input from NDP members, who in the past have talked about this type of thing.

On May 31, 1982, the Lefebvre committee was created. The committee recommended several changes in the Standing Orders on a trial basis, such as the automatic referral of departmental and crown corporations annual reports to committees and the requirement for a government response to these reports within 120 days. The prime minister at the time was Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and the reforms were adopted unanimously.

•(1250)

Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's government created the McGrath committee on December 5, 1984. The principal goal of that committee was to find ways to give private members a meaningful role in the development of public policy and in doing so, to restore the House of Commons to its rightful place in the Canadian political process. The committee went on to table three reports, all of which were adopted unanimously.

McGrath and Lefebvre proposed ideas that enhanced private members' business, strengthened the powers of committees, and enfranchised members.

Is everybody okay over there?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like everybody to know it was the light bulb that went out. We will have to maybe turn up the cameras a bit so we can get better pictures, but we will be fine. Everything is good.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, the committee went on to table three reports, all unanimously. McGrath and Lefebvre proposed ideas that enhanced private members' business, strengthened the powers of committees, and enfranchised members with the selection of our Speaker by secret ballot, to name just a few.

The Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections recommended in a report tabled on December 6, 1990, important amendments that transformed private members' business. These rule changes were again adopted unanimously.

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Under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and this was the specific one that we recommended, a Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons was created and chaired by then Deputy Speaker Bob Kilger. One of the rules of the committee was “That the committee shall not adopt any report without the unanimous agreement of all the Members of the committee”. This unanimity requirement did not deter the special committee. It tabled six reports to the House and the House adopted five of them. The committee made significant changes, such as allowing all items on the order of precedence of private members' business to be votable.

The Stephen Harper government also followed the tradition of the unanimity approach, bringing in reforms to improve private members' business and broadcasting rules for committees.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that not 100% of all changes were unanimous. Some required a vote. However, since the very beginning of Parliament these incidents were rare, and whenever more broad-based changes to the Standing Orders were adopted, the time-honoured practice of this place was to do so through unanimous consent.

That being said, there exists a very small and exclusive club, if one wants to be a part of it, of forgotten House leaders who rammed through changes, such as the closure motion in 1913, time allocation in 1969, and Standing Order 56(1) in 1991. I am at a loss to understand why the government House leader would rather join this group than be associated with the likes of McGrath, Lefebvre, and Bob Kilger, but I suppose that would not be inconsistent with her government's track record.

Members will recall that we had an electoral reform issue, the efforts of another minister, who turned that reform exercise into a fiasco that led to a full retreat and the firing of that minister from her post. Then there was Motion No. 6. The minister who gave us that doozy has disappeared from that job as well.

Let me take a few minutes just to remind the House of what Motion No. 6 was. Simply put, Motion No. 6 proposed to legislate by exhaustion. It offered unstructured, open-ended debate, potentially sitting 24 hours around the clock all summer long. The motion targeted the opposition and would have hamstrung its ability to hold the government to account. Essentially, it violated one of the fundamental principles of Parliament, a principle described in Beauchesne's, sixth edition, citation 3, “More tentative are such traditional features as respect for the rights of the minority, which precludes a Government from using to excess the extensive powers that it has to limit debate or to proceed in what the public and the Opposition might interpret as unorthodox ways.” That is what Motion No. 6 was and we know what the outcome was of that.

I want to speak briefly about another change that has not been talked about extensively in the House, but it is one of the changes to the Standing Orders that the Liberals are trying to ram through. It is an idea that has been proposed by the President of the Treasury Board in regard to the estimates.

Page 12 of the document says, “For parliamentary committees, the proposed approach trades off the longer period of time now available to study an incomplete Main Estimates...for a shorter time to study a

complete Main Estimates”. That all sounds good. It sounds like there is going to be shorter time to study complete, thorough, and accurate estimates rather than having a longer time but with inaccurate estimates. The President of the Treasury Board should know that the House will always insist on full and accurate information and will never attach any such conditions to that right.

In its role in the supply process, Parliament would be foolish to voluntarily clawback two months of its ability to hold a ministry to account in exchange for flawed, unenforceable promises. Even though the paper says it would be accurate information, there is nothing incumbent on the government to provide that accurate information, which is why it is so important that the opposition has as much time as possible to look at those estimates and to scrutinize them.

● (1255)

Let me explain this by first putting forward this historical context. On page 114 of Josef Redlich's *The Procedure of the House of Commons: A Study of its History and Present Form*, it says:

The whole law of finance, and consequently the whole British constitution, is grounded upon one fundamental principle, laid down at the very outset of English parliamentary history and secured by three hundred years of mingled conflict with the Crown and peaceful growth. All taxes and public burdens imposed upon the nation for purposes of state, whatsoever their nature, must be granted by the representatives of the citizens and taxpayers, i.e., by Parliament.

Pages 404 and 405 of the fourth edition of Bourinot's *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice*, published in 1916, state:

The cardinal principle, which underlies all parliamentary rules and constitutional provisions with respect to money grants and public taxes is this—when burthens are to be imposed on the people, every opportunity must be given for free and frequent discussion...[and] whenever the government finds it necessary to incur a public expenditure...there should be full consideration of the matter in committee and in the house, so that no member may be forced to come to a hasty decision, but that every one may have abundant opportunities afforded him of stating his reasons for supporting or opposing the proposed grant...

With respect to delaying the main estimates, I will quote from the parliamentary budget officer's most recent report, “Considerations for Parliament in Reforming the Business of Supply”. It states, “With respect to delaying the main estimates, the Government indicates that the core impediment in aligning the budget and estimates arises from the Government's own sclerotic internal administrative processes, rather than parliamentary timelines.”

It says right there that it is about administrative processes, not parliamentary timelines. The report goes on to state:

PBO notes that the Government's Supplementary Estimates B, tabled on 3 November, contained 51 measures that were originally proposed almost seven months earlier in Budget 2016.

This example shows that it is unlikely that delaying the release of the main estimates by eight weeks would provide full alignment with the budget.

That was in the PBO's report.

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This is a lot of “inside Ottawa” and really diving deep into the estimates. However, the bottom line is that Parliament needs to be able to look at the government's estimates and should not have its time shortened. The President of the Treasury Board cannot ask us to trust that the government's estimates will be more accurate and that we will have a third of the time to study them. That is wrong. It is one of the issues that has not been talked about a lot, but is creating a lot of problems. As former PBO Kevin Page said, “This legislation creates the facade of independence...but on the other hand it completely takes it away.”

The other change the Liberals want to make and have done it in the omnibus bill, which is indicative of what they do, is to take away the power of the parliamentary budget officer. The former PBO stated:

The Government asserts that Parliament does not play a meaningful role in financial scrutiny. PBO disagrees with this view....

We note that notwithstanding the Government's performance information of admittedly poor quality, and their inability to reconcile the Government's spending proposals, parliamentarians have performed a commendable job of asking pertinent questions in standing committee hearings, Question Period and Committee of the Whole.

We know that even the parliamentary budget officer would disagree with those changes and has questions on them. We know the Liberals are currently trying to make changes to the ability of the PBO in Bill C-44, and on that he said:

The proposed amendments impose significant restrictions on the way the PBO can set its work plan and access information. Those restrictions will undermine PBO's functional independence and its effectiveness in supporting parliamentarians to scrutinize government spending and hold the government to account.

In her remarks to you, Mr. Speaker, after your election to the office of Speaker, the then leader of the opposition and member for Sturgeon River—Parkland, the former interim Conservative leader, talked of the interrupted history of the office of Speaker, which began in 1376 when Sir Peter de la Mare presided over what is known as the “Good Parliament”. She pointed out that the title of “Good Parliament” was not due to the performance of the administration of the day but a reflection on the efforts of the members of that parliament to keep the government in check.

• (1300)

There was a significant principle developing in that parliament, a principle that should apply to this and to all parliaments. In Philip Laundy's book on the office of the Speaker, published in 1984, he had this to say about the Good Parliament:

Parliament was greatly concerned at the abuses in the administration which were threatening the welfare of the realm—

That sounds familiar.

—and encouraged by the support of the Black Prince it set itself to the task of correcting them.

Which is what the opposition wants to do. He continued:

After lengthy debates...the Lords and Commons again assembled in the Painted Chamber before John of Gaunt to give answer to the financial demands which had been made of them. Speaking on behalf of the Commons Sir Peter de la Mare boldly refused to grant supplies until the nation's grievances were redressed.

That was over 600 years ago, but it is still one of the cornerstones of our proud parliamentary democracy. We have made improvements in our approach over the years, but diminishing principles of accountability is the farthest thing from modernizing the procedures

of the House. The Liberals keep saying they want to modernize the House, but all they want to do is take away the time-honoured and proven ways that we can hold governments to account. One day very soon, when we are back in government, the opposition is going to want us to be held to account, and the Liberals need to think about this.

During the remarks addressed in the Speaker's election, the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland referenced the “Bad Parliament”, but she did not get into the details of why that parliament's style was bad. We were at that point beginning the era of sunny ways, and who were we to spoil the mood? We were hoping it would be sunny ways.

As members know, as soon as that slogan was out of the box, it collapsed under the weight of dark clouds of arrogance and entitlement, and now serves to give a modern context to the story of the Bad Parliament that sat in England between January 27 and March 2, 1377. The Bad Parliament undid the work done by the Good Parliament, which brought in measures to reduce corruption in the royal council. The Bad Parliament approved reversals of the Good Parliament's impeachment of a number of royal courtiers. It also introduced a new form of royal taxation.

That sounds familiar too, does it not?

In addition, the Bad Parliament was forced to accede to the fact that the King could renege on political promises. Unfortunately, that does sound away too familiar to what is playing out in this Parliament.

I have one more parliament to reference. An even earlier parliament to the Good and Bad Parliaments was the “Mad Parliament” that met in Oxford on June 11, 1258. In Philip Laundy's book at page 11, he suggested that the Mad Parliament set itself against the tyranny of the court and owes its derogatory designation to those whose abuses it sought to check. If the government uses its majority to force through the changes proposed by the government House leader, the official opposition will be fighting its own form of tyranny. I assure members that the language used to describe the 42nd Parliament will be much stronger than just “mad”.

On a more positive note, though, I would like to reference a few distinguished parliamentarians, coming from all sides of the political spectrum. The Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, in an address to the Empire Club in 1949, had this to say, “If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution His Majesty's Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions.... The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends.”

In an address to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, January 27, 1959, Lester B. Pearson said:

In national politics during the years when I was in the government, I watched the Opposition perform their duty vigorously and industriously, with courage and determination. They rightly insisted on their right to oppose, attack and criticize, to engage in that cut and thrust of debate, so often and so strongly recommended by those concerned with the vigour and health of Parliament and the health of democracy.

In an address on March 21, 1957, New Democrat Stanley Knowles said:

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The opposition has only the rules for its protection, hence the authorities on parliamentary procedure emphasize the greater importance to the opposition of the only protection it has, the protection of the rules. Only by according such rights to the opposition is it possible to achieve anything even approaching equality of strength between the two sides....

● (1305)

Finally, I would like to make reference to a more recent elder statesman, and I use the word in a very positive way. A respected senior member of this House, the hon. Liberal member for Malpeque, said on April 11, 2017:

However, this place is called the House of Commons for a reason. It is not the House of cabinet or the House of PMO. Protecting the rights of members in this place, whether it is the opposition members in terms of the stance they are taking, is also protecting the rights of the other members here who are not members of cabinet or the government. We talk about government as if this whole side is the government. The government is the executive branch. We do need to protect these rights.

I think those are very wise words, and we would like the government, the backbenchers to think about that in terms of this motion. We are fine sitting later hours. We know it will be long days for all of us, but let us do it. As my hon. colleague says, let us do the good work that Canadians have asked us to do.

However, we ask two things: allow us to have fuller opposition days, just like the Liberals are having full government days, and do not shut down the debate on the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, I believe there have been consultations. I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House to propose an amendment. The amendment would restrict the use of closure on any motion proposing to change the Standing Orders during the period outlined in Motion No. 14, and would propose to treat opposition motions on allotted days the same as other government business.

Therefore, I seek the consent of the House to amend Motion No. 14 accordingly. I move that Motion No. 14 be amended by deleting all the words in paragraph (j) and substituting the following: "A motion pursuant to Standing Order 57 shall not be admissible for any motion dealing with amendments to the Standing Orders or changes to the practices of the House."

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1310)

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, we will go to plan B.

I move:

That the motion be amended

(a) by adding to paragraph (b) the following: "and if a recorded division is demanded in respect of a motion moved pursuant to Standing Order 57 in relation to any motion dealing with amendments to the Standing Orders or changes to the practices of the House, it shall stand deferred to December 5, 2017 at the conclusion of Oral Questions; "; and

(b) by deleting all the words in paragraph "(j)".

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

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Spadina—Fort York.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will just address some of the points that were raised.

Putting aside the sheer foolishness of having the opposition decide which Liberal should or should not talk at any given point, let me just assure the members opposite that one Liberal could take on 99. It does not matter which one of us it is. One can deal with it.

It is sheer audacity to call the budget bill an omnibus bill. Our bill is 400 pages long. There was never a budget bill passed by the Conservatives that was less than 600 pages. It is sheer audacity to refer to an omnibus bill. I await a budget presented one clause at a time. I do not think it will ever happen in my lifetime.

Then putting aside the sheer nonsense about the Prime Minister, when asked the same question, giving the same answer—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I believe the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar asked for people to be quiet, and she got what she asked for. I would imagine that we owe the same respect to the questions she is getting as well.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, then there is the sheer nonsense of asking the Prime Minister to provide a different answer to the same question. The same question will get the same answer. That is unlike the former prime minister, Mr. Harper, who when asked about the Wright and Duffy scandal changed the answer every time the question was asked. Every time the question was changed, the answer was different, even without the involvement of the party.

Let me also talk about the absolute sheer lunacy of a party that says it does not want to work on Fridays, knowing that we work in our constituencies on Fridays. That is a party that tries to adjourn the debate in every single term. I do not think there has been a bill in this Parliament that has not had at least two motions of adjournment whereby the Tories try to skip off work and go home early. That is what the motion of adjournment is all about.

Then they complain that we move closure, when they tried to adjourn three times. What is adjournment? Adjournment is the opposition's method for closure.

Putting aside that sheer lunacy, there is the waste of time of having the House decide which one of the members opposite gets to speak. The number of votes we have had deciding whether Tory A or Tory B should speak has wasted hours of time. If they had a leader who was anything more than a sheer rookie, perhaps they would end up in a situation where they could choose their own speakers.

Since we are going to extend speaking hours and sitting hours through the month of June, can we have an agreement from the opposite side that members will not try to adjourn three, four, five, and six times a day and will actually pledge to show up and work and debate the issues of the day? Otherwise, will they adjourn at every opportunity to get home early for summer vacation because they are members of the party that does not seem to want to work?

Government Orders

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I welcome all members. It is wonderful to see the backbenchers. At this point in a Parliament, we should know every single one of the members by name. We should know which one has a topic he or she thinks is important. We should know which one can expound passionately. We should know the ones who are a little calmer. However, we do not know anything about any of them, because the only one who gets to speak is the parliamentary secretary for the House leader, so it is very nice to see the member for Vaughan stand. We know his style and we would love to see the style and the gifts of some of the other Liberal members, including the ones who are sitting on this side. We want to see their gifts and their speaking ability. It is a wonderful opportunity to hone those abilities.

I encourage them to keep standing up and not let one guy hog the show over there, because he has done it enough.

To answer the other part of the question, we will continue to move to adjourn debate on some of the terrible bills that the government is bringing forward. If the Liberals think that what they saw us doing when they were trying to ram through the changes at the committee was bad, let them wait until they try to bring it to the House of Commons.

They are laughing, and that is good. We have to do everything that we can. They have taken away most of our tools already. We are going to keep using every tool available so that the Prime Minister has to show up and tell Canadians how many times he has met with the Ethics Commissioner.

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to the next question, I want to remind hon. members to refer to other members in the House by their riding and not by their name.

The hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the opposition House leader for making this so interesting. Who would have thought that a procedural motion replete with references to history and so forth could be so passionate at this time of day?

However, here we are, about to start on a path of four weeks when we will be sitting four days a week until midnight. A while ago, the House leaders all were new, all three of us, and we ended up working together in a positive spirit.

Then something happened. The government thought it could unilaterally change the rules of democracy and started to treat this place as if it were simply an inconvenience rather than the cornerstone of our democracy.

I would like to ask the opposition House leader for her views on how we came into this mess. Was it the fact that the discussion paper was put forward as if it were just a discussion paper, but then unilaterally moved through the House as if the opposition was simply a rubber stamp? Is it because of the mismanagement of that file that we ended up in this uncharacteristic situation of having four weeks of sitting four days a week until midnight? Is that how this happened, and can we get back to a more collegial spirit?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for noticing the passion and excitement in that speech.

As a party, we have just finished an exciting and amazing weekend electing our new leader. This is a culmination of a leadership race whereby our party has raised almost \$10 million to the Liberals' barely \$2 million. Our party has 260,000 paid memberships. We have just elected a new leader, a young man who has five children, drives a minivan, and is completely different from the current Prime Minister. He understands the needs of middle-class Canadians because he is a middle-class Canadian. I am pretty excited to be here today looking forward to our new leader's first showing here at question period as our leader.

As to what my honourable colleague from the NDP talked about, he is right that there really had been goodwill. We had been working well together. We had been having good debates, but votes would happen and the government was able to move its legislation through.

However, when we say to somebody that they are to do what we want and we have a gun to their head, that does not make for good conversation. That is what has happened with the Liberals. They are forcing changes through, and it is always for their benefit. It is always to make life easier for them. It is always to make life easier for the Prime Minister, easier so that members of Parliament might not have to be here on a Friday.

Frankly, when the House is not sitting and we are in our ridings, I understand that, absolutely. However, when we are here, we should be open for business five days a week. When the House is sitting, we need to be here five days a week. We know the Liberals really have an aversion to that, but we are not going to stop fighting this idea.

We would like to get back to a place where we can keep working together and keep doing the work of the House, but the Liberals do need to make some changes if that is going to happen.

• (1320)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it might have been the first time for my honourable colleague from Spadina—Fort York to stand in the House to speak. On his maiden speech, I would like to congratulate him on that.

I have a couple questions for the hon. House leader of the official opposition.

With these extended hours, does she believe that we will finally see the Prime Minister more in the House? As well, will we finally have the answer to the question of how many times the Prime Minister has met with the Ethics Commissioner?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Mr. Speaker, I do not hold out hope that we will get any answers.

As we will recall, the Prime Minister said he was going to start being here to answer all questions on a Wednesday. I hesitate to refer to the presence or absence of anybody in the House and I will not do that, but I will say that last Wednesday there was not one question answered by the Prime Minister, and in the week before that, we had that silly charade when he would not answer a typical and very easy question.

Government Orders

I would even be happy with the following. If the Prime Minister is not here every day debating but wants to get out and meet with Canadians, when is he going to head up north and meet with some northern Canadians?

I know maybe it is not a fancy place to go and it is not Europe or Italy or Broadway shows, but when is he going to go to some rural communities in Canada? When is he going to head up to northwestern Ontario or the Arctic? When is he going to talk about our north and first nations that do not just want to be a park, but want to be creating jobs and opportunities?

If the Prime Minister is going to be getting out and meeting the people, let him go where the Canadian people are, not in New York and not meeting with billionaires in the U.S. or on a private island. Let him get back home and get some work done for Canadians.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

The motion before us goes beyond the traditional use of Standing Order 27 to extend sitting hours in the final days of the session. At one level, I can see why the government felt that the traditional period of late sitting was insufficient. I understand the government's desire to enliven the glacial pace of its legislative agenda. After all, believe it or not, in its first 18 months, the government has passed fewer bills than one per month. That is the slowest rate of any government in decades. Today there are still more bills awaiting second reading than have received royal assent. All told, 30 government bills are at various stages of study and debate in the House. Therefore, I can understand the government's desire to get its legislative engine, sputtering as it is, into gear.

However, the motion before us is not without serious drawbacks, and those deserve careful consideration in the House. Broadly speaking, what the motion accomplishes is clear. It streamlines the passage of the government's agenda by limiting the tools and rights of both opposition and backbench government members. It forces members of Parliament who want to engage in debates on behalf of their communities to be in the House until midnight each night, with no consideration for family life, despite the government's pledge to make the House more family friendly. Also, while it does not repeat some of the very worst proposals in previous government motions to similar effect, it does affirm a pattern of behaviour such that the government treats Parliament as an inconvenience rather than the very keystone of our democracy. That is a pattern set by the previous Harper government. It is a pattern the government opposed when in opposition and now seeks to simply perpetuate when in power.

The tools and rights of opposition members of Parliament, and indeed backbench government members, are not luxuries to be tossed aside in the name of expediency. Without them, Parliament cannot do the job Canadians expect of us.

Our scrutiny of legislation should not fluctuate with the seasons. We should not give cursory examination to an issue of importance to Canadians merely because it falls in the final weeks of a particular session. There are 30 government bills at various stages of study and debate in the House today, and each proposes meaningful changes for Canadians. These changes all deserve the consideration and refinement our legislative machinery was designed for and that Canadians expect us to provide.

When similar changes to the rules were proposed by the Conservative government under Prime Minister Harper in 2014, New Democrats moved to find a middle ground: retaining the powers of opposition MPs while allowing more time for the consideration of government bills. Sadly, this compromise was opposed at the time by both the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I find it disappointing that, once again, a new government is going down an old road of tolerating Parliamentary accountability when it is convenient and casting it aside the moment it becomes inconvenient. That is not how our Parliament should function. We owe it to Canadians to not lightly accept any measure that infringes on the ability of Parliament to scrutinize the government's agenda and hold it accountable to Canadians. That is our job.

As the hon. government House leader said in her remarks, we have had moments of collaboration and co-operation in the House, and that is what I urge the government to remember today, because the imposition of the motion is not about parliamentarians coming together. It is about strengthening the power of cabinet at the expense of opposition members. Let there be no doubt about that. Once again, it is about the government turning its back on genuine negotiation with the other parties when the going gets tough and instead relying on heavy-handed and unilateral action to push through its agenda.

● (1325)

If the government had not rejected co-operation and resorted to strong-arm tactics, first with Motion No. 6 and later with the Standing Orders debacle, perhaps it would not require such extraordinary measures now.

Last, of course, it is disappointing for members of all parties who have young children and families to care for at home to be expected to work night shifts four days a week just to do the job Canadians sent us here to do. It is especially disappointing when the government committed, at least in its early days, to making this chamber more modern and more family friendly as a workplace.

Members of all parties work hard, and they want to. However, it is disappointing to see the government resorting to last-minute rule changes that make life harder for those members and easier for cabinet members.

In conclusion, it is important for Canadians to understand what these types of motions by the government are all about. Despite what the speech writers for cabinet ministers might say, this is not about whether parliamentarians roll up their sleeves and work for a few more hours each day. Members on all sides of this House already work hard each and every day.

Government Orders

What this is about is tilting the balance of power away from the opposition parties and toward the government. It is about making work easier for cabinet ministers and harder for opposition members. The reason such extraordinary measures are necessary, the reason the government needs twice as many extended hours as previous governments have, is that it has consistently chosen to reject co-operation and has relied on heavy-handed, unilateral action.

The debacle surrounding the discussion paper is an illustration of that reality. So far, that strategy has failed. It has resulted in the government passing its agenda at the slowest rate of any new government in modern history, barely a bill a month, as I said.

I urge the government to consider that record and to return to the pledges it once made to this House to be more family friendly, more co-operative, and more collaborative. Do members remember those pledges? I can promise all members on the government benches that if they want to restore that spirit of co-operation, they will always find willing partners in the New Democratic Party.

•(1330)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will go to the last point the member made regarding co-operation in the House and the length of time it takes to pass bills. It should be observed that with now 338 members in the House, there are 10% more members with the opportunity to speak and participate and have their voices heard in the House, which lends naturally to crowding out the time available in the House for debate.

One of the opportunities to correct this problem put forward by the government was to investigate programming. Programming of the debate schedule in the House would allow for more efficient functioning of this place. It would allow members to be heard in an appropriate, timely, and efficient fashion, and it would allow us to engage in business and hear more bills. These were the types of things that were proposed to address the very issue the member brought forward.

If the member is interested in co-operating in all aspects with the government to see bills passed in an appropriate fashion, will the member commit to co-operating with us to bring programming into the House so that our business can be done more effectively and efficiently?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments about the fact that there are more MPs and government backbenchers. There is no doubt about it. What there is doubt about is when they stand up. One rarely sees them in action. Although the arithmetic is correct, the reality has proven true, because so many of them never stand in this place anyway. It is hard to believe that it is a critical reality.

In terms of investigating programming, as the member talked about, that was part of the unilateral discussion paper, which I think the government has chosen not to proceed with. At least, that was the last draft. Who knows where the government is on that now? It fell by the wayside with the Friday sittings being dropped and so forth. I thought that was part of the initiative the government did not want to proceed with.

I grant that in England and other parliamentary systems, that kind of programming can be valuable, but it cannot simply be dropped on

Parliament without the benefit of discussion and collaboration among members of Parliament, something the former Liberal government thought was valuable but that this government seems to think is merely an inconvenience.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one aspect of the issue my hon. colleague did not have an opportunity to speak to in his speech but that was mentioned by the government House leader is that the new arrangement of the Senate has also caused delay in the passage of bills. Of course, that did not happen spontaneously. It was a reform dreamt up by the Prime Minister.

I wonder if my colleague would like to offer some remarks as to the new arrangement in the Senate and the consequences for this place.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for pointing that out. The fact is that we have a Senate that actually is sending bills back now. The problem with that is that it will propose amendments, as we saw with a couple of initiatives lately that were passed in this House and studied by committee, and those amendments were explicitly rejected by the elected members of this place, only to come back, and then we have to say, "No, we really meant it, Senate. We really wanted it to be that way. Please don't throw stuff back at us that we have already rejected."

The government is having an awfully hard time managing the Senate. In its speeches, it blames the opposition for stopping this legislative machine the government wants to put forward, blaming us for motions and obstruction and so forth and never reminding Canadians that the Senate reforms it brought forward have allowed the government to delay the work of this place by sending back amendments we have already rejected. We have seen that a couple of times so far. I suspect we will see it again.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member from the NDP about the hypocrisy of the government when it comes to the fact that it is claiming that we need to sit long hours, which I am very willing to do. However, at committee, when we try to bring amendments, it does not listen to what we are saying anyway. How can more hours of debate that is not being listened to be meaningful in any way?

Would the member comment?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thought it was something that only the Conservatives did, serving on committees and having it entirely rejected. Any good ideas must come from the government side, be they at committee or be they private member's bills. If they are not from the red side of the chamber, they are just not counted. I really do not understand how that change is going to make any difference.

Government Orders

• (1335)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin my contribution to this debate by reiterating what we have heard from a few members. I do not think the issue is that members mind sitting longer to accomplish important work. We were sent here to do that work. If there are things that need to get passed and we feel they are of value to Canadians, we are willing to do the work to get it passed. The issue is that sitting longer does come with real consequences both in terms of costs to the House by not just having MPs here, but all the staff that make debate in this place possible and that support this work. Having them come in to work overtime has a real cost. There is a productivity cost that may be incurred for some of us who stay up past midnight and then get up for eight o'clock meetings that will not get pushed back. That is fine, and it can be a reasonable choice to make. Sometimes we just have to get things done, which means staying later. Putting in some overtime is not a problem. However, the question is why we are in a situation that we have to do that.

It is important to understand how we got here. I do not think anyone would disagree with the claim that this is not ideally how one would run things around here. To ask MPs, or staff on the Hill, on relatively short notice, to stay until midnight, and then be back again every morning is not the ideal way to run the House of Commons. That is why it is exceptional and not usually done. I have not heard anyone today suggest it should.

Part of how we got here is simply. The government has been inept for a number of months. That ineptitude manifested itself when the government brought what it called a discussion paper to change the Standing Orders. It then, at the procedure and House affairs committee, where that would properly be dealt with before coming to this place, decided to move to close down that conversation. The opposition parties rightly reacted for a number of reasons. One was that it did not seem to be a good faith discussion when the government had said it wanted to have that and then moved to close it down. Therefore, it did not feel like the government was acting in good faith on that. However, the opposition members also rightly objected because all they were asking for, in order to embark on that conversation in good faith, was that the government would agree in advance to seek all-party agreement before moving ahead with changes to the Standing Orders. This was not some cockamamie scheme that the opposition parties of this Parliament came up with. It is a long-standing parliamentary tradition, which has worked to bring in significant parliamentary reform.

I grew up hearing stories of the McGrath committee at the dinner table. My father sat on that committee. It brought forth changes for the Speaker to be elected by secret ballot. That was a huge change. It also made private members' business votable, not in the way it is currently. It was the beginning of ensuring that at least some private members' business would be voted on.

These were just some of the substantial reforms that were made in the House via all-party agreement. Therefore, the idea that somehow we would never get all-party agreement, and it was just a pipe dream, is completely false. There are ample examples of that. The hon. official opposition House leader has outlined a number more, in fact, some dating back to the 14th century in Britain. Certainly, there

are a number of cases where we have seen good reform come out of all-party work.

Therefore, the opposition said it did not think it acceptable for a government to unilaterally change the rules of this place. This place is meant to serve Canadians, not the government, and the interests of the government are not always the same as the interests of Canadians. Not wanting to depart too much from debate on the motion, the creation of the infrastructure bank is a good example of where the interests of the government do not align with the interests of Canadians. However, I will not get into that.

The filibuster that happened and some of the time that was spent in the House, and there was a lot, was spent rightly. People were standing up to a government that thought Parliament was here to simply do whatever it wanted. We have seen that in Winnipeg with the call for an inquiry into the building of the new police headquarters. Because that project got out of hand and went way over budget, there are questions about whether the CAO of the city and the former mayor were involved or accepting money. Those questions are out there, and people are asking for an investigation. What people are rightly asking is whose hand was on the wheel, who was overseeing this and if it was not the job of backbenchers and opposition politicians to provide appropriate scrutiny.

• (1340)

That is what these tools of Parliament allow us to do. Standing up for those tools is part of that job. The "just trust us" attitude of the government is not sufficient. The government is not only saying "just trust us, we are doing a good job", but it is talking about changing the rules of Parliament so we have no choice but to just trust it.

If the proposals in the discussion paper did not do that automatically, that was certainly the thrust and direction of them. The Liberals' way of doing it would set the principle and the precedent that a majority government could unilaterally change the rules of the House.

It is not our job to just trust the government. It is not our job to just help the government get legislation through the House. It is the government's job to get legislation through the House. By refusing to honour a long-standing parliamentary tradition of seeking all-party consensus, the government was at the root of the delay that happened in the House. As a result, it could not get its legislative agenda through. It is not even a very big legislative agenda, and that speaks to the magnitude of the Liberals' failure as a government to work collaboratively with opposition parties.

As my colleague rightly pointed out, that was something the Liberals committed to doing. They made it a cornerstone of what they wanted to do. They said they wanted to work collaboratively and take the work of committees seriously.

Government Orders

How is the government taking the work of committees seriously when it presents a discussion paper on changes to the Standing Orders then moves to shut down the debate? How was it a sign of respect for the work of committees when the special committee on electoral reform came out with a proposal on how to advance the government's own election commitment? Even in the face of challenge and even though we said that we on this side of the House disagreed substantially on how we should or should not change our electoral system but nevertheless here was a path forward that we could at least agree on, a general outline of what the process would look like, the government threw it back.

When we hear the government House leader today say that the government wants committees to do their great work and it wants more debate in the House, as if somehow we are to believe that this is really the motivation of the government, it is a challenge. It is a challenge on this side to take the Liberals at their word on those things because of what happened at PROC, because of what happened with Motion No. 6, because of what happened on democratic reform, and now with what is happening with this motion.

The government, essentially after botching its job, which is to guide legislation through the House and to work with other parties to do that, is now asking its backbench to make up for the mistakes, instead of looking at its cabinet, asking what has gone wrong, why has it been unable to advance its legislation through the House and what is that saying about the quality of the government's leadership.

These are questions the Liberals should be asking instead of asking all of us to put in extra time at the last minute to help them get through an agenda that they say is going to be positive for Canadians. That is fine. I do not believe that for a minute. Getting Bill C-44 through the House is not an important priority.

I would love to see the committee get to work on the infrastructure bank. When we proposed to separate that from the omnibus bill, the Liberals said no. They then had the audacity to stand here and say that they valued the work of parliamentarians and committees. Why not let a committee study that? The government House leader even went so far as to say that the government had the power to call witnesses and do an in-depth study. That was our point about the infrastructure bank, and the Liberals shut it down. For the Liberals to ask us to take their word that this is being done in good faith is a little much.

There are other aspects of this that would be useful to get into, but we are pushing up against the clock, not the least of which is the reforms that the Prime Minister has made within the Senate.

We have a chamber full of unelected people who are accountable to no one and it is sending bills like Bill C-4 back to the House. This is after two-thirds of Canadians voted for parties that said they wanted to see the anti-labour legislation of the last Parliament repealed. People who are accountable to no one have sent the bill back and have refused to pass it.

That has to get done. It should have been done a long time ago. It speaks volumes to the ineptitude of the Liberal Party that it has not already been done. It is a straight up repeal. It was a matter of getting it through the House and then getting it through the Senate. The

Liberals failed to do that in a timely way. It is just an indication of how broken the Liberals are as a government that they cannot get such a fundamental piece of legislation passed. Granted it does not enjoy consensus because there is one party in the House that does not support legislation, but every other party in the House does, even the unofficial parties.

• (1345)

Four out of the five parties that won seats in the last election support the legislation, and the government still cannot get it passed. It does not even do anything new. It just restores labour law to what it was in 2012.

I will defer to questions and answers.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy my colleague's speeches because he always tells it like it is.

It appears that the government, which is supposed to be in charge of the legislative agenda, has really squandered the time it has spent by doing these dictatorial moves, like trying to ram changes through committee. The fact that the government cannot even get its own budget bill passed with a majority is just symptomatic of that. Would the member agree?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are really hooked on the horn of a dilemma. This is their meagre attempt at some sort of solution.

On the one hand, if we take the Liberals at their word about wanting to work collaboratively with other parties, getting things through Parliament, improving the Senate and making it better, and having better legislation, then they are just inept and are terrible managers. They have not managed to do that. If we take the Liberals at their word, that is what they are doing, they have done a terrible job of it. It is not working, and that is too bad.

However, on the other hand, maybe there is another reason why the Liberals have not gotten that through. Maybe we do not take them at their word when they say they want to treat Parliament with respect but actually treat Parliament like it is an inconvenience, and there is a lot of evidence in their behaviour for that point of view, and that maybe the proper way is to just ram things through. Well, frankly, they are still inept. The Liberals have been doing a lot of ramming and a lot of jamming. PROC was all about that. They were going to shut down the conversation and were not willing to agree to have all-party consensus. They are not even able to make the tough-handed approach work.

If the Liberals are serious about taking a collaborative approach, they are failing on that score. They have clearly tried the heavy-handed approach, and they are failing on that score. What management strategy are the Liberals competent enough to use to actually get their agenda through? The answer seems to be that there is not one.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was colourful. The ramming and jamming and the like certainly got my attention. I also loved what he had to say about the unelected, unaccountable, and often under investigation senators and their role in this drama, which the government seems to be in denial about.

Government Orders

I would like to go to a much more specific aspect of what the motion would do. As members know, we have opposition days available to the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party. One of the things the government is trying to do is to jam legislation through up until midnight, but not allowing those opposition days available to the opposition to be available for a full day.

Could the member comment on that proposed change?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, again, this speaks to the different ways of thinking about Parliament.

If opposition days were just a day for the opposition to get the whining off their chest, have their little whine time in the House, and then we would move on and get back to doing what the Liberals get to do because they have a majority of the seats, even though they got less than 40% of the vote in the House, then we would not see any value in extending the opposition days. The thought might be that the opposition members just want time to whine about whatever and they get to whine, so let us move on.

That seems to be the attitude of the government in this motion. However, if the rationale for the supply days, or opposition days as they are more commonly known, was that the opposition deserved to have a certain proportion of the time to address concerns that may be embarrassing to the government or that the government did not want to spend time on, then we would adopt it. As members would imagine, I do not support the former interpretation. However, it is quite reasonable to also extend the time for those opposition days. This time is for that. It is the time for the opposition to bring forward those issues that the government does not want to discuss.

For the benefit of the House, the opposition day motion we had was to separate out the infrastructure bank, or the government's privatization scheme, from the omnibus budget bill. It was also an NDP opposition day motion that created the special committee for democratic reform. As I said, it came up with a proactive proposal to help the government meet its election commitments, that it then reneged on.

That is productive work. The idea of the supply days is that a certain proportion of the House time is dedicated to that work. Part of the problem is that this motion undercuts that fair proportion of established time. We heard earlier from members who were concerned that this was really about the government, not the Liberal backbenchers but the cabinet, infringing on the time that Parliament had to conduct business that was not necessarily what the government would have us be talk about. That is sad for the government, but it is important for our work.

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go on to the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, I want to remind him that he will have 20 minutes, and he will resume once we return to the debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments from speakers this morning and afternoon in regard to the government motion. To begin, it was not that long ago, a couple of years, that I sat in the opposition benches, not far from the member who just spoke. At that time, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper recognized the need to bring in the

almost identical motion that we are debating today. I can recall standing up in my place and even saying that this was a good thing. At times, the government needs to be able to extend the hours of sitting in order to achieve more debate on very serious issues facing Canadians.

I, like my colleagues, am not scared to work overtime, if that is what they want to call it. Many of us work well into the evening every night of the week anyway. It is important that we recognize right from the get-go, and everyone in the House should recognize it, that there is a time when the House needs to extend its hours. Conservative governments have recognized it. Even when I was in opposition, I recognized that.

I suggest that my colleagues across the way read the motion and compare it to the motion that Prime Minister Stephen Harper brought in. If they can find a difference, I ask them to please tell me where those differences are.

Stephen Harper was right back then. That is why we supported—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Yes, Mr. Speaker, they should applaud. He was not right that often.

That is one of the reasons I voted for what he was attempting to do.

Fast forward to today. Members and Canadians know that our Prime Minister has a very aggressive legislative and budgetary agenda. I will provide some comment on that. We are at a stage, getting closer and closer to that two-year mark as legislation has been proceeding along, where we have to recognize there is a need for the House to have extended hours. That is nothing new. That should not be a news flash for anyone sitting in the chamber. I have been a parliamentarian for 25 years, whether here in Ottawa or in the Manitoba legislature, and we have quite often had extended hours of sitting to encourage more debate. In fact, in the last 10 years in Ottawa, we have seen it six or seven times. What we are debating today is nothing new. It is something that is important.

The member for Elmwood—Transcona said something that really tweaked. There were a lot of things said, and I want to pick up on a couple of points that I heard today. One of them was that a proportion of time should be allocated towards opposition days. I should remind the New Democrats, before they get too cozy with the Conservatives on that particular issue, that the Conservative government House leader brought it up. I should let the member know, because he was not here when Stephen Harper was the prime minister, that Stephen Harper had opposition days on Wednesdays and Fridays. Wednesdays and Fridays are short days, as all members know, so where is this argument about proportion of time? Is the memory of Conservatives that short that they have forgotten it?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Statements by Members

●(1355)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. I want to remind hon. members that someone is speaking, and shouting across is not parliamentary procedure. I want to especially remind those who are sitting close to the Chair that I can hear them. I do not want to name them so that the people back home would be ashamed of them or wonder why they are screaming in the House.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the point is that within the motion, again, there is no difference. We did not see Stephen Harper say, “Oh, gee whiz, we’re going to have opposition days going to midnight too.” That did not happen. This should be no surprise. If there is a surprise, the surprise is that with this government, we have not put opposition days on Wednesdays and Fridays, unlike the former prime minister. That is a good thing, I would argue. That is the reason why I advise my New Democratic friends that they should think it through before they jump onside with the Conservatives. The spin by the Conservatives on this will not go very far, I am afraid.

However, it is not alone. I have heard a great deal of talk about the Standing Orders. In fact, they raised the issue of Fridays once again. I can assure the residents of Winnipeg North that Liberal members of Parliament, and I would like to think all members of Parliament, work seven days a week. I know that I do. The issue is whether I am working in Ottawa or working in Winnipeg.

Having said that, the idea of the particular proposal that was a part of the discussion paper was not that we want Fridays off, it was that we only work half Fridays in Ottawa. Why not work more of a full day by starting at 8 o’clock or 9 o’clock in the morning on a Tuesday or Thursday? Most Canadians do that. The hours we make up by doing that would then allow us to maybe do some things in the riding. For example, June is going to be a busy month. There are going to be all sorts of graduation ceremonies. I know that I am very proud of all of my graduates in Winnipeg North. I suspect that there is a huge demand for us to be in our constituencies.

At the end of the day, no one on this side of the House is suggesting that we want more time off. In fact, if people were to judge us based on what we have been able to do to date, they would see there is only one party that has persistently pushed to have this chamber working in a much more productive fashion. I do not know how many motions we have had for adjournment being proposed by the opposition and how many times we have had to vote that down so we would be able to continue.

Members want to talk about the need for debate. We debated a matter of privilege for seven days. I did not hear any opposition members say, “Well, because it’s seven days and it’s going to be on government business days, gee whiz, why don’t we give the government some of our opposition days in order to compensate?” No.

Now, fast forward to where are we today, and we have an aggressive agenda. We are going to need that time. Canadians want us to work hard, and this government is prepared to work hard in order to deliver.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have 12 minutes and 30 seconds when this item comes up again.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS*[English]***INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOSPHERE RESERVES**

Ms. Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is UNESCO’s biosphere reserves day. Canada has 18 unique biospheres, in which more than two million people live. Biosphere reserves exist to preserve and uphold natural ecosystems which contribute to the needs and healthy living of a growing human population.

Hamilton, my beloved city, is a part of the Niagara Escarpment, which has the highest level of biodiversity among Canada’s 18 biospheres. The Bruce Trail, which is Canada’s longest footpath, runs through the escarpment. I love walking through that trail and taking in the beautiful nature that surrounds me. I can close my eyes now and see it. Oh, how beautiful it is. I cannot think of a better way to celebrate UNESCO’s biosphere reserves day than by noting that our government has made the environment a fundamental consideration in our policy and infrastructure investments.

Happy biosphere reserves day to one and all.

* * *

●(1400)

SKIN CANCER SCREENING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Kathy Barnard is one of the longest-living survivors of melanoma in North America. Her journey with the disease began in 2003, when she was first diagnosed with stage four melanoma. Cancer could not keep Kathy down. In 2006, while still battling melanoma, Kathy and her family started the Save Your Skin Foundation, a national not-for-profit advocacy group that is dedicated to leading the fight against skin cancer. They provide national education, advocacy, and awareness to elevate the patient’s voice within Canada. They provide compassionate care and support to those affected by the disease by directing patients to reliable sources of information and helping them access the medical and financial support they need to navigate the journey.

I thank Kathy Bernard, her husband Scotty, and her family for their tireless work in raising awareness of melanoma and other forms of skin cancer. Through their efforts, we are closer to realizing a Canada where skin cancer is prevented, survived, and cured.

* * *

*[Translation]***GBA+ AWARENESS WEEK**

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week the government is marking Gender-based Analysis Plus Awareness Week. This year’s theme is “Inclusion. Innovation. For the next 150.”

*Statements by Members**[English]*

As Canada works to position itself as world leader in innovation, it needs to harness the talents of all Canadians. Using GBA+ is one way to ensure inclusive growth and an economy that works for everyone. As parliamentarians, we are in a unique position to put GBA+ into action in our work and position Canada for a prosperous future.

[Translation]

During GBA+ Awareness Week, let us do our part to achieve equality.

* * *

*[English]***JUSTICE**

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, more than a year ago, a man named Mark Farrant called my office. Mark was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after serving as a jury foreman in the trial of young man accused of a gruesome murder.

Mark discovered that when ordinary Canadians suffer as a result of jury duty, there are no supports available. There are programs for court workers and others, but nothing for jurors. Since then, Mark's tireless advocacy has garnered national attention, built a network of former jurors across Canada, and succeeded in establishing a free counselling service in Ontario. This week, he is on Parliament Hill to call on the government to ensure that when Canadians do their public duty and serve on a jury, their government has their backs and provides the supports they may need, no matter where they live

I want to thank Mark Farrant and other jurors who have stepped forward for their service to our justice system, their courage in speaking out, and for bringing to the attention of this House a problem that we can and must solve now for all Canadians.

* * *

*[Translation]***KIDNEY ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with us today in the gallery are members of the Association générale des insuffisants rénaux, or AGIR, which is located in my riding of Bourassa.

Founded in 1979, AGIR is a non-profit organization that brings together people with kidney disease, people on dialysis, and those who have had a kidney transplant, as well as health care professionals and those who are sympathetic to the cause.

The association's mission is to bring together people who are suffering from kidney disease, and to help its members and facilitate their social integration by organizing monthly meetings and all sorts of social and cultural activities and events.

I congratulate Ms. Chouinard and Ms. Martin. I am so glad that the members of AGIR accepted my invitation to visit Parliament. I extend a warm welcome to them and hope they have a wonderful day.

*[English]***TOURISM WEEK**

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's tourism sector is an important contributor to our country's economy. It is a \$90-billion-a-year industry that employs more than 1.7 million Canadians in every region and is important to every community across the country.

[Translation]

Every year at this time, we celebrate Tourism Week in Canada. The purpose of this grassroots initiative is to promote the many benefits that tourism brings to the Canadian economy and to explore opportunities for the industry.

● (1405)

[English]

We are blessed to live in such a beautiful country that has so much to offer, from the mountains to our oceans to the Northern Lights. We have great food and wine, aboriginal tourism, vibrant cities, and every outdoor activity one can imagine.

As we celebrate tourism, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the operators and workers across this country in the hospitality industry who make, with all of their hard work, Canada such a great place and welcoming place to vacation. People from all over the world come here to visit and are treated to first-class experiences that they will remember for a lifetime.

[Translation]

Happy Tourism Week.

* * *

*[English]***HALIFAX PUBLIC GARDENS**

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to grow up only steps from the iconic wrought iron gates of the Victorian public gardens in Halifax. Now what Haligonians have known for 150 years, since the gardens first opened in 1867, has been made official: the Halifax Public Gardens have been named one of the top 10 North American gardens worth travelling for.

The Garden Tourism Award is given jointly by the Canadian Garden Council and the American Public Gardens Association to recognize amazing gardens on this continent. With the gardens' lush flowers, shrubs, unique tree specimens, statues, fountains, footbridges, idyllic pond, and, indeed, the community pride that the public gardens evoke, this recognition is well deserved. In Halifax, a team of gardeners and arborists has watered, weeded, pruned, and poured love into our beautiful gardens for years to make them what they are today in Canada 150.

I want to congratulate The Friends of the Public Gardens in particular for their ongoing dedication to the preservation and protection of this special Halifax treasure.

*Statements by Members***PARAMEDICS**

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the beginning of National Paramedic Services Week, and it gives me great pleasure to rise and pay tribute to our country's paramedics. These dedicated men and women serve on the front line of health care delivery and public safety across Canada and are proud members of our first responder community.

There are an estimated 40,000 paramedics across this country. They serve in our municipalities, remote communities, and the Canadian Armed Forces. They are there in our moment of greatest need. Whether it is at the front line of Canada's opioid epidemic, at the scene of a motor vehicle accident, delivering community paramedicine in rural and remote areas or in a time of crisis, these men and women save the lives of countless Canadians each and every day. We cannot forget the daily challenges of their profession and are reminded of this when discussing paramedic wellness and the high rates of PTSD suffered by first responders.

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

* * *

PERSEVERANCE IN WEST KELOWNA

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about two of my great West Kelowna constituents: Peter Klein and Anja Dumas. Peter is known originally for creating what is called “the Canada cake”, which is a four-foot by six-foot cake with 40 pounds of fresh strawberries placed to look like the Canadian flag for Canada Day.

One day, Anja approached Peter to learn how the cake was assembled, and she learned very quickly. She became very good at it and eventually took over for Peter. Her baking was greatly appreciated by everyone around, and she even received praise from Premier Christy Clark.

Unfortunately, Anja was recently involved in a tragic accident and lost the majority of her right arm, but she is a fighter and has said she looks forward to receiving a prosthetic and to continue making the Canada cake for years to come. I am personally inspired by Anja's optimism in the face of adversity and her dedication to her community of West Kelowna. She represents the best of us.

I am immensely proud to know her and I ask all members to help celebrate Anja's continued perseverance on this big challenge.

* * *

EVENTS IN NIPISSING—TIMISKAMING

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, nothing says summer like a road trip.

[Translation]

Travelling east or west along the Trans-Canada Highway leads to Nipissing—Timiskaming. Standing among the great pines in Temagami, a person immediately understands where the Group of Seven got its inspiration.

[English]

Celebrate the culture, food, and history of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai, or “Deep Water by the Shore People”, during the annual powwow on Bear Island July 8 and 9. Travel along the routes of the voyageurs, who, in turn, were following the path of the Huron and Ojibway, during the Mattawa River Canoe Race July 29, or rock along to tunes from headline acts to homegrown talent during Summer in the Park, North Bay's annual homage to music and fun, August 4 through 6.

[Translation]

The summer really is too short. It lasts only 79 days. Let us make the most of it and see where the open road takes us. Everyone is welcome in Nipissing—Timiskaming.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

RAMADAN

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Ramadan is a blessed and revered month for Muslims all over the world. The word *sawm*, or fasting, is one of the five major pillars of Islam.

Fasting is not just abstaining from eating and drinking from dusk to dawn. It teaches a person the principles of compassion and it indoctrinates patience and selflessness, as through fasting we feel the pains of deprivation but endure them patiently. It creates in a person the real spirit of social belonging, unity, and brotherhood, of equality before God as well as before the law.

We break our fast each night after sundown with an iftar dinner, and I look forward to sharing many iftars with the community and with my parliamentary family as we work hard on the people's business in the days and weeks ahead.

To all Canadian Muslims, I wish them *Ramadan kareem* and *Ramadan mubarak*.

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LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to coin a phrase, diversity is our strength. At our Conservative leadership convention this weekend, I was struck by the diversity in our party—ethnic and religious diversity, yes, but also the intellectual diversity of people with different opinions having respectful discussions.

Unlike the Liberal Party, we embrace diversity of opinion. Our leadership race was remarkably successful, featuring real debate, good ideas from almost all the candidates, and the largest number of people participating in a party leadership in Canadian history.

Oral Questions

We have chosen a leader with firm convictions and vision, rooted in real-world experience. We know he did not grow up rich because his father was a journalist. Our leader will unite a diverse Conservative family to make life more affordable for families. We will stand up for freedom of speech, for freedom of conscience, and for free votes for members of Parliament. He may not look as good in a boxing ring, but our leader will always be on our side.

* * *

EGYPT

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again Coptic Christians in Egypt have become victims of another gruesome terrorist attack. Last Friday, a bus filled with innocent pilgrims was attacked. A group of terrorists killed 28 men, women, and children and injured another 23.

The Prime Minister issued a statement condemning this heinous act and offered condolences to those affected. I spoke with Father Angelos Saad to express my sympathies and affirm our government's support. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

The Prime Minister affirmed Canada's commitment to combatting extremism and terrorism at the recent G7 summit.

Minority groups have been targeted too frequently in the Middle East. We stand firm as a voice that promotes human rights and speaks out against persecution of minorities. As someone who was born in the region, I dream of the day when minorities, including Christians, are treated as equal citizens in the Middle East.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Kinder Morgan pipeline is a bad deal for British Columbia. It is being rammed through our beautiful province by the Liberal Prime Minister, who broke his election promise not to approve this pipeline. The Prime Minister knows Kinder Morgan is slated to be pushed through up to 15 first nation reserves without consent. His natural resources minister even said he would use the army to push this through if necessary.

Section 78 of the National Energy Board Act states that "No company shall take possession of or occupy lands in an Indian reserve without the consent of the Governor in Council." This means the Prime Minister will personally approve expropriating first nation lands on reserve without consent.

I am warning the Prime Minister not to expropriate land from first nation reserves. I am warning the Prime Minister not to use the army to enforce expropriation orders. If he does, there will be hell to pay in British Columbia. Instead, the Prime Minister should reverse this betrayal and reject the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with sheer delight that I rise today to pay tribute to my friend and colleague, the new leader of the Conservative Party.

●(1415)

During the leadership campaign, Canadians embraced his infectious personality, his incredible work ethic, and his positive message about the benefits of Conservative policies. He offers Canadians impeccable character, integrity, and especially authenticity. I am proud to say our leader is someone hard-working Canadian families can relate to, because he is one of them.

In fact, someone in the media asked me the other day whether there was enough room in Stornoway for our new leader's family, with five kids. With our new leader at the helm and a united, energized, battle-tested caucus, the stay at Stornoway will be short, and there is lots of room at 24 Sussex.

In 2019, with sheer excitement, Canadians will elect a strong, united, Conservative government.

The Speaker: I think perhaps on behalf of the fraternity of presiding officers, I too can offer my congratulations to the new leader of the official opposition.

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TERRORIST ATTACK IN MANCHESTER

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness that I learned of the tragedy in the United Kingdom last week. On the heels of an attack on the Parliament of the United Kingdom in March, this new terrorist attack in Manchester specifically targeted the young, the defenceless, the innocent.

Canada stands firmly with the United Kingdom and the British people during these difficult times, and we will continue to fight against terrorism and violence in all its forms.

As chair of the Canada-United Kingdom Inter-Parliamentary Association and on behalf of our members in this House, I extend my deepest condolences to our colleagues in the United Kingdom and to those they represent.

I think I speak for all of us in this House when I say that our thoughts and our prayers are with the families and friends of all those affected by this heinous terrorist attack.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

FINANCE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I remember that when I was younger, families like mine suffered through the disastrous policies of the 1970s. It took this Prime Minister less than two years to lead Canada down that same path with irresponsible spending, higher debt, and a heavier tax burden. Since the Prime Minister is so much older than I, he must remember that time well.

Can the Prime Minister explain why his policies are hurting young people and everyone the government says it is helping?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the new leader of the official opposition. I am sure that all members of the House hope he will play a very important role as a member of the official opposition.

Our program is one that will really help Canadians by creating vigorous growth. The past quarter was our best in six years. The unemployment rate is lower than it was 10 years ago. We need to stay the course.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister does not think that there is something wrong, that shows just how out of touch he is. His misguided economic policies are hitting people hard right now. He is hiking payroll taxes, making it harder for young people and new entrants into the workforce to find jobs. He has made it harder to save for retirement. He is nickel-and-dime Canadians on everything from textbooks to bus passes.

Why can the Prime Minister not understand that this high-tax, high-spending agenda hurts the very people he claims to help?

• (1420)

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now in English, I would like to welcome the member as the new leader of the official opposition. I know I speak for people in the House in saying that we look forward to working with him in the years to come.

It is important that the member started out with a question on economics. We know that the program that we have put in place is really making an important difference for Canadians. We have seen 250,000 net new full-time jobs in Canada. We know that our level of economic growth in the last quarter has been the best in six years. Our program is working. It is helping Canadians, and we look forward to continuing it.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is hard to exaggerate just how out of touch the Prime Minister is with the lives of Canadian families. He thinks he helped the middle class by buying Broadway tickets for Wall Street big shots. He thinks he helped the middle class by hiking taxes on kids' sports, on their music lessons, and on public transit.

Can the Prime Minister explain exactly how higher taxes will improve the lives of hard-working Canadians, and how hard it will be for future generations to pay back the borrowing that the Liberals are racking up?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that the very first thing we did was to lower taxes for middle-class Canadians. What we know for sure is that the average family is paying \$540 less in taxes and for the average individual, \$330 less in taxes. That, together with other issues like the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine out of 10 families, is helping Canadians to succeed with our policies.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister once again reduced Canada's

commitment to the fight against ISIS. For no apparent reason, Canada's contribution of surveillance aircraft was quietly cut in half. Even though he was at NATO bragging about Canada's commitments, the truth is that the Liberals are happy to let others do the heavy lifting when it comes to fighting radical terrorism.

Can the Prime Minister name even one NATO ally who asked us to cut our contribution to the war against ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the work and of the commitments that we have made by increasing the ground forces, which has a direct impact on the ground. The intelligence contributions that we have made and the role 2 hospital that we have put in place are having a direct impact on the ground. I can assure members that when I was at the counter-Daesh meeting, that is exactly what we talked about. We will always continue to revamp our commitments to make sure that we are going to be a viable and credible partner in this coalition.

[Translation]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this Prime Minister's watch, Canada is not back on the world stage, but rather it is absent.

Canada has world-class surveillance aircraft, and our allies really need them. The attack in Manchester proves that radical-led terrorism poses a real threat to Canada and our allies.

Can the minister name a single one of our allies that has welcomed our decision to abandon the fight against ISIS?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we increased our contribution to the fight against Daesh within Iraq, and certainly our trainers are doubling the intelligence. We review our missions every single year to make sure that we remain a credible partner. That is exactly what we are doing. We are making sure that we take the time to consult with our allies to make sure we have the right resources in place. That is exactly what we did when we put in the role 2 hospital. This is one of the reasons we are actually having an impact on the ground today.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, evidence is mounting that the Liberals' privatization bank was hastily put together and aims to help corporations, not Canadians. The Liberals promised transparency and accountability. They promised to do politics differently. Here is their chance to prove it.

Will the Liberals come clean and admit that their infrastructure bank will mean user fees and tolls on hard-working Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we consulted municipalities, provinces, and territories before the creation and introduction of the legislation for the creation of the infrastructure bank. What we heard from our partners is that despite the historic investment we are making in infrastructure, there will still remain an infrastructure deficit. We want to mobilize private capital to ensure that when municipalities need infrastructure, they have the infrastructure to grow the economy, create jobs for the middle class, and provide opportunities for those who work hard each and every day to be part of the middle class.

•(1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learn something new every day about the infrastructure privatization bank.

We already knew that Canadians would have to pay user fees, but now we have also learned that the bank will not be free from political interference. Who is saying so? François Beaudoin, the former president of the Business Development Bank of Canada. He would know, since he was the victim of Shawinigate, under the former Liberal prime minister.

On top of fleecing taxpayers, is this bank meant to be a cash cow for friends of the Liberals?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the last couple of weeks, the member of the opposition and his party have been criticizing us that the bank is too close to private capital. Today, he is saying that it will be too close to government. We have struck the right balance. We believe that the bank will be at arm's length but accountable to Parliament. It will be able to make a decision on its own, ensuring at the same time that the projects it puts forward are in the public interest and are best for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, investors will invest in the infrastructure bank because they are going to make a profit, and taxpayers will have to foot the bill.

In the last campaign, the Prime Minister promised to restore the lifetime pension for wounded veterans and to increase disability payments. It should come as no surprise that this government now appears to be backpedalling and is breaking yet another promise.

Could this government keep even just a few of its promises, show a little respect, and restore the pensions for injured veterans?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government acknowledges the significant contributions that veterans and the Canadian Armed Forces have made and continue to make in protecting Canadians' peace and security at home and around the world. We will deliver on what we committed

to support the mental health, financial security, and the well-being of veterans and their families. We remain committed to a pension-for-life option. In budget 2017, we have outlined that we will announce further details later this year.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, veterans deserve respect, financial security, and fair treatment, but the minister breaking his promise of a full pension leaves veterans vulnerable, frustrated, and betrayed. The minister refuses to listen. Rumbblings of discontent are even coming from the minister's own consultation groups. The present government called for real change for veterans, but so far veterans have been shortchanged.

Will the minister keep his promise to fulfill the sacred obligation owed to our veterans, or will he explain his betrayal to the veterans of this country?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 was about investing in the financial security of veterans, with over \$5 billion of new money for benefits.

Budget 2017 was about supporting the health and well-being of our veterans. We remain committed to a pension-for-life option. In budget 2017, we outlined that we will announce further details later this year.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after Boeing filed complaints against Bombardier following the billions of dollars it received in subsidies, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said it could cancel the purchase from Boeing of 18 Super Hornets.

Can the minister tell us what is important, Canada's air defence capability or the financial interests of Bombardier?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me tell the House what is the most important thing for me every single day, and that is jobs for hard-working middle-class Canadians.

The aerospace industries in Canada and the United States are highly integrated and support good, middle-class jobs on both sides of the border. We strongly disagree with the U.S. Department of Commerce's decision. Our government will defend the interests of the Canadian aerospace industry and our aerospace workers. I will always stand up for Canada.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after forcing Canadian taxpayers to give Bombardier \$372 million in subsidies, the government is about to jeopardize our trade relations with the U.S.

Oral Questions

Knowing that NAFTA negotiations will begin soon, in September, can the minister today tell us once and for all, here in the House, the extent to which she is willing to compromise Canada's trade interests to defend the interests of a single company?

• (1430)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one small correction: the NAFTA negotiations will begin in August, not September.

The aerospace industries in Canada and the U.S. are highly integrated and provide good jobs to middle-class workers on both sides of the border.

Our government will vigorously defend the interests of Canadian workers, including aerospace workers. We will always defend Canada's economic interests.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' latest boondoggle, the \$35-billion infrastructure bank, is under attack again, this time by someone who knows the backrooms of the Liberals really well. François Beaudoin, the former head of the BDC, who testified at the Gomery inquiry about Liberal corruption, has said that the bank is easily open to political interference. What a surprise. Considering the track record of the Liberal Party and its elite friends, this is a scandal waiting to happen.

When will the Liberals focus on what we need to do for Canadians instead of their backroom elite friends?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week was a very good week for Canadian municipalities. We announced 750 projects, more projects in one week than the previous government did in four years combined. That is delivering for Canadians. We put forward a very ambitious agenda to build and rebuild Canadian communities. That is exactly what we are doing.

We are investing billions of dollars in community infrastructure, to grow our economy and enable our municipalities to deliver on the expected—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Simcoe—Grey.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Beaudoin testified at the Gomery inquiry that he was pressured to hire a Liberal staffer who wanted to have “dry cleaning” methods for hiding expenses. Now he says that the \$35-billion infrastructure bank is wide open to political interference. This is Gomery 2.0.

Why will the Liberals not protect Canadian taxpayers? Why are they not looking out for the money of Canadians as opposed to their friends, the Liberal elites?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member and the House that we are structuring the Canada infrastructure bank to function in a way that it will be accountable to Parliament. It will report to Parliament on an annual basis, at the same time making sure it is a crown corporation, arm's length from the day-to-day intervention of the government, making decisions that are in the

best interest of Canadians, and building infrastructure that Canadian communities need, the infrastructure that has been denied by the previous government's underinvestment for a decade.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some things have changed since the last time I rose in the House, but one thing that has not changed is the Liberal government's steady withdrawal of Canada's fight against ISIS. In the last few days, we have learned that we are withdrawing our Aurora surveillance aircraft.

My question is for the minister, who is now known as a military planner. Who is the architect of this withdrawal from the fight against ISIS? Is it you, Minister, or is it the Prime Minister?

The Speaker: Order. The member knows very well he that is to direct his questions to the Chair. He is saying that he is out of practice.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I stated, we are very proud of our revamped mission in Iraq. We have tripled our trainers and doubled our intelligence.

In regard to the Aurora aircraft, in May, one of the two Aurora aircraft that were put into Operation Impact returned to Canada to ensure that the RCAF can continue to deliver on its full range of missions for Canada.

When it comes to fighting Daesh, it happens on the ground. Our troops are training the Iraqi security forces so the fight can be taken directly to Daesh, and that is exactly what is happening on the ground.

• (1435)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in military planning terms, that response would be called a delay tactic.

First the Liberals withdrew our CF-18s; now they are withdrawing our CP-140 surveillance aircraft, the same week that NATO is stepping up its efforts to fight ISIS. Why are the Liberals running from Canada's fight against ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have increased our commitments to Iraq. We have always been working with our coalition partners in making sure we have the right adjustments, just as we did with the role 2 hospitals before the commencement of the operation in Mosul.

Today we announced our extension and also the revamped mission for Operation Artemis, our counterterrorism fight in the Indian Ocean, within that area.

We will always be a credible partner with our coalition, making sure we have the right assets for our coalition partners to have the impact on the ground.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over a year ago, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found the government guilty of discrimination against first nations children.

The Liberals said that they had taken note of the ruling and promised to take action. However, last week, the tribunal was forced to issue a third non-compliance order against this government.

The government keeps telling us that it is investing, but the tribunal has confirmed that this is not the case. I repeat: the tribunal has confirmed that this is not the case. Why?

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is implementing Jordan's principle, as the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has indicated. In fact, to that end, we have taken steps so that now there are 5,000 children, 5,000 cases that have been identified, where kids are getting the care they need who were not getting it a year and a half ago. We are determined to make sure that all children, first nations children, Inuit children, get the care they need, and we will continue to implement this principle.

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what about the other 60,000 kids across Canada?

Four hundred and eighty-nine days ago, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the federal government to end discrimination in funding for first nations kids. On Friday, the tribunal confirmed what we already knew, that the failure to live up to Jordan's principle contributes to the suicides that are plaguing aboriginal youth. Countless other kids are at risk because of the Liberals' refusal to match their words with actions. When will the government wake up to the kids and help them?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government is determined to take action, and we have taken action. We have put new funding into first nations and Inuit health. We have invested in the order of \$828 million of new funding for the first nations and Inuit health branch. We are making sure that people get access to the mental health resources they need. We are implementing Jordan's principle. We are determined to find which kids are not getting the care they need and making sure that they get that care.

We will continue to do this work and make sure that justice is done.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the best way to get appointed to an independent office by the Liberal government? It is easy. Just ask the Liberal cronies.

When esteemed Acadian jurist Michel Doucet asked about his chances of getting the position of Commissioner of Official

Languages, a Liberal MP told him to forget about it, that everyone knew that Ms. Meilleur was the one who would be getting the job.

I have a simple question: were the cards stacked in favour of a good Liberal donor even before the process began?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our two official languages are a priority for our government.

After a long, open, merit-based process, which included 72 candidates, a selection committee, multiple rounds of interviews, and psychometric tests, Ms. Meilleur stood out as the best candidate because of her expertise, skill, and impartiality.

For over 30 years, Ms. Meilleur has fought for francophones' rights and French-language services, for example to protect the Montfort Hospital, and I am convinced that she will be able to carry out her duties in a non-partisan way. She is the best candidate.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, preserving and promoting our two official languages is vital to our country.

Like Graham Fraser before him, Acadian legal expert Michel Doucet wanted to be selected for his skills, not his political allegiances. "This job is too important to be sullied by political manoeuvring," he said. He was right.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage assure us that the procedure to appoint the commissioner complied with the Official Languages Act, or will there have to be an investigation?

• (1440)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said a number of times in the House, our two official languages are a priority.

Following a lengthy, open, merit-based process involving 72 candidates, a selection committee, interviews, and psychometric testing, I can assure my colleague that we are confident Mrs. Meilleur is the best candidate.

Moreover, when I shared the news with the two main opposition party critics, they both told me they believed she had the necessary knowledge and experience to serve in that capacity. Naturally, I am hoping the House will vote in favour—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

[English]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a Liberal MP told Michel Doucet, a candidate for Commissioner of Official Languages, that,

[Translation]

"if he did not talk to certain Liberal Party of Canada higher-ups, he would not get the job."

[English]

The Commissioner of Official Languages is an agent of Parliament, not a partisan employee of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Oral Questions

In the last election, the Prime Minister promised to clean up the partisan swamp. He promised to do things differently. Is this his idea of cleaning things up?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two official languages are a priority for our government. That is why after a rigorous, open, and merit-based process, which included 72 candidates, a selection committee, multiple rounds of interviews, and psychometric tests, Mrs. Meilleur clearly emerged as the most qualified candidate.

I personally had the opportunity to ask my two colleagues from both opposition parties, and they both said that Mrs. Meilleur had the expertise and the experience. Also, the leaders of the opposition and the Senate were—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Harper proposed Graham Fraser for the position, his credentials were above any partisan approach, but the present Prime Minister proposed a candidate who does not pass the partisan smell test, and he failed to legally consult the opposition.

This past January, the Prime Minister refused to answer an anglophone in English. So much for the respect for this institution of Parliament, so much for the respect for Canada's two official languages.

When will the Prime Minister withdraw this nomination?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course our two official languages are extremely important to our government, but, more than that, the vitality of the linguistic communities of the country is also extremely important.

That is why we took this approach very seriously. We did a rigorous, open, and merit-based process, which of course included many interviews, psychometric testing, and we are convinced that Mrs. Meilleur is the best-suited candidate. She has expertise. She has the experience. She has been involved her entire life in the protection of linguistic minorities, and that is why we are confident with her candidacy.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at least 42 gay men from Chechnya have had to flee for their lives and are now hiding in dangerous situations elsewhere in Russia.

Given the ongoing campaign to wipe out the gay community in Chechnya—and that is what is going on—the lives of these 42 men are still at risk from reprisals from Chechnyan officials, Russian officials, and sometimes even their own families.

Will the government take immediate action in this emergency situation and grant these 42 temporary visas, and then work with NGOs to help these men find a path to safety in Canada?

The whole world is watching.

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely share the view of the hon. member that

what is happening to the gay men of Chechnya is deplorable, and we have spoken out clearly about that.

I am very personally engaged in this matter and have been personally working with Russian NGOs. This is a very delicate situation and people's lives are in the balance, but we are very engaged.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is about more than just rhetoric. This is about taking action.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister said that he would not hesitate to criticize President Putin, but his criticism of the pogrom happening in Chechnya right now against gay men has been rather muted, to say the least.

Where is the Liberal leader who was going to stand up to Putin and his human rights abuses? Will the government at least take action and grant emergency visas to the 42 gay men who have fled Chechnya because they fear for their lives?

• (1445)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

This is a very personal matter to me. We deplore the recent reports of human rights violations against gay and bisexual men in Chechnya. We are actively working to find ways to help these individuals. I have engaged directly with Russian NGOs. This is a very delicate situation, so we cannot disclose everything we are doing, but we are very engaged.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, global economies are focusing increasingly on new markets and innovative industries, and now is the time to invest in Canadians.

In many sectors, we have both the talent and the economic capacity to lead, to take full advantage of changing global priorities, to create the jobs of the future now and to build the foundation for the next generation Canadian economy.

Can the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development explain what steps this government is taking to invest in Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nepean for his work in developing an innovation and skills plan. A key part of that plan is a supercluster initiative. This is about helping Canadian companies grow and succeed in Canada, and globally as well. This is about creating good-quality, resilient jobs by promoting collaboration between industry, academia, and civil society.

We want to make sure that we provide good economic innovation and industrial benefits. In three words, this plan is about jobs, jobs, jobs.

TAXATION

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, big city Liberals think that imposing a carbon tax on Canadians will mean that more Canadians take their bikes to work, but in Saskatchewan it is difficult to take bikes to work, especially when the weather is -30°.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation calculated that if the Liberals have their way, their carbon tax of over \$300 per tonne will cost over 90¢ per litre more.

Why are the Liberals determined to make it impossible for Saskatchewan families to make ends meet?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working with the provinces to support the middle class and to make the planet cleaner for our children and grandchildren. Through the pan-Canadian framework on climate change and clean growth, we are encouraging cleaner ways to do business and foster innovation. This is how we grow the economy and create jobs for the future.

Under the previous government, Canada did nothing to address the issue of climate change and had a decade of incredibly slow growth. We are working together with the provinces, territories, indigenous peoples, business people, communities, and all Canadians to build a more sustainable, cleaner, and more prosperous economy and to support the creation of good middle-class jobs now and for the future.

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—University, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers, like all businesses, under the Liberals are facing higher taxes and more expenses. Their competitors in the United States and Australia will have a massive advantage because they will not be paying a carbon tax.

The Prime Minister's promise of returning farmers' carbon taxes to the provinces rings hollow because farmers, like all Canadians, need to pay for their goods to be moved by trains and trucks, whether it is grain or fertilizer.

Why are the Liberals making it harder for all Canadian businesses to survive with the imposition of a carbon tax?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, addressing climate change is one of the critical issues of our time. It is something we must do for our children and our grandchildren. This government is committed to creating a more innovative economy that reduces emissions while creating good middle-class jobs.

Pricing pollution is a market-based, efficient way to reduce emissions at the lowest possible cost and stimulate innovation. This government has been actively working with the provinces and territories under the pan-Canadian framework regarding the pricing of carbon pollution to ensure flexibility exists for provinces to customize their systems to the unique circumstances of their province. This is an important economic and environmental measure, and we intend to continue forward.

Oral Questions

LABOUR

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, farmers, resource workers, transportation workers, and small businesses are all reliant upon a stable and dependable transportation system. CN Rail has received notice of a strike. While the parties do remain at the table and continue to negotiate, people are concerned about the effect that a work stoppage is going to have on their jobs.

I want to know from the Minister of Transport if he actually has a plan in order to protect the jobs of these workers in the event of a work stoppage.

• (1450)

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government firmly believes in the process of collective bargaining. I have spoken to both of the parties and they are working diligently to come to agreement. We stand by them with the mediators that Canada so proudly provides.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague says, that is not a plan.

Here is the deal. In five days, mines will close. In five days, grain will back up in elevators. In five days, auto plants will run out of auto parts. In five days, retailers like Canadian Tire and Walmart will choose to leave Prince Rupert and Halifax.

Does the Minister of Transport have a plan to make sure our transportation continues?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government believes in the collective bargaining process. Both parties are at the table, working around the clock to come to an agreement. We firmly believe in this process. We have mediators working with them and we support them all the way.

* * *

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as B.C. begins its busy boating season, the Liberal government is shutting down the Coast Guard's only emergency dive team specialized in search and rescue. The last time the Liberals cut this dive team, 15 years ago, it led to deaths on our coasts.

Have the Liberals learned nothing from their past mistakes? Why are they killing this emergency service that keeps our coast safe? Will the Prime Minister reconsider his terrible decision?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the House that we have significantly increased the funding for the Canadian Coast Guard for search and rescue services across the country, including in British Columbia. There are four new lifeboat stations being set up in British Columbia right now. There is a 15% increase in the front-line personnel on the water.

Oral Questions

The waters of British Columbia and every coastline across the country will be safer than they have ever been before. My colleagues from British Columbia understand this. Our government is investing in these services and will continue to do so.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two months ago, a young boy named Dash discovered his father's body at their home. Dash had already lost his mother to breast cancer several months ago.

His Aunt Willow welcomed Dash into her home and applied for parental benefits so she could care for him as he struggled with this traumatic loss, but she was told that permanent legal guardians were not eligible for the same parental support as adoptive parents.

What will the government do for Willow and Dash and will it amend the EI Act so families like them can get the support they need?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members of the House are very saddened by the difficult times in which many Canadian families are living, such as the circumstance just described. The role of the EI parental benefits, maternity benefits, and other special benefits is exactly to support those families in the difficult times in which they live.

I invite my colleague to make sure that all the information that is relevant to this case is known by my department.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to talk about being accountable and transparent, but every chance he gets, he uses his power to run away from accountability in this place. Whether he is stripping the powers of the PBO or changing the rules arbitrarily so he only has to be here one day a week, he treats Parliament like it is a nuisance.

When he is here answering one day a week, will he at least answer our questions and not give us this rinse and repeat and repeat times 19 that we had to deal with last week?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and to recognize that the member does hear some of the stuff we say, that she recognizes that we can modernize this place and have some of those important conversations we have been encouraging.

When it comes to the parliamentary budget officer, the constructive feedback we shared was heard. That is the importance of legislation actually making it to committee so committees can do the important work and hear from experts and stakeholders. We can improve legislation so we are serving the best interests of Canadians. That is exactly what we have done.

●(1455)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no one believes that the Prime Minister is being accountable. Even the media is not buying it. *The Globe and Mail* wrote, “we have the ... Liberals, whose new rules threaten to make a government less accountable, not more.” Only the Prime Minister would believe that showing up one day a week to work makes someone more accountable.

Is the Prime Minister's lack of accountability genetic, or is it something that maybe he has learned from Kathleen Wynne?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to working hard on behalf of all Canadians. We are committed to having constructive and meaningful conversations to ensure we are serving in their best interests.

When it comes to a Prime Minister's question period, the member is mistaken once again. The Prime Minister's question period would be in addition to the other days that he is present. Moreover, we see that this government is doing government very differently. We are a more open and transparent government, just like we committed to be. When questions are posed to this government, ministers who are present always answer; otherwise, parliamentary secretaries do.

We will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice's father, the esteemed Chief Bill Wilson, called out the Prime Minister for the failed missing and murdered inquiry. He actually called it a farce and urged the Prime Minister to fire the commissioners and start all over. He wrote, “8 months, \$6 Million and nothing has been done except pay salary and expenses.”

Victims and families are threatening to boycott. Will the minister stand and tell us what she will do today to fix this mess?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ending this ongoing national tragedy. As family member Bernie Williams has said, families have fought too long and hard for this much needed inquiry to abandon it and them now.

The commission has publicly acknowledged the need for increased communication, and the families must be at the centre of the inquiry. The commission is committed to find culturally sensitive and trauma-informed ways to ensure this. I am pleased the hearings will begin in Whitehorse this week.

*Oral Questions***TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister's special adviser on LGBTQ issues, I know that Canada has an incredible reputation as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly countries in the world. Cities like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax, and of course Edmonton are internationally recognized LGBTQ destinations. Our community contributes over \$4 billion annually to tourism in Canada.

[Translation]

Can the Minister of Small Business and Tourism inform the House of our government's plans to strengthen our brand as a destination for LGBTQ2 tourism?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Edmonton Centre for his question, and I wish everyone a happy Tourism Week in Canada.

[English]

The value of global LGBTQ2 tourism spending is \$202 billion annually. As part of Canada's new tourism vision, we are partnering with Travel Gay Canada to provide training for LGBTQ2 tourism businesses.

Canada's welcoming spirit will help attract more tourists to incredible pride celebrations across the country, creating more customers for small businesses and more jobs in the tourism industry.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned last week the heartbreaking news that 500-plus Brockville and area residents would be losing their jobs when the Procter & Gamble plant shuts down and moves to West Virginia.

The Liberals' preoccupation with raising taxes, adding a carbon tax, and increasing payroll taxes has forced these jobs out of Canada, and many more will follow.

When will the Liberals abandon their high-tax scheme and start to help struggling Canadians? What specifically will they do to help the hard-working people in my riding?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have introduced two budgets that deal with the anxieties and challenges faced by many of these communities. That is why growth is up. That is why exports are up. That is why manufacturing is up. That is why job numbers are up. If we look at the last eight months, 250,000 good-quality resilient jobs have been created. Our unemployment level has gone from 7.1% to 6.5%.

We will continue to work hard for middle-class Canadians, help these communities, and make sure these investments are made in Canada to create good-quality jobs.

● (1500)

[Translation]

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CRTC pulled the rug out from under the feet of everyone in the country by cutting funding for Canadian and French-language content, with disastrous consequences.

Three days later, three original series were cancelled in Quebec. It is wrong, but it is legal because the CRTC is allowing it to happen. Even the Quebec minister of culture has asked the CRTC to go back to the drawing board.

This weekend, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage to remind her that the government can step in and refer a decision back to the CRTC in exceptional cases such as this one, which is threatening our entire cultural industry.

In this exceptional circumstance, can we count on the minister to refer these ill-advised decisions back to the CRTC? Can independent producers, the artisans of our culture, count on her?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in the importance of arts and culture. That is why we invested \$1.9 billion in that area in budget 2016. That is the largest investment in arts and culture in 30 years, and we are the only country in the G7 that has invested so much.

I am currently looking at the impact that the CRTC decision will have, and I invite artists and industry creators to make their views known.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a serious food crisis in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen. At present, more than 20 million people are at risk of starvation as a result of severe drought and ongoing conflicts.

Today, our government made an important announcement in that regard. Could the minister explain to the House how Canada plans to increase its contribution and further help the most vulnerable populations, who are the victims of this terrible crisis?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Davenport for her question.

Today, we launched the famine relief fund to help 20 million people facing starvation in South Sudan, Nigeria, Yemen, and Somalia. The government will match every eligible donation made to registered Canadian organizations between March 17 and June 20.

[English]

I encourage all Canadians to give to the famine relief matching fund. Information is available on Canada.ca or by following #zerofamine.

*Oral Questions***PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Hon. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with 24 hours until the Canadian autism partnership vote, the Liberals have still not signalled their support. They talk about research, but researchers themselves want to see their work actually used to benefit families. They talk about transfers to provinces, while some Canadian families mortgage their homes to fund evidence-based early intervention or adult programs.

The experts, the incredible self-advocates, and Canadian families have worked tirelessly for years to get to this point. Can they count on their Minister of Health to stand up for them and support this motion tomorrow?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that autism spectrum disorder has a significant impact on individuals and families.

Federal investments in research, improved data, monitoring, skills, and training support those already diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

The minister is currently touring Canada to develop a first piece of legislation on accessibility. I can assure the House that autism will be included in this new legislation.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we know that legalizing marijuana has less to do with health and public safety than it does with money. We also know who is going to cash in: friends of the Liberal Party.

Considering how many boards of directors in the medical cannabis industry feature an erstwhile Liberal minister, an ex-senator, or a former Liberal Party director, the industry is obviously counting on the government to make money.

Does the government's move to legalize marijuana have anything to do with setting its pals up with golden parachutes?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is referring to the fact that there are a number of licensed producers across the country. There are now 44 of them producing cannabis for medical purposes. There is a regulatory arm's-length process that is undertaken in order to determine whether someone qualifies to be a licensed producer, and I am pleased that the process is working well.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): The process is not working that well, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The recreational marijuana industry is still embryonic, but already it reeks of cronyism and patronage.

When industry players turn up at cocktail fundraisers a year before the bill is introduced and hire former ministers, senators, and party

directors, we can be forgiven for thinking they might have certain expectations.

Will the government let Quebec and the provinces select their own authorized producers so they can take what is really starting to look, and not for the first time, like a conflict of interest and nip it in the bud?

• (1505)

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are proud of the fact that in Canada we have a regulatory process that is approved through Health Canada for the process of having licensed producers. There are now 44 licensed producers in the country. The vast majority of them, 30 in fact, were approved by the previous minister of health, who is a member of the benches opposite, so I suppose that one could also ask that member whether she also feels that it was a good arm's-length process.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on August 11, 2014, the Prime Minister said the following regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: "It is only through negotiation...that we will arrive at the two-state solution that so many believe is key to ending hostilities in the region."

That is all well and good, but first Canada needs to recognize Palestine as a free and independent state.

Will the government recognize Palestine as an independent state?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a long-standing commitment to a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace, and to a two-state negotiated solution. This includes Israel's right to exist in peace and free from terrorism within secure borders, as well as the creation of a sovereign, viable Palestinian state.

Canada calls on all parties to refrain from taking any unilateral action that would undermine the outcome of direct negotiations and jeopardize the prospect of a two-state solution.

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix on a point of order.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage told the House that she consulted us and that we supported her choice, but that is not true. She did call me, and I told her very clearly that Ms. Meilleur was not the right person because she is too closely connected to the Liberals.

I would ask the Minister of Canadian Heritage to apologize.

The Speaker: This is perhaps a matter of debate, but I see the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage rising. The hon. minister.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Mélanie Joly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct my colleague. I never said that she approved of the choice. I said that she recognized her expertise and her experience. During our conversation, she specifically said that Ms. Meilleur was qualified, and that she had the skills and a history of defending minority rights—

The Speaker: I thank the honourable member and the honourable minister, but this is a matter of debate.

* * *

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I hope you will not mind a brief commentary before my point of order, which will relate to Standing Orders 16 and 18, to congratulate the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle on becoming the Leader of the Opposition.

I do recall his time as Speaker, and I hope he will too as he helps this place restore respect for the rules regarding heckling. Goodness knows, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, the new Leader of the Opposition, knows those rules inside and out. However, I hate to mention that in today's question period, the noise was all coming—not all, not entirely, but primarily—from the Conservative benches. I hope he will turn his attention to that.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for her point of order. I look to all members to assist the Chair in improving the decorum and lowering the noise in this place and remembering that we take our turns, one at a time.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANNABIS ACT

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a legislative backgrounder, including a charter statement, for Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts.

* * *

• (1510)

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 responses to 35 petitions.

[Translation]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, five reports of the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The first concerns the bilateral visit to Delhi, Bombay, and Ahmedabad, India, from September 10 to 18, 2016.

[English]

The second concerns the 65th Westminster Seminar on Practice and Procedure, held in London, United Kingdom, from November 21 to 25, 2016.

The third concerns the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, held in London, United Kingdom, from December 11 to 17, 2016.

The fourth concerns the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Working Group meeting, held in Steyning, West Sussex, United Kingdom, from February 24 to 27, 2017.

The fifth concerns the International Parliamentary Conference on National Security and Cybersecurity Day, held in London, United Kingdom, from March 27 to 31, 2017.

We have been very busy.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates regarding the study of the main estimates 2017-18.

[Translation]

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology entitled “Main Estimates 2017-18”.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs, entitled “Default Prevention and Management 2017”.

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

Routine Proceedings

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note that the Conservatives attached a dissenting report. We are very concerned that the committee did not look at the issue of generating wealth as an important part of avoiding third party management. It did not actually look at the issue of transparency and the importance of community members understanding what is happening in their own communities. We also thought it was flawed in terms of the cost-sharing recommendations.

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CANADIAN JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-232, An Act respecting Canadian Jewish Heritage Month.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to give first reading to Bill S-232, an act respecting Canadian Jewish heritage month. I want to thank my hon. colleagues, the members for Thornhill and Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, for their support.

This bill would recognize and designate the month of May each year as Canadian Jewish heritage month. By designating the month of May as Canadian Jewish heritage month, this bill would recognize the important contributions Jewish Canadians have made to Canada's social, economic, political, and cultural fabric. Canada is home to the fourth-largest Jewish population in the world, and Canadian Jewish heritage month would provide an opportunity to remember, celebrate, and educate future generations about the inspirational role Jewish Canadians have played, and continue to play, in communities across the country.

(Motion deemed adopted, bill read the first time)

* * *

● (1515)

PETITIONS**CARBON TAX**

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present a petition signed by many people in my constituency about a carbon tax. Surprise, surprise, they are against it. Constituents recognize in my riding the negative impact this will have on the energy sector and jobs in all parts of this country, but particularly in Alberta, which is already facing a jobs crisis. This petition notes that this tax will not help the environment. More effective measures to help the environment would involve exporting Canadian technology to less environmentally friendly jurisdictions, not sending jobs to less environmentally friendly jurisdictions.

This petition protests the tax on everything that the government is trying to impose on provinces, and I heartily agree with my constituents in opposing this imposition by the government on our economy.

[Translation]

WATER QUALITY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting another petition about Lake Champlain signed by

people in my riding from the Saint-Armand and Bedford regions. Cyanobacteria tend to proliferate in hot summer weather.

The International Joint Commission, which is the result of a Canada-U.S. agreement and dates back to 1909, provides for co-operation between Canada and the United States. In the 2016 budget, the government allocated \$7.5 million to the commission, but the mandate letter indicates that this money is to be used for flood relief.

The petitioners are calling on the government to allow the \$7.5 million that was allocated for flood relief to also be used to study Lake Champlain's water quality. We think that the mandate letter should be revised to make water quality part of the International Joint Commission's mandate. I also want to thank the member for Saint-Jean for his support.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the pleasure of welcoming people marching from Victoria to Burnaby, protesting the Kinder Morgan pipeline, in the "Walk 4 the Salish Sea!" march. The petition is signed by many people across British Columbia who are opposed to the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and I urge the government to pay attention to what they are saying.

[Translation]

IN THÉRÈSE-DE BLAINVILLE ROAD WORK

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I am presenting a petition signed by over 7,000 people from Thérèse-De Blainville and the Lower Laurentians region regarding the completion of Highway 19 and the dedicated transit lanes on Highway 15. This is about more than just infrastructure. It is about quality of life, economic development, and sustainable development in the Montreal region.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to intervene with the appropriate authorities to ensure the completion of these urgent and long-awaited projects.

The petition was spearheaded by the Thérèse-De Blainville chamber of commerce and industry. As the sponsor of the petition, I humbly submit that the 7,000 signatures represent more than just names scribbled on bits of paper. These are 7,000 people who are involved in their community and who are taking action to make it a better place.

I would like to thank all of the stakeholders from near and far who supported the petition regarding these projects, which have unanimous support. This has been going on for far too long.

[English]

CONTRACEPTION

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from Canadians in support of free prescription birth control. Among sexually active heterosexual Canadians, only 15% use contraception, with withdrawal remaining the third most-used contraceptive method in Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Twenty-four per cent of Canadians do not have access to subsidized drug plans, meaning they have to pay for contraception medications out of their own pockets. It has been shown that subsidized contraception has had a cost benefit to society in jurisdictions like the U.S. and Great Britain. It not only reduces costs but helps in terms of preventing unintended pregnancies.

Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to support my Motion No. 65, which would compel the federal government to work with the provinces to cover the full cost of prescribed contraceptives.

• (1520)

GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first is from petitioners who are asking the House to take action so that Canadian consumers know the contents of the products they buy, particularly those that contain genetically modified organisms. This is a question of consumers' right to know and choose products they want in their homes and that they want to feed their families.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second set of petitions is from constituents and relates to the ongoing human rights abuses in the People's Republic of China against practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong. Petitioners urge the House of Commons assembled and the Government of Canada to press the People's Republic of China to respect the rights of belief, worship, free speech, and basic human rights.

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present e-petition 760, which calls upon Parliament to pass Magnitsky-style legislation. Petitioners mention Bill S-226, which is currently in the House at second reading, as well as Bill C-267, which is my version of the Magnitsky act. Both bills are known as the justice for victims of corrupt foreign officials act, or the Sergei Magnitsky law. As we know, the legislation is getting wide support.

In particular, the 646 petitioners who signed the petition are drawing attention to the corrupt officials in the Communist government of Vietnam and the systematic and brutal human rights violations to political dissidents. Petitioners want us, as parliamentarians, to ensure we pass this important legislation so we can hold to account corrupt foreign officials and those committing atrocities against their own citizens.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, if I may, I will provide some feedback to the chair. I just tabled a revised response to Question No. 954, which responds to the point of order raised by the member for Carleton, respecting the government's response to this question. I would like to state that the original response contained inaccurate information due to an administrative error in producing the response. I thank members for their understanding.

Having said that, the following questions will be answered today: a revised response to Question No. 954, originally tabled on May 18, 2017; Questions Nos. 958 to 960; Questions Nos 966 to 971; Questions Nos. 973 to 976; Question No. 980; Question No. 982; and Question No. 985.

[Text]

Question No. 954—**Mr. MacKenzie (Oxford):**

With regard to page 11 of the Guide for Parliamentary Secretaries published by the Privy Council Office in December 2015, where it states that Parliamentary Secretaries are “prohibited from accepting sponsored travel”: (a) does the government consider the trips taken by Parliamentary Secretary Khera and Parliamentary Secretary Virani, which are listed in the 2016 sponsored travel report by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, to be a violation of the guide; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what corrective measures were taken to reconcile the violation; and (c) if the answer to (a) is negative, why does the government not consider these trips to be a violation?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to trips taken by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism), their sponsored travel was pre-approved by the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Furthermore, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage (Multiculturalism) made the proper and appropriate public declarations to the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner upon their return, in accordance with the rules that govern the practice of sponsored travel.

Sponsored travel is not unusual for ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

For example, Kerry-Lynne Findlay, the former parliamentary secretary to the minister of justice, travelled to Taiwan, a trip that was sponsored by the Chinese International Economic Cooperation Association.

Question No. 958—**Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy:**

With regard to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and energy efficiency programs, for the years 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017: (a) what programs are in place; (b) what are the eligibility criteria for each of these programs; (c) what tools do the government and the CMHC use to promote these programs to the public (i) at the national level, (ii) at the provincial level; (d) how many people use these programs (i) at the national level, (ii) by province, (iii) in the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot; and (e) how much has been spent to advertise these programs (i) at the national level, (ii) in each province?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, CMHC, considers energy efficiency an important issue. Many of the housing programs available to Canadians include a consideration or component for energy efficiency.

Routine Proceedings

In regard to stand-alone programs, in response to part (a), CMHC green home program was introduced in 2004 and is intended to encourage consumers to purchase energy-efficient housing or make energy-saving renovations which can generate significant reductions in energy costs for homeowners and have a positive environmental impact. CMHC green home offers a premium refund to CMHC mortgage loan insurance borrowers who either buy, build, or renovate for energy efficiency using CMHC-insured financing.

For the years 2014, 2015, and up to June 22, 2016, borrowers could benefit from a 10% refund on their mortgage insurance premium, and a refund of sales tax where applicable, when using CMHC-insured financing to purchase a new or existing energy-efficient home or to undertake energy efficient renovations to an existing home.

Enhancements to the program were made in June 2016. Effective June 22, 2016, the base premium refund increased from 10% to 15% of the total premium paid and a two-level premium refund structure exists, allowing for as much as 25% of the total premium paid to be refunded, depending on the level of energy efficiency achieved.

In response to part (b), under the CMHC green home program, most new homes built under a CMHC eligible energy-efficient building standard automatically qualify for a premium refund. For all other homes, eligibility is assessed using Natural Resources Canada's EnerGuide rating system.

Information on how to apply for a partial premium refund and eligibility requirements is available on CMHC's website www.cmhc.ca/greenhome.

In response to part (c), CMHC's modernized green home program was launched in 2016 and was actively promoted through various channels including mortgage professionals, industry associations, media outlets, and CMHC's redesigned web content. CMHC's green home program continues to be promoted through various social media outlets including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter.

In response to part (d), the number of refunds issued under CMHC green home, at a national level, during the requested years is as follows: 752 in 2014, 476 in 2015, 443 in 2016, and 153 in 2017. These numbers are not available by province or territory nor specifically for the riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

In response to part (e), CMHC did not spend any specific advertising funds prior to 2016. In 2016, CMHC spent \$20,940 to advertise the CMHC green home program at a national level.

Question No. 959—Mr. David Sweet:

With regard to the call for proposals for government funding under the Natural Resources Canada's Energy Innovation Program allocated for Clean Energy Innovation that closed October 31, 2016: (a) what criteria were used to select approved projects; (b) what projects received funding, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) type of project, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received; (c) what projects have been selected to receive funding in the future, broken down by the (i) name of the recipient, (ii) type of project, (iii) date on which the funding was received, (iv) amount received; and (d) for each project identified in (b) and (c), was a press release issued to announce it and, if so, what is the (i) date, (ii) headline, (iii) file number of the press release?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to paragraph (a), the criteria used to select

approved projects are outlined in section 6 of the "Energy Innovation Program, Clean Energy Innovation Component: Request for Project Proposals, Applicants' Guide", which is made available to all applicants.

With respect to paragraphs (b), (c), and (d), as of April 4, 2017, NRCan had not yet formally announced any of the selected projects for the clean energy innovation program. However, 100% of the \$25.1 million in funding available for this program has been allocated to projects selected through the call for proposals process. The current number of projects expected to be supported by the clean energy innovation program is approximately 27, although this figure could change slightly in the future. All applicants have been notified, and NRCan has started conducting post-selection due diligence and negotiating contribution agreements with applicants. It is expected that the majority of the 27 contribution agreements will be signed by June 30, 2017. Once contribution agreements are signed, NRCan will announce the projects. NRCan will also disclose the contribution amounts through the formal, quarterly proactive disclosure process. This information will be available on NRCan's website.

Question No. 960—Mr. Kevin Sorenson:

With regard to the announced 372.5 million dollars in repayable loans provided by the government to Bombardier: (a) was the government told during its negotiations with Bombardier that the financial assistance provided by the government would be used for bonuses to executives; (b) did the terms of the financial assistance include any guarantees that the loans would not go towards executive bonuses; and (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, what are the details of such guarantees?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to part (a), the Government of Canada is committed to the long-term viability and success of the Canadian aerospace sector. The repayable contribution by the government to Bombardier is focused on research and development. This contribution will support creation of high-quality jobs and development of leading-edge technology in Canada. It will ensure the long-term competitiveness of Bombardier as a key aerospace firm for Canada.

Routine Proceedings

In response to part (b), the strategic aerospace and defence initiative and C Series are claims-based programs where recipients make claims against eligible costs associated with research and development required in the performance of the project by the recipient. As negotiated in each individual contribution agreement, the costs must be reasonably and properly incurred and/or allocated to the project with eligible costs mainly supporting labour, materials, overhead, equipment, and contractors. Costs not related to the completion of the project are ineligible.

In response to part (c), specific terms of the contribution agreements are deemed third party commercially confidential information and protected under paragraph 20(1)(b) of the Access to Information Act.

Question No. 966— **Mr. Guy Lauzon:**

With regard to page 24 of the Liberal election platform where it said “We will ensure that Access to Information applies to the Prime Minister’s and Ministers’ Offices”: (a) does the government plan on keeping this election promise; and (b) in what year does the government plan on introducing legislation which would make such changes?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to raise the bar on openness and transparency because government information ultimately belongs to the people we serve, and it should be open by default.

Major reforms to the Access to Information Act have not been done in more than three decades since it was enacted and we are taking on this challenge in a two-phase approach.

Changes to the act have to be carefully crafted to balance our fundamental values of openness with other principles, including independence of the judiciary, the effectiveness and neutrality of the public service, the protection of Canadians’ personal information, and national security.

We are working on fixing an Access to Information Act that is stale-dated after decades of neglect and, furthermore, we will legislate a requirement that the act be reviewed every five years so it never again becomes stale.

Through the ministerial directive issued last spring by the President of the Treasury Board, we moved to enshrine the principle of “open by default”, eliminated all fees apart from the \$5 application fee, and directed departments to release information in user-friendly formats whenever possible.

Furthermore, we will undertake the first full and now-mandatory review of the Act beginning no later than 2018.

Question No. 967— **Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to the possible extradition of individuals between the Government of Canada and the Government of China: (a) what are the details of any communication between the governments on the subject including (i) the date, (ii) the form (in person, telephone, email, etc.), (iii) the titles of individuals involved in the communication, (iv) the location, (v) any relevant file numbers; and (b) what are the details of any briefing notes on the subject including the (i) title, (ii) date, (iii) sender, (iv) recipient, (v) subject matter, (vi) file number?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to discussions between the Government of Canada and the Government

of China, please read the following joint communiqué found online at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/09/13/1st-canada-china-high-level-national-security-and-rule-law-dialogue>

Question No. 968— **Mr. Tom Lukiwski:**

With regard to interaction between the government and the Bradford Exchange: (a) when was the government made aware that the company was planning on producing a talking doll bearing the image of the Prime Minister; (b) did the government authorize the company to produce the doll; (c) if the answer to (b) is affirmative, who provided the authorization; (d) did the government provide any input regarding the phrases which the doll says; (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, what are the details including (i) who provided the input, (ii) when was the input provided; and (f) what are the details of any briefing notes or memos related to the production of the talking dolls including the (i) sender, (ii) recipient, (iii) date, (iv) title and subject matter, (v) file number?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government had no interaction with The Bradford Exchange and did not authorize the production of the doll.

Question No. 969— **Mr. Gordon Brown:**

With regard to the “Sober Second Thinking: How the Senate Deliberates and Decides” discussion paper, circulated by the Government Representative in the Senate, and dated March 31, 2017: (a) does this paper represent the policy of the Government of Canada; (b) was its preparation, writing, editing and publication coordinated with the Government House Leader’s March 10, 2017, discussion paper entitled “Modernization of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons”; (c) was its preparation, writing, editing and publication coordinated in any other manner with the Government House Leader; (d) did the Privy Council Office, or any other department, assist in the preparation, writing, editing and publishing of it; (e) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, with respect to the employees involved, what are their (i) titles, (ii) occupational groups, (iii) levels; (f) if the answer to (d) is affirmative, (i) were any parliamentarians or political parties consulted in the course of their work, (ii) were any staff of the Senate consulted in the course of their work, (iii) were any academics, experts, or any other outside advisors consulted in the course of their work; (g) if the answer to any of (f)(i), (ii) or (iii) is affirmative, what are the names of the persons or organizations consulted, and when were they consulted; (h) were any contractors, paid by the Government of Canada, involved in the preparation, writing, editing and publishing of the paper; and (i) if the answer to (h) is affirmative, with respect to the contractors involved, (i) what are their titles, (ii) what services were contracted, (iii) what is the value of the services contracted, (iv) what amount were they paid for their services, (v) what are the related file numbers?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to discussion paper entitled “Sober Second Thinking: How the Senate Deliberates and Decides”, the paper was prepared exclusively by the Office of the Government Representative in the Senate and published on the Senate website.

Our government believes that a more independent and less partisan Senate will rebuild Canadians’ trust in this parliamentary institution.

It is up to the Senate itself to determine how to best adapt its internal rules and practices to function effectively.

Our government will continue to work productively with the Senate to move forward on our legislative agenda.

Question No. 970— **Mr. Pierre Poilievre:**

With regard to the services related to issuing debt and selling of government bonds, since April 1, 2016: (a) what amount has the Government spent on services related to issuing debt and/or selling government bonds; (b) for each service in (a), what is the (i) name of the person or firm, (ii) service period, (iii) amount of the contract, (iv) reason that person or firm was chosen to provide the service?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Government of Canada marketable debt, which includes treasury bills and marketable bonds, is distributed by the Bank of Canada, as the government's fiscal agent through competitive auctions to government securities distributors, a group of banks and investment dealers in the domestic market. No commissions or fees are paid to government securities distributors.

The Bank of Canada, as the government's fiscal agent, is also responsible for overseeing and administering the retail debt program, which includes the issuance of Canada savings bonds and Canada premium bonds. Fees are paid to financial institutions in proportion to the amount of bonds outstanding that they have distributed. Any Canadian financial institution can distribute retail debt products, subject to signing the sales agent agreements. Financial institutions are engaged to distribute Canada savings bonds and Canada premium bonds as they are seen as an effective distribution channel for retail savings products. In 2015-16, the government paid an aggregate amount of \$3.9 million in fees to a number of financial institutions on an outstanding retail debt stock of about \$5.5 billion. The government announced in budget 2017 that it is winding down the retail debt program, so these fees will stop. The Bank of Canada directly pays these fees to financial institutions and is refunded by the Department of Finance. Accordingly, the department does not have the list of financial institutions nor the breakdown of fees paid per financial institution.

The Government of Canada holds foreign currency reserve assets to provide foreign currency liquidity to the government and to promote orderly conditions for the Canadian dollar in the foreign exchange markets, if required. Foreign currency debt is issued to fund foreign reserve assets in a manner that mitigates the impacts of movements in interest rates and foreign exchange rates. The government pays fees to financial institutions selling Canada bills, i.e., short term debt issued in U.S. dollars. Financial institutions are selected based on their ability to efficiently distribute a debt offering to a diverse investor base located around the world and play an active role in secondary market making. The Canada bills program contracts have no service periods. In the 2016 calendar year, the Department of Finance paid an aggregate amount of \$2.2 million U.S. in fees to RBC, CIBC, and Goldman Sachs in proportion to the amount of Canada bills they distributed, with a total issuance of \$18.6 billion U.S. Disaggregated information per financial institutions is confidential.

These fees, for retail debt and foreign currency debt, are included in the \$10.6 million under "Servicing costs and costs of issuing new borrowings" in the Public Accounts of Canada, volume III, section 7.6. Unfortunately, this information is not yet available for the period starting April 1, 2016.

Question No. 971—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to funding for the implementation and administration of various measures to crack down on tax evasion, combat tax avoidance and enhance tax collections in Budget 2016 for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and referenced in Supplementary Estimates (B) 2016-2017: (a) how many full time equivalents (FTEs) were created from this additional funding; (b) what percentage of all FTEs within CRA are dedicated to tax evasion and what was the percentage before the additional funding for tax evasion; (c) of these FTEs, how many employees are targeted toward offshore tax cheats; (d) of the new hires at CRA responsible for going after tax

evasion, what is the breakdown by area of focus; and (e) how many new FTEs have been dedicated to address the back-log of low-complexity, medium complexity and high complexity assessment objections?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the above noted question, here is the response from the Canada Revenue Agency, CRA. Regarding part (a), on the basis of the funding received in budget 2016, the CRA created a total of 654 FTEs across its collections, verification, and compliance programs in 2016-17 to implement, administer, and support the various measures to crack down on tax evasion, combat tax avoidance, and enhance tax collection. Of this amount, 171 new FTEs were specifically provisioned for our compliance programs to crack down on tax evasion and tax avoidance. When fully implemented in 2020-21, this will represent an additional 375 permanent FTEs.

Regarding part (b), the additional provision of 171 FTEs in 2016-17 raised the percentage of FTEs dedicated to addressing tax evasion and tax avoidance to approximately 6% or 2,255 FTEs of the total CRA base of 37,878 FTEs. Prior to the additional funding, 5.5% or 2,084 FTEs of the total CRA base was dedicated to these measures.

Regarding part (c), of the 2,255 FTEs dedicated to addressing tax evasion and tax avoidance, 383 are dedicated to offshore non-compliance. The CRA also has 447 FTEs dedicated to conduct international compliance interventions, including transfer pricing. In addition, these positions are indirectly supported by other compliance and enforcement staff who make referrals and leads to the offshore compliance auditors in the course of conducting their domestic activities.

Regarding part (d), the areas of focus for the various measures to crack down on tax evasion and combat tax avoidance include high net-worth individuals, aggressive GST-HST planning and refund integrity, tax scheme promoters, aggressive tax planning specialists, legal support for criminal investigations, large business audits, offshore non-compliance, and international auditors that focus primarily on transfer pricing verification to ensure appropriate attribution of profits between Canada and other jurisdictions.

Regarding part (e), the CRA is focused on service and improving the objection process by providing people and businesses with greater certainty about their tax obligations earlier in the process.

Routine Proceedings

In response to the Auditor General 2016 fall report on income tax objections, the CRA committed to an action plan that addresses each of the Auditor General's eight recommendations. For example, the agency updated its website in November 2016 to provide taxpayers with more information about the objection process, definition of complexity level, and current time frames for assigning low and medium complexity objections. In addition, the CRA is currently piloting a new triage process for objections, so that taxpayers are contacted earlier in the process and files are complete when assigned to an officer.

Moreover, a separate budget 2016 initiative under the section entitled "Improving Client services at the Canada Revenue Agency" increased capacity to resolve existing taxpayer objections and ensure that taxpayers are provided with certainty of their tax obligations as soon as possible. For this specific client service measure, the CRA did receive funding for an additional 71 FTEs, all of whom were hired in 2016-17.

Funding received in budget 2016 for the implementation and administration of various tax measures to crack down on tax evasion, combat tax avoidance, and enhance tax collections included provisions to ensure that taxpayers who choose to avail themselves of their recourse rights receive timely responses. Funding to address potential impacts to the objections workload will be made available in subsequent years, after the reassessments have been issued.

Question No. 973—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to videos which appear on the Environment and Climate Change Minister's Twitter Account between March 23, 2017, and April 6, 2017: (a) what is the total cost associated with the production and distribution of the videos, broken down by individual video; (b) what is the itemized detailed breakdown of the costs; and (c) what are the details of any contracts related to the videos including (i) vendor, (ii) amount, (iii) description of good or service, (iv) file number, (v) date and duration of contract?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Environment and Climate Change Canada has one video from World Meteorological Day 2017, which appeared on the Environment and Climate Change minister's Twitter account between March 23, 2017, and April 6, 2017.

The video was produced with internal resources and Getty Images at a total cost of \$68.20. Since March 6, 2017, Getty Images has a one-year contract for 2,500 videos or 5,000 photos.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has no expenditure recorded between March 23, 2017, and April 6, 2017, in relation to (a), (b) and (c) of Question No. 973.

In addition, Parks Canada has no expenditure recorded between March 23, 2017, and April 6, 2017, in relation to (a), (b) and (c).

Question No. 974—Mr. Robert Kitchen:

With regard to greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs): how many GHGs does the current Prime Minister's motorcade emit every (i) minute, (ii) hour, for which it is running?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP's information management system does not capture the requested information.

Question No. 975—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the government's claim that the February 7, 2017 Bombardier bail-out will result in 1300 new jobs: (a) what were the calculations used to come to that conclusion; (b) what evidence was given to come to that conclusion; (c) what branch within Bombardier will these jobs be in; (d) how many of these jobs are full-time; and (e) how many of these jobs are part-time?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Government of Canada is committed to the long-term viability and success of the Canadian aerospace sector. On February 7, 2017, the Government of Canada announced a \$372.5-million repayable contribution to Bombardier for research and development for the new Global 7000 business jet and ongoing activities related to the development of the company's C Series aircraft. Bombardier has indicated that employment related to the production of the Global 7000 business jet will go from approximately 1,700 jobs to approximately 3,000 jobs as a result of the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, SADI, contribution.

With regard to parts (b), (c), (d), and (e), Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada conducted the required due diligence for projects under SADI. Specific information related to the due diligence and analysis is considered commercially confidential and protected under paragraph 20(1)(b) of the Access to information Act.

Question No. 976—Mr. Kelly McCauley:

With regard to the Phoenix Pay System and Public Services and Procurement Canada since June, 2016: (a) how much has been spent on researching other payment delivery systems; (b) how many meetings have been held on other payment delivery systems; and (c) for the meetings in (b), what are (i) the names and titles of the staff members that have been present at those meetings, (ii) the dates of the meetings?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing public service pay problems are completely unacceptable. Resolving these problems remains our priority. Our government is committed to ensuring that all employees are paid what they have earned.

Prior to awarding a contract for a new pay system, research was conducted by PSPC and with the industry throughout 2008-2009 to seek feedback and test market capability. This included two requests for information and a series of one-on-one meetings with the industry. No further research of other pay systems has taken place since June 2016.

Following an open, fair, and transparent bidding process, PSPC awarded a contract to IBM Canada Limited in June 2011 to design and implement the new pay solution for the Government of Canada.

Since the implementation of Phoenix, PSPC's priority has been and still is to help each and every employee experiencing a problem with his or her pay and to ensure they receive what they have earned.

In this regard, PSPC is making progress toward achieving steady state and continues to look at options to increase pay processing efficiencies by implementing technical enhancements, increasing capacity, and improving work processes and procedures.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 980—Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to the protest at the offices of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in St. John's on April 7, 2016: (a) what was the amount of damage to government property caused by the protesters; (b) what are the titles of the government officials who met with the protesters; (c) did the government sign an agreement with the protesters; (d) if the answer to (c) is affirmative, what are the contents of the agreement; (e) did the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans approve (i) the meeting, (ii) the agreement; and (f) were there any Ministerial Exempt Staff in attendance at the meeting and, if so, what are their titles?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary for Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate to comment on this incident, as it is currently under investigation by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is co-operating fully with this investigation.

Question No. 982—Mr. Mark Warawa:

With regard to the statement by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change in the House of Commons on April 10, 2017, that "Every dollar that comes from putting a price on carbon pollution to the federal government goes directly back to the provinces": (a) does the government consider this statement to be accurate; (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, then how is the government disposing of the extra Goods and Services Tax collected as a result of collecting GST on the price of carbon; (c) when did the program to send the extra revenue collected from the GST back to the provinces begin; and (d) how much has been paid out to the provinces, broken down by province, as a result of such a program?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pricing carbon pollution is a central component of the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change that was announced by Canada's first ministers in December 2016. The pan-Canadian approach to pricing carbon pollution will expand the application of carbon pricing, which is already in place in Canada's four largest provinces, to the rest of Canada by 2018. Recognizing that each province and territory has unique circumstances, the pan-Canadian approach allows provinces and territories flexibility to choose between a direct price on carbon pollution and a cap and trade system. As part of the pan Canadian framework, the Government of Canada will introduce a backstop carbon pollution pricing system that will apply in provinces and territories that do not have a carbon pricing system in place that meets the federal carbon pricing benchmark by 2018.

The pan-Canadian framework includes the commitment that revenues from pricing carbon pollution will remain with the province or territory of origin, each of which will decide how best to use the revenue. These revenues do not include those in respect of the GST charged on products or services that may have embedded carbon pricing costs in them. Revenues generated by the federal backstop will be returned to the jurisdiction in which the backstop revenues originated.

The Government is making investments to address climate change and support a healthy environment, through the Pan-Canadian Framework and other measures. Budget 2016 provided almost \$2.9 billion over five years to address climate change and air pollution. This included \$2 billion to establish the Low Carbon Economy Fund to support provincial and territorial actions that materially reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Budget 2017 proposes a number of new and renewed actions to reduce emissions, help Canada adapt and build resilience to climate change and support clean technologies. To

further advance Canada's efforts to build a clean economy, Budget 2017 lays out the Government's plan to invest \$21.9 billion in green infrastructure. This includes programs and projects that will meet the goals outlined in the Pan-Canadian Framework.

Question No. 985— Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to Access to Information requests submitted to the Privy Council Office: (a) between April 1, 2016, and April 1, 2017, excluding instances where no records exist, how many Access to Information requests were completed and; (b) of the completed requests, how many resulted in documents being (i) completely redacted or not disclosed, (ii) partially redacted, (iii) completed disclosed without redaction?

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), 827 access to information requests were completed during this period.

With regard to (b)(i), of the completed requests, of those that were completely redacted or not disclosed, 53 documents were exempted and 16 were excluded. With regard to (b)(ii), 495 were partially redacted. With regard to (b)(iii), 30 were disclosed without redaction.

The final numbers will be posted in the PCO's annual report. It will be released in June 2017.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 961 to 965, 972, 977 to 979, 981, 983, and 984 could be made orders for return, they would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 961— Mr. Bob Saroya:

With regard to the choice of July 1, 2018, as the target date for the legalization of marijuana in Canada: (a) why was that specific date chosen; and (b) does the government have any plans in place to ensure that the Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill on July 1, 2018, are not impacted as a result of the legalization of marijuana and, if so, what are the details of any such plan?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 962—Mr. Matthew Dubé:

With regard to the high-risk immigration-related detention by Canada Border Services Agency in provincial jails: (a) how many high-risk immigration-related detainees are currently detained in each province; (b) of the total number of detainees in (a), (i) what is the gender ratio, (ii) how many are under 21 years old, (iii) how many are over 65 years old; (c) how many high-risk immigration-related detentions have been prolonged, since October 2015, in the past (i) six months, (ii) one year, (iii) one year and six months; (d) what has the government done with respect to outsourcing of housing for high-risk immigration detainees to provincial jails, since 2000, and related to (i) annual cost, (ii) cost by provinces; and (e) what is the percentage premium, on top of the per-capita costs associated with housing those detainees, paid to each province?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 963— Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to the FEDNOR, for each fiscal year from 2009-10 to 2017-18: (a) what is the organization's total approved budget; (b) with respect to the budget in (a), how much was actually spent; (c) with respect to the budget in (a), how much lapsed funding was eligible to be carried over to future years; (d) how much was allocated to the Northern Ontario Development Program; (e) how much was actually spent on the Northern Ontario Development Program; (f) how much was allocated to the Community Futures Program; (g) how much was actually spent on the Community Futures Program; and (h) what were the Full Time Equivalent staffing levels of the organization?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 964— Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) and the Independent Assessment Process (IAP): (a) following Justice Perrell's ruling in January 2014 requiring the government to disclose additional documentation that includes police investigations, transcripts of criminal proceedings, and transcripts of civil proceedings (i) what is the number and full list of Narratives that were modified, (ii) what is the number and full list of person of interest reports that were modified, (iii) what is the number of IAP claims, broken down by school, that had been adjudicated under the previous unmodified narratives and person of interest reports, (iv) what is the number of cases, broken down by school, that were re-adjudicated since the narratives and person of interest reports were modified, (v) what steps were taken by federal officials, for each IRS where the narrative and POI reports changed, to determine if individual IAP claims had been denied that might otherwise be supported on this new evidence, (vi) what is the number of survivors or his/her claimant counsel who were contacted or notified of the modifications to the narratives or person of interest reports; (b) regarding civil actions related to Indian Residential Schools predating the IRSSA (i) what is the number of civil cases the government is aware of, (ii) what is the number of civil cases the government was involved in, (iii) what is the number of civil cases the government has court transcripts or documentation of, (iv) what is the number of civil cases that were settled, (v) what is the number of civil cases the government has placed any kind of privilege over the documents (civil pleadings and transcripts of examinations for discovery) related to the case, (vi) what is the number of civil cases the government has not provided the documentation (civil pleadings and transcripts of examinations for discovery) to the IAP or to the NCTR (vii) what is the full list of reasons the government has failed to provide this documentation, (viii) were there any terms under which any plaintiff in those civil actions were not allowed to provide his/her civil pleading and/or the transcript of his/her examination for discovery to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, (ix) if the settlement agreement was signed before the IRSSA, what steps have been taken by federal officials to permit each plaintiff to file his/her civil pleadings and transcripts of examinations for discovery with the NCTR, (x) if no steps have been taken, what steps are currently being taken, (xi) if steps are not being taken, is direction from the court being sought by the Attorney General, (xii) which federal officials have possession of the transcripts of examinations for discovery, (xiii) what is going to be done with those transcripts when the IRSSA is completed if directions have not been sought from the Court, (xiv) will the Government fund the plaintiff lawyers to communicate with each plaintiff or his/her Estate on this question of the transcripts being filed with the NCTR, (xv) are the Churches in any way constraining the Attorney General of Canada from ensuring that the stories of IRS survivors who were plaintiffs in civil actions, are allowed to be filed with the NCTR; (c) regarding conversation, consultations, or discussions between defendants in the IRSSA such as the government and any church (i) have any conversations, consultations, or discussions occurred over any individual cases in the IAP, (ii) if they occur how common are they, (iii) if they occur what are the matters that are discussed, (iv) if they occur, does this happen when allegations are raised about any current or previous members of either defendant during the IAP hearings; (d) regarding documentation of the IAP (i) what is the number of IAP decisions that have been redacted, (ii) what is the number of IAP transcripts that have been created, (iii) what is the number of IAP transcripts that have been redacted to remove the names of alleged perpetrators; and (e) regarding the IRSSA database (i) what is the number of school narratives in this database, (ii) what is the number of school narratives in this database that have been redacted to remove personal information?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 965— Mr. Alistair MacGregor:

With regard to crime statistics of possession of marijuana since October 20, 2015: (a) how many adults over the age of 25 were (i) arrested, (ii) charged, (iii) convicted

for possession of marijuana, and (b) how many youth under the age of 25 were (i) arrested, (ii) charged, (iii) convicted for possession of marijuana?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 972— Mr. Dan Albas:

With regard to counterfeit goods discovered by the Canada Border Services Agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or other relevant government entity, since December, 2015: (a) what is the value of the goods discovered, broken down by month; and (b) what is the breakdown of goods by (i) type, (ii) brand, (iii) country of origin, (iv) location or port of entry where the goods were discovered?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 977— Mr. David Anderson:

With regard to materials prepared for ministers since December 6, 2016: for every briefing document, memorandum or docket prepared, what is the (i) date, (ii) title or subject matter, (iii) department's internal tracking number, (iv) recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 978— Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Inuit Health Branch: (a) with respect to First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Assembly of First Nations v. Attorney General of Canada (representing the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada), Canadian Human Rights Tribunal File No. T134017008, what are the total legal costs incurred by the government in this matter since January 25, 2016; (b) with respect to Budget 2017, (i) how much of the 50 million dollars announced for the ASETS program is new funding, how much of it is reallocations, and where are the reallocations coming from, (ii) how much of the money to reduce employment barriers for First Nations youth is from unspent funding in this program area, (iii) how much of the money allocated to Indigenous tourism is new money or just a reallocation from the broader spending on attracting international tourists, (iv) what percentage of the back-log of post-secondary students will be addressed by the additional funding in PSSP and how many students will still remain on the backlog, (v) what are the details of the 4 billion dollar investment for infrastructure, broken down by year for the last ten years, and by program type, (vi) what is the number of homes that will be built with the 300 million dollars for Northern housing housing broken down by year, as well as by new homes, lots, and renovations, (vii) what are the details of the funding for each individual area, broken down by year, by chronic and infectious diseases, by maternal and child health, by primary care, by mental wellness, by home and palliative care, by non-insured health benefits, and by drug strategy; (c) if the department cannot provide the information requested in (b)(v), (i) is it because there is currently no identified plan for these investments and where they will flow, (ii) then how was this investment figure calculated; and (d) with respect to the FNIB program, what is the most current rate of denials for each level of appeals, broken down by type?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 979— Mr. Dave MacKenzie:

With regard to the ongoing renovations at 24 Sussex Drive: (a) what is the current status of the renovations; (b) what is the expected completion date; (c) what are the expected costs between 2016 and the completion date; and (d) what are the details of any contracts issued since January 1, 2016, related to the renovations including the (i) vendor name, (ii) date, (iii) amount, (iv) description of goods or services provided, (v) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 981— Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to the Canada Summer Jobs Program in 2016 and 2017: (a) how many jobs were approved in each riding in Canada for each of the aforementioned years, and (b) how much money was awarded to each riding in Canada to support the jobs in (a), for each of the aforementioned years?

Speaker's Ruling

(Return tabled)

Question No. 983—**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren:**

With regard to amounts paid by the government to the Aga Khan in relation to the trip taken to the Bahamas by the Prime Minister in December 2016 and January 2017: (a) what was the total amount paid out to the Aga Khan in (i) per diems, (ii) other payments; (b) how many employees per diems were paid to the Aga Khan; (c) did the Aga Khan submit invoices to the government in relation to the trip; and (d) if the answer in (c) is affirmative, what are the details, including the (i) date of invoice, (ii) amount of invoice, (iii) amount paid by the government, (iv) date of payment, (v) description of goods or service provided?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 984—**Mr. Dean Allison:**

With regard to the Prime Ministerial delegation to Vimy, France, in April 2017: (a) who were the members of the delegation; and (b) how were the delegation members chosen?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

*[Translation]***POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 17, 2017, by the hon. member for Victoria concerning the consultations conducted in the nomination process for the next Commissioner of Official Languages.

I would like to thank the member for Victoria for having raised this matter, as well as the House leader of the official opposition and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for their interventions.

[English]

In raising the matter, the member for Victoria explained that when appointing a Commissioner of Official Languages, two statutory requirements must be satisfied. Both he and the House leader of the official opposition cited section 49 of the Official Languages Act, which stipulates that “The Governor in Council shall, by commission under the Great Seal, appoint a Commissioner of Official Languages for Canada after consultation with the leader of every recognized party in the Senate and House of Commons and approval of the appointment by resolution of the Senate and House of Commons.”

Having acknowledged that the leader of the New Democratic Party did in fact receive a letter announcing the nomination and inviting a reply, the member argued that, nonetheless, Canadian courts have made it clear that the term “consultation”, when provided for in a statute, connotes more than mere notification. Having received no offer of further discussion from the government after the letter, he argued that this statutory precondition requiring consultation had not been met.

[Translation]

For his part, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons contended that the requirement for consultation had indeed been met when the Prime Minister sent the letter on May 8, 2017, to the leaders of both recognized parties in the House, informing them of the nomination and requesting their views on the appointment. Confirming that both leaders had replied, he argued that the government was required only to consult, not abide by the recommendations of the opposition leaders.

[English]

Essentially, the Chair is being asked to judge if the actions taken by the government satisfy the requirement for consultation pursuant to the Official Languages Act. To do so would require the Chair to determine what constitutes “consultations” pursuant to that act. Past rulings set the parameters of the role of the Chair vis-à-vis consultations as they pertain to proceedings in the House. For instance, when asked to rule on the consultations required for the use of time allocation pursuant to Standing Order 78(3), Deputy Speaker Comartin explained on March 6, 2014, at page 3598 of the Debates that:

The nature of the consultation, the quality of the consultation, and the quantity of the consultation is not something that the Chair will involve himself in. That has been the tradition of this House for many years. What the Chair would have to do, in effect, is conduct an extensive investigative inquiry into the nature of the consultation. That is not our role, nor do the rules require it.

[Translation]

My predecessor added on June 12, 2014, at page 6717 of the Debates:

Therefore, it remains a steadfast practice that it is not the role of the Speaker to determine whether consultations have taken place or not.

[English]

The fact that, in this instance, the requirement for consultation is embedded in statute, rather than a rule of the House, does little to change the role of the Speaker in this respect. In fact, it adds an additional element in terms of the role of the Speaker: that of interpreting laws. On that front, there is a rich body of jurisprudence to confirm that the Speaker cannot adjudicate on the legality of matters, which, of course, would include whether or not specific provisions of a statute, such as the need for consultations, have been respected.

[Translation]

Faced with a situation regarding the statutory requirement for consultations on appointments made pursuant to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, Speaker Fraser stated on December 7, 1989, at page 6586 of the *Debates*:

It is rather a question of law, and consequently I cannot offer my opinion as to the merits of the case.... The Chair is not in a position to decide upon questions of law. This is a matter best left to the courts.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

Therefore, in this matter, the Chair cannot pass judgment as to the adequacy of the consultations, nor the fulfillment of the legal requirements. Instead, the role of the Chair is strictly limited to determining procedural admissibility of the motion for the nomination of the official languages commissioner, which was put on notice on May 17.

As Speaker, I am satisfied that the procedural requirements have been met. The motion is in order and the process prescribed in Standing Order 111.1 can follow its course.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before proceeding to the orders of the day, I wish to draw the House's attention to Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act, maternity benefits, standing in the name of the member for Kingston and the Islands.

[Translation]

The Chair would like to remind members of a ruling made on December 6, 2016. In that ruling, I stated that the bill as it then stood needed to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[English]

On May 3, 2017, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities reported the bill with amendments. The Chair has carefully examined these amendments and confirms that the bill, as amended, no longer requires a royal recommendation. Consequently, debate may proceed and, when appropriate, all necessary questions to dispose of the bill will be put.

[Translation]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

* * *

● (1540)

PRIVILEGE

CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE BANK—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on May 10, 2017, by the hon. member for Victoria concerning the government's advertisement of job opportunities at the proposed Canada infrastructure bank.

I would like to thank the member for Victoria for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader, the member for Perth—Wellington, and the member for South Surrey—White Rock for their interventions.

[English]

In presenting his case, the member for Victoria explained that the government had publicly launched the selection process for various positions at the proposed new Canada infrastructure bank before the bill creating the bank and its governance structure, Bill C-44, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, had been passed by

Parliament and received royal assent. In fact, he noted that the bill had passed only second reading in the House. Arguing that all new activities and the appropriation of associated funds require the authorization of Parliament before being acted upon, he considered the actions taken by the government to recruit for these positions to be a contempt of the House and a grave attack against the authority of Parliament.

In response, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader agreed that the Canada infrastructure bank being proposed by Bill C-44 could not be established nor any associated funds spent until such time as the bill has been passed by Parliament. However, he added that the member for Victoria was making an assumption that the government was seeking to proceed prematurely, when, in fact, the government was simply proceeding with planning for the potential establishment of the bank. As proof of this, he cited the news release posted on Infrastructure Canada's website which stated that the selection processes in question were subject to parliamentary approval.

[Translation]

As the charge being made by the member for Victoria is one of contempt, it is important to understand what constitutes contempt and, in doing so, what distinguishes contempt from privilege. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 82, defines contempt as:

...other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges.

It continues, and I quote:

Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers.

[English]

I might add, as many of my predecessors have, that it is possible to categorize the privileges of both the House and the individual privileges of members which are limited, whereas contempt cannot be catalogued and defined categorically.

It is within that framework that the Chair must now determine if, in advertising prospective positions at the proposed Canada infrastructure bank in advance of Parliament having authorized its creation and funding, the government committed an offence against the authority or dignity of the House. Did it, to quote the member for Victoria, discount "the need of this House to pass legislation before it rolls out appointments for this institution."? It is a serious question, one complicated, in some sense, by the need for the Chair to carefully measure precedents against the inability to either enumerate or categorize cases of contempt.

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Chair therefore examined thoroughly the evidence presented, including the news release on Infrastructure Canada's website, as well as the proposed selection processes in question on the Privy Council Office's website. In particular, as Speaker, I was looking for any suggestion that parliamentary approval was being publicized as either unnecessary or irrelevant, or in fact already obtained. Otherwise put, I was looking for any indication of an offence against or disrespect of the authority or dignity of the House and its members.

[English]

Madam Speaker Sauvé specified on October 17, 1980, at page 3781 of the *Debates*, that in order for advertisements to constitute contempt of the House, “there would have to be some evidence that they represent a publication of false, perverted, partial or injurious reports of the proceedings of the House of Commons or misrepresentations of members.”

The Chair's review also looked for such evidence. In doing so, the Chair found that, in the news release on the Infrastructure Canada website, the words “subject to parliamentary approval” were clearly there, as the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader had indicated. In addition, the Chair notes that there is no reference to a starting date of employment. Thus, there were not any specific details found indicating that any position at the Canada infrastructure bank would be filled in advance of the enactment of the enabling legislation.

[Translation]

The Chair must also take into consideration the assertion of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons that the advertisement was but a preparatory measure for a proposed initiative, in addition to his clear acknowledgement of the role of Parliament. In keeping with established practice, the Chair must take the member at his word.

[English]

However, as noted by the member for South Surrey—White Rock, the relevant job postings found on the appointments-nominations.gc.ca website maintained by the Privy Council Office lacked any reference to parliamentary approval. On this point, the Chair notes, with some disquiet, that this was changed after this matter was raised in the House. The advertised positions are now listed as “anticipatory”, and a disclaimer has been added in each case. It reads, “An appointment to the position will only be made once the legislation to create the Canada Infrastructure Bank has been approved by Parliament and receives Royal Assent.”

[Translation]

The member for Victoria has noted that Bill C-44 has passed second reading only: this leaves the House and its members still able to determine its outcome. As Speaker Fraser indicated in his ruling of October 10, 1989, at pages 4459 and 4460 of the *Debates* in a case with some similarity to the present one:

In order for an obstruction to take place, there would have had to be some action which prevented the House or Members from attending to their duties, or which cast such serious reflections on a Member that he or she was not able to fulfill his or her responsibilities.

[English]

The Chair has carefully considered that ruling, which had to do with a misrepresentation of Parliament's role in government communications respecting the proposed goods and services tax in newspaper advertisements, because of its relevance to the current circumstance. It is interesting to note that in it, Speaker Fraser, in reference to the clarity of advertisements, reminded the public service that the role of Parliament needs to be acknowledged and respected.

[Translation]

Members are aware, however, that in the end Speaker Fraser did not arrive at a finding of prima facie contempt. The honourable member for Perth—Wellington may be right: had he been confronted again with such a case, Speaker Fraser may have ruled differently as he indicated he would. We will never know, as Speaker Fraser was not again seized of a matter of that kind.

[English]

Thus today I must assess the facts of this case on their own merits. In applying the strict procedural confines of contempt, the Chair must conclude that the question raised does not constitute a prima facie contempt of the House, and thus there is no prima facie case of privilege as there is no evidence to suggest that the House was obstructed in its legislative authority nor that members were obstructed in the fulfillment of their parliamentary duties.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-46, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Red Deer—Mountain View has 17 and a half minutes remaining in his speech.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to resume the remarks I started on May 19 on this very important discussion relating to Bill C-46, an act to amend the Criminal Code, offences relating to conveyances, and to make consequential amendments to other acts.

I had closed by thanking our amazing interim leader, the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland, for her service to our Conservative Party and indeed to our country, for her commitment to those who are disadvantaged in the world, and for standing up for those Canadians whose voices had been so long ignored. Many of those voices came from families whose loved ones had been taken from them because of the actions of impaired drivers.

Government Orders

This legislation before us today speaks to some of the issues that we, as Conservatives, have been championing for years. We know that dangerous driving and impaired driving injures or kills thousands of Canadians every year, and that all Canadians recognize that these actions are unacceptable at all times and in all circumstances.

As the Liberals prepare to roll out their new legislation on marijuana and its associated government-sponsored distribution and sales, it is even more important that law enforcement officers become better equipped to detect instances of alcohol- and drug-impaired driving, and that laws relating to the proof of blood alcohol concentration and drug-impaired indicators be clean and concise.

Bill C-46, in its preamble, states:

it is important to deter persons from consuming alcohol or drugs after driving in circumstances where they have a reasonable expectation that they would be required to provide a sample of breath or blood;

This provision and the bill's potential remedies need much clarification, as specific metrics of time-lapse, observable consumption, and proof that a person would be planning to continue driving would need both legal and scientific scrutiny.

As Conservatives, we have always worked hard to deter the commission of offences relating to the operation of conveyances, particularly dangerous driving and impaired driving. Along with our provincial partners, we have made laws that have promoted the safe operation of motor vehicles. Proposed changes to weaken consequences for such behaviour, such as reducing the current waiting times for offenders before which they may drive using ignition interlock devices, although an effective tool in itself to preventing recidivism, will minimize the seriousness of the offence and will be counter-effective.

Part 1 of the bill amends the portion of the Criminal Code that deals with offences and procedures related to drug-impaired driving. The three main amendments contain new criminal offences for driving with a blood drug concentration that is higher than the permitted concentration, address the authorization of the Governor in Council to arbitrarily establish its rate of permitting concentration, and gives authorization to peace officers to demand that a driver provide a sample of bodily substance for analysis by drug-screening equipment.

Part 1 brings up some interesting points, because determining at what point one is drug impaired is important. Giving the government authority to establish the concentration in law seems reasonable, and determining a procedure for peace officers to obtain evidence for conviction is a critical part of law enforcement.

Proposed subsection 254(2) of the act, before paragraph (a), is replaced by the following, the topic being "Testing for presence of alcohol or a drug".

It states:

(2) If a peace officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that a person has alcohol or a drug in their body and that the person has, within the preceding three hours, operated a motor vehicle or vessel, operated or assisted in the operation of an aircraft or railway equipment or had the care or control of a motor vehicle, a vessel, an aircraft or railway equipment, the peace officer may, by demand, require... [compliance]

Many of these provisions are part of standard workplace rules, and as such are expected to be adhered to.

How would peace officers make such determinations with the general public? No logs are required, no travel plans are prepared, so what evidence-seeking process would they use to assure conviction with this three-hour window that would not be challenged when cases come to court?

• (1545)

The other part of this discussion has to do with the definition of drug impairment. When one reads a prescription bottle, there are many drugs taken by people where it states specifically, "Not to be taken when handling heavy equipment. Do not drive. May cause drowsiness." Drivers who are on such medication when stopped by police would unlikely know that a drug sample reading would be calculated.

One can calculate, based on the weight of a person, the time since the last drink or the amount consumed what a blood alcohol reading should be. One also expects that marijuana consumption readings would depend on product concentration and no doubt other factors. How will these tests differentiate the potential impairment of any one or any combination of prescription drugs, marijuana or alcohol? These are questions on part 1 that need to have answers when the legislation is studied at committee.

Part 2 would repeal provisions of the Criminal Code and would replace them with provisions in a new part of the Criminal Code.

First, it would all repeal and replace all transportation offences with what has been described as a more modern and simplified structure.

Second, it would authorize mandatory alcohol screening at the roadsides where police would have, according to this legislation, already made a lawful stop under provincial or common law.

The third part would be to propose increasing certain minimum fines and certain minimum penalties or maximum penalties. These particularly relate to penalties for injury or death due to impaired driving. Having stiffer penalties is something of which I have personally been in favour. I have delivered many petitions in the House on this matter. Of course, I, like many others, have had many heart-wrenching discussions with constituents, friends and families over the years with this situation.

The fourth part is to create a process to facilitate investigation and proof of blood-alcohol concentration. These processes I hope will be expanded to have logical blood-drug concentrations as I had mentioned before.

The fifth part is to attempt through law to eliminate and restrict offences that encourage risk-taking behaviour and to clarify crown disclosure requirements.

Government Orders

Finally, as I alluded to earlier and had expressed my reservations, is the removal of the current waiting period before which the offender may drive when using an ignition interlock device.

The contradiction I see here is that on one hand, it is being said that a severe penalty will be enforced, one such penalty, the time period between when an offence occurs when the privilege of driving with an ignition interlock device is granted, has been reduced to zero for first time offenders. The first time caught does not mean the first time offending. This deterrent should remain, in my opinion.

One of the provision of the bill relating to investigative matters, section 320.27(2), speaks of mandatory alcohol screening. It says that if the peace officer has in his or her possession an approved screening device, the peace officer may take the breath sample. Section 320.28(1a), the provision relating to blood samples and how they can be used to determine blood alcohol concentration is discussed.

As we move along in the legislation, we see where samples of other bodily substances, such as saliva or urine, can be demanded in order to determine drug concentration that could ascertain the presence in the person's body of one or more of the drugs set out in subsection 5, which I will get to in a moment, which relates back to one of my earlier points about what drugs are what, and how would the general public know about the effects of any particular drugs.

These are the drugs listed in section 5.

First, is a depressant. The depressants are a broad class of drugs, intended to lower neurotransmission levels and decreasing stimulation in various areas of the brain. They are contrasted by stimulants, which intend to energize the body. Xanax is a commonly abused example.

The second is an inhalant. Inhalants are various household and industrial chemicals whose vapours are breathed in so as to intoxicate the user in ways not originally intended by the manufacturer. Examples include shoe polish, glues and things of that nature.

• (1550)

The third is a dissociative anaesthetic. Dissociative anaesthetics are hallucinogens that cause one to feel removed or dissociated from the world around them. When abused, they cause people to enter dream like states or trances.

The fourth, and again critical in the situations we speak of, is cannabis, which is a tall plant commonly abused as a drug in various forms. Its primary effect is a state of relaxation produced in users, but it can also lead to schizophrenic effects resulting from brain networks being “disorchestrated”, according to researchers at Bristol University in the U.K.

Fifth is a stimulant. Stimulants are a broad class of drugs intended to invigorate the body, increasing activity and energy. They are contrasted by depressants which are intended to slow the body down. Cocaine is one of the most famous examples of a stimulant.

Sixth is a hallucinogen. Drugs under this class are intended to produce hallucinations and other changes in emotion and conscious-

ness. Psychedelics and dissociatives are the most common forms of hallucinogens. LSD is the most common abused hallucinogenic.

Finally, is a narcotic analgesic. Narcotic analgesics, commonly referred to as opiates, are drugs that affect the opioid system which controls pain, reward, and addictive behaviours. Their most common use is for pain relief.

Are our police forces prepared for this type of roadside analysis? I know that my local police officers, as well as our municipalities and provincial regulators, have a concern about the downloading of the costs associated with enforcement of marijuana legislation. The vagueness of some of the provisions in the bill causes further concern for them as well.

Will the enforcement regulation be accompanied with funding? Will training and equipment be provided for officers? Who will cover the costs when officers are off learning about these new procedures? Will issues like mandatory alcohol screening withstand a charter challenge as it is a very invasive practice of the state on an individual without reason?

To this, I remind the government, as I had mentioned in my earlier discussion on this matter, all governments depend on their departmental legal teams to ensure that legislation is charter compliant. The same lawyers who our government depended on to ensure charter compliance are advising the current Liberal government. I leave that for the members opposite to ponder.

If one thinks that does not happen with regularity, I also would remind everyone that less than two weeks ago the Alberta Court of Appeal struck down a portion of its provincial impaired driving laws as it pertained to the immediate suspension of a driver's licence by ruling in favour of a constitutional challenge to strike down the law.

Our courts exist to grant justice to those who have been wronged. Delays and charter challenges will only benefit the perpetrators and career criminals, while the victims are dragged through a long and painful process.

As I close my remarks today, I continue to stand for those whose lives have been affected by the actions of impaired drivers. I remember the countless loved ones torn away from their families because of irresponsible people getting behind the wheel when they were clearly impaired. As Conservatives, we will remain steadfast in our commitment to families that have been unfortunately affected by impaired driving.

I remember being part of a discussion with MADD Canada. I and the Hon. Peter MacKay had opportunities to meet with various individuals. We talked about the devastation that this type of activity had on families. A good friend of mine is Darren Keeler. His son Colton was killed by a drunk driver. I know it was devastating to him and his family.

Government Orders

Brad and Krista Howe are the parents of five children who were killed by an impaired driver in 2010 in my riding. I know Krista's mother, Sandra Green, had so much to do with our office and with the justice department, trying to ensure we were there to help strengthen laws.

I also want to take this time to speak about those who encourage underage drug use in our schools and our communities. As a former teacher, I know and have seen first-hand the devastation of drug dependency on our young people.

• (1555)

It has always been a concern of mine as we see fantastic young people get caught up in situations and see how their lives are affected by those who troll and try to push them into activities that unfortunately in so many ways devastate them. It is important we all consider this. Certainly the Liberal government must go hard after drug pushers who prey on our children.

I am well aware that drug-impaired driving is also a serious concern for Canadians. With the Liberal government's normalization of marijuana, this issue will rear its ugly head time and time again. At a time when marijuana will soon be accessible to a wider clientele, the bill cannot afford to be vague or poorly drafted. It is up to us as parliamentarians to do right by the people we represent.

As Conservatives, we take pride in our record and our common-sense smart on crime agenda. We are also proud of our record on helping those with addiction problems. We cannot abandon our most vulnerable. We need to give them hope, but not enable them with their addictions.

I am confident that after the exciting events of this past weekend, with Her Majesty's loyal leader of the opposition now at the helm, Canadians can be assured that the Conservatives will continue to work hard to protect their families and their loved ones.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased with the member's remarks and analysis of Bill C-46 and his indication that he supports the bill going forward to committee. I would like some clarification on some of the concerns he expressed.

In 2009, the justice committee submitted a report to the government of the day strongly recommending the implementation of what at the time was random breath testing. In this bill it is referred to in a slightly different way as mandatory breath testing. It was the unanimous recommendation of that committee.

I wonder if the member opposite could recall why that recommendation was not acted on for now these eight years that have passed, when it was clearly a measure that demonstrably saved lives. In other jurisdictions such as Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand and other jurisdictions, where this measure has been implemented, there has been as much as a 48% reduction in impaired deaths. Now that our government has brought forward the legislation, for which I am very grateful for the support of the member opposite, I wonder why this was not acted on previously.

• (1600)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his service to the community and for bringing up the question of

alcohol roadside testing. I cannot recall exactly where the legislation was and at what stages it had been dealt with. However, I mentioned what had taken place in Alberta with respect to charter rights. Where the discussions come from and things that people talk about, it has kept us from perhaps doing some of the things that have needed to be done for too long. There are still concerns when people say that we can demand, for any reason, a check stop. The way in which people have interpreted it, it seems as though it might be going too far. That is the reason why I brought up charter rights and potential charter challenges. We all have to be concerned about those.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. Caution is definitely needed here. It seems to me that this government is obsessed with this promise to legalize cannabis. This is having a domino effect on health and safety.

For some time now, officials have been having a hard time assessing the potential dangers and problems associated with drug-impaired driving. It is much more complicated than measuring blood alcohol concentration, with a legal limit of 0.08%.

The framework here is very flimsy, as though it were made of papier mâché. I remember something a librarian told me when I was little. I was told not to return books to the shelf just anywhere, but rather to leave them on the table, because books returned to the wrong shelf can never be found again.

The Liberals are improvising when it comes to important safety standards and they are going to create a nice little framework. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that. The Liberals have introduced a botched bill and are telling us to simply trust them, as usual, because they are royalty and they know better.

[*English*]

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, that is a major concern that I have as well.

Just a few minutes ago, Bill C-45 was tabled in the House, which is the companion legislation to this legislation, or the other way around, however we wish to interpret it. It is a bit of a smokescreen to talk about some things that need to be done and issues that are important, because Liberals will tell us to look at what they have done, and now they have marijuana legislation. We start asking ourselves questions, especially on the point of conveyance, which is what this bill is all about: people driving around while having potentially used drugs.

When it comes to someone smoking, is it going to be allowed in a vehicle, and if it is allowed in a vehicle, will people under the age of 18 be affected by it? There have already been discussions, and we were told that perhaps we will talk again about edible oils and drugs that can be put in brownies and everything else that people hear about. These are being presented to children and families. Believe me, no matter what Liberals say, children smoke pot with their parents. This is the way it works. To suggest that all of a sudden we should not worry because it will be a legal product that will solve that problem is, I think, very naive.

Government Orders

•(1605)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member for Red Deer—Mountain View gave a very thoughtful speech.

One of the consequences of the government moving forward with the legalization of marijuana is that more drug-impaired people are going to be on the road. It is all very well to pass legislation, but it is quite another thing to talk about implementation and enforcement. We have seen no plan from the government when it comes to implementation and enforcement. I was wondering if the hon. member could comment on that and the real concern that exists about more injuries, more deaths, and more carnage on the roads as a result of the legalization of marijuana.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, the normalization of any type of intoxicant makes it difficult. Alcohol was in that same position. It has been normalized, and we see the carnage associated with it. We would be adding one more, potentially one that ties in with alcohol consumption, because there is already the situation of people who consume alcohol also smoking pot when they drive. These issues already exist, but I do not think a lot has been thought about in that regard.

Of course, we then have to look at how to download all of this onto the provinces. Provinces have different ages, and people drive across provincial boundaries and cross borders and go into the States. There is a lot that has to be thought about in this regard.

Mr. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, among its young people, Canada has the highest rates of cannabis use in the world. As a former teacher, I know that the member opposite would be well aware that the student drug usage studies indicate that close to 35% of young teenagers in high school are using this drug occasionally or frequently. This has been the situation for decades on our highways. What has been missing, what has been absent in the law and in the tools available to law enforcement has been the legislation, the technology, the training, and the resources necessary to deal with this situation.

As the government, we have made a commitment to law enforcement and we have met very extensively with law enforcement agencies. They have had legislation since 2009 that authorized drug recognition experts, but no funding was ever made available by the government of the day to support that. We have made a commitment to make sure that they have the technology, the training, the legislation, and the resources to do the job.

As this has been a problem for decades, I would ask the member opposite why he would be concerned that taking action now is not appropriate.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, I know people quote those types of statistics, but the reality is that I have a lot more faith in young people. If we look at the types of things that have happened with smoking, we see that the amount of smoking in schools has been reduced, and the same type of thing is happening with drugs.

When we are affected, it becomes much more serious. There are other things that are tied into it, and we end up in a lifestyle that is very difficult. I do not have the time to go through it, but a May 9 article from CBC Kitchener-Waterloo talked about the fact that drug

use by high school children is actually less than it has been in the past, so we have been doing some of the right things.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity today to be able to speak to this bill. I want to acknowledge the great job that my colleague just did on this, particularly in mentioning at the end that drug usage by Canadian teens is actually decreasing.

My colleague across the way, the parliamentary secretary, talked about the fact that because 35% of the students across this country can access marijuana, the solution obviously is to give access to 100%, to find the other 65% and see if we cannot give them that same access. We do not think that is the proper solution.

What we are here to do today is to take a look at one bill and a second piece of legislation as well that is involved with it, which I do not think either Canadians or the Liberals are ready to handle. We have heard words this afternoon from one of my colleagues about how this seems to be done pell-mell, and my other colleague talked about how this looks like a bit of a smokescreen. That describes what we are seeing here, both in Bill C-45, which is the cannabis legalization bill, and in Bill C-46, the impaired driving bill. Both of these bills are tied together, and Canadians need to be paying attention, because that tie is much tighter than most Canadians would first realize.

I want to talk first about legalization and the current government's fixation on it through Bill C-45, and then talk about Bill C-46 and what the Liberals see as some solutions to problems that they would create by bringing in Bill C-45.

Bill C-45 is entitled “An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts”. Its summary talks about the objectives being “to prevent young persons from accessing cannabis”—which is a bit of a surprise, given the direction that this legislation goes—“to protect public health and public safety by establishing strict product safety and product quality requirements and to deter criminal activity”. It talks about the act having the power to establish cannabis as a legalized product, basically, and then to try to deal with criminal prohibition, such as the unlawful sale or distribution of it. In addition, it would “[enable] the Minister to authorize the possession, production, distribution, sale, importation and exportation of cannabis”—so the Liberals want to be the drug czars over this product—and then it would “[authorize] persons to possess, sell or distribute cannabis if they are authorized”, and there are a number of other things that the bill would prohibit and provide.

It is a fairly ambitious bill in terms of legalizing cannabis, giving the government authority over cannabis so that it is going to be able to manage cannabis across this country well. I guess we will see whether that happens.

Out of the approval and legalization of cannabis then comes a major concern, which is the operation of motor vehicles while under the influence of cannabis or, as Bill C-46 includes, a number of other drugs. To respond to that challenge that would come out of Bill C-45, the Liberals have recently introduced Bill C-46, which deals directly with offences and procedures that are related to impaired driving, both for alcohol and for cannabis and a number of other drugs.

Government Orders

Bill C-46 is a fairly lengthy bill. It is 78 pages long. It proposes to introduce a new impaired driving regime that would be considerably more complicated than the present laws. It includes new and higher mandatory fines. It includes changes in how and where testing can be done. It changes the timelines on testing, and it sets maximum penalties for impaired driving crimes. It also introduces a new element of mandatory alcohol screening at the roadside, which is expected to become a civil rights concern or issue in this country.

Clearly, our party supports measures that protect Canadians from impaired drivers. I doubt that there is a person in this House who has not been impacted by the stupid and tragic results that come from impaired driving and the incredible human cost that is paid for that. Mandatory fines, maximum penalties, and those kinds of things do send a strong message that Canadians will not tolerate impaired driving, but I am very concerned that the Liberals want to rush these two drug bills through Parliament by July 2018. The Liberals do not seem to be prepared to deal with the consequences of what would come from passing these two bills. I believe this hurried timeline is unrealistic. It puts the health and safety of Canadians at risk.

I want to talk today about this legislation and about some of the other concerns around it. Likely the bills will pass on second reading and go to committee, so I am going to raise a number of questions that need to be asked at committee in order for any responsible legislator to continue to support either bill.

• (1610)

The first question is why the government moved forward with this legislation when there is clearly no consensus on this issue. This afternoon we have heard different statistics back and forth across the House and some very different results. There is no agreement among Canadians on this issue. Polls show an almost schizophrenic understanding of it. One of the latest ones actually demonstrates that a strong majority apparently believe that this will not prevent drug use. Half see this as a gateway drug. A majority believe that this will not lessen crime and that the drunken or impaired driving enforcement will not be effective. Half think the proposed limit for possession and plants is too high. A strong majority believe that the age limit needs to be raised, and two-thirds agree that the health risks are not understood, yet we are told that a majority of Canadians support the legislation. Past surveys have similar confusing statistics and results.

This is all at a time when we are told that teen education drug prevention programs are working and teen usage is declining. The Liberals then come forward with a bill to make cannabis legal in this country. There is a clear conclusion that Canadians are conflicted about this issue.

Another question that has not been answered by the government is what the actual impact on people is, especially young people. We have seen some unexpected results from a couple of states in the United States that have legalized cannabis. What work has the government done on this issue, especially when its own task force identified this as probably one of the most important issues the government will face if it comes forward with this legislation?

Medical evidence indicates that marijuana impacts brain development up to age 25, and we believe it affects brain function after that. The government seems to think that age 18 is okay. The public

disagrees. All polls show that. How is the government going to address seriously the issue of young people being exposed to this drug prior to when they should be?

Another question is how allowing possession and growing plants at one's home would achieve the goal, as the legislation says, of preventing young people from accessing cannabis. With increased public awareness, and as people were allowed to grow it at home, what would the impact on young people be? As my colleague mentioned earlier, would people be allowed to smoke this in a vehicle, and if they were, how would that impact children or people in the car with them? The same thing would apply at home.

There are questions about the overall health impact and the impact on the public, especially with respect to the use of vehicles.

The task force report indicates that research shows that youth, in particular, underestimate the risks of cannabis use, and so do others. I would ask if the government has done any homework on overall health impacts. It certainly seems that it has not done that and cannot answer that question.

There are other ongoing questions on the role of medical marijuana and what many people see as the present abuse of it as well. How has it become so simple to access this program, and how does it give us any assurance that future legislation will deal with the real issues around marijuana and other drugs mentioned in the legislation?

Questions arise also about the perception of a very small group of people who are being chosen by the government and stand to become extremely wealthy through this issue.

What about the public education component that was so important to the task force? Officials in both Washington and Colorado have stressed the importance of starting education campaigns as early as possible before legalization. The Liberal government's task force recommended extensive marijuana impaired-driving education awareness campaigns before the drug's legalization. Where is that campaign? We have seen nothing of it.

On the issue of driving and education, the Canadian Automobile Association has said that the government needs to launch a public education campaign and provide greater funding to law enforcement authorities to get ready for the new regime. CAA vice-president Jeff Walker said, "It's clear from the report that work needs to start immediately in these areas, and that the actual legalization should not be rushed."

Government Orders

Where do we see this education campaign, and since we do not, what will be the cost of it when we do? There are other costs involved as well. We will talk about those a little later. When it comes to the testing being proposed, there is going to be a massive increase in costs to do the testing. I am wondering if the government has any answers as to how that is going to be paid for. Are the Liberals going to stick the provinces with the bill? Is the federal government going to make the commitment necessary to do this in a fashion that will work?

● (1615)

Driver safety is an issue, a big issue, and it brings us to Bill C-46. Two states have introduced recreational marijuana sales, and both have seen significant increases in the proportion of fatal accidents involving drivers who tested positive for the drug. That is in a report in *The Globe and Mail*. I am concerned that the Liberal government is not taking the proper steps to develop effective education campaigns or to put in place adequate roadside capacity to deter Canadians from driving impaired.

The reality is that impaired driving remains one of the most frequent criminal offences and is among the leading criminal causes of death in Canada. The expectation, probably the reality, from the United States, is that it is only going to increase. Anne McLellan, chair of the task force, said the best solution is to give researchers additional time to not only do the educational campaign but to develop proper detection tools. It is clear that the government needs to ensure that Canadians understand the risks of impaired driving before moving forward with this legislation.

As I mentioned, all of this costs money for education and new legal regimes, especially with the increased participation of the medical profession. What will be the cost to the court system with the increased traffic that will be going through the courts? The government has not been quick to fill vacancies in the court to speed up processing through our court system. Will police have the resources and training required to face the increased threat of impaired driving associated with the legalization of marijuana, and what will be the cost to Canadian taxpayers for this radical change in policy? Canadians do not have answers to any of those questions right now. Testing for impairment is a huge issue. It is probably the major concern of Canadians on this issue.

Part 1 of Bill C-46 would amend the provisions of the Criminal Code that deal with offences and procedures related to drug-impaired driving. Among other things, it would enact new criminal offences for driving with a blood concentration equal to or higher than the permitted concentration. It would authorize the Governor in Council to establish blood drug concentrations and would authorize police to demand that a driver provide a sample of a bodily substance for analysis.

Part 2 would repeal the provisions of the Criminal Code and would repeal and replace transportation offences with a different structure. It would authorize mandatory alcohol screening at the roadside and would increase certain minimum fines and certain maximum penalties. It would do a few other things, such as facilitate investigation and proof of blood alcohol concentration. It would take out some of the defences that encourage risk-taking behaviour and

would permit earlier enrolment in the provincial ignition interlock program.

The problem is that the Liberals have brought forward some good initiatives, but this is not actually primarily about alcohol impairment. In many ways, it is being used, as my colleague said earlier, as a smokescreen or a mask to allow the government to divert attention from its inability to test drug impairment. The problem is that as it begins to do that, it will be moving aggressively to restrict the civil liberties of Canadians.

There is no clear way to measure drug impairment. There is no way to measure marijuana, in particular. There are no reliable roadside drug screening devices available to police officers. That is why we see in the legislation that police officers will be allowed to do a breath test, and if that is not good enough to be considered an offence, it has to lead to further testing. It is a very big concern.

My colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable talked in his speech about the fact that screening devices are really not that effective. The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse and Addiction is concerned about that. It said:

Although the accuracy of oral fluid screening devices has been improving, they are not perfect. Some drivers who have used drugs will test negative and there remains a small probability that some drug-free drivers will test positive. When a driver who has used drugs is missed by the screening procedure, it has implications for road safety;

Is the technology there to meet the goals of the Liberal policies? Conservatives are not sure about that.

I should mention that this is not just about alcohol and cannabis. There are a number of other drugs covered as well, which will make the testing regime even more complicated. This is a big challenge. It is not just about alcohol or cannabis but is also about six other types of drugs. It is interesting that the legislation, while complicated, does not seem to be able to deal with these issues.

Marijuana can be tested through breath, saliva, blood, urine, or hair. Officers can detain suspects on the basis of smelling marijuana or noticing physical signs of impairment, at which point they can ask offenders to provide saliva samples. That is fine, except that it is most likely to be used at DUI checkpoints. It is faster and less invasive than a blood test, but there are all kinds of problems, such as that edibles, injections, pills, etc., may not produce results as reliably.

● (1620)

The presence of vapours may not correspond to actual impairment, as very small doses still register, and strong doses that were inhaled longer ago do not register. Blood testing generally registers the presence of THC for up to 12 hours, depending on the dosage, but again, there are problems. It is invasive. There is the question of the civil rights of Canadians. It requires more specialized equipment and sterilization, and test results may not correspond, again, to actual impairment.

Government Orders

Urine and hair tests register marijuana use over a much longer period of time, which poses similar problems, in addition to other privacy issues. There are a lot of issues. They can provide false positives, so even if we prove that a person has used marijuana, we cannot actually easily prove that the person was impaired at the time of the search.

My colleague mentioned earlier the time of testing. There are provisions in the bill for testing two hours after someone has been drinking or taking drugs. Police would have to prove that someone was behind the wheel. I can see a pile of complications from doing that as well.

The government's response to this challenge was to introduce a new section of the Criminal Code that would remove the need for an officer to have reasonable grounds to demand a breath sample. There is a provision in Bill C-46, and the minister talked about this, for mandatory alcohol screening. This part of the legislation would face a court challenge probably immediately, I would say. It is an invasive practice of the state on an individual, and it would specifically be done without reasonable grounds. There are a lot of questions around that section. Proposed subsection 320.27(2) reads:

If a peace officer has in his or her possession an approved screening device, the peace officer may, in the course of the lawful exercise of powers under an Act of Parliament or an Act of a provincial legislature or arising at common law, by demand, require the person who is operating a motor vehicle to immediately provide the samples of breath that, in the peace officer's opinion, are necessary to enable a proper analysis to be made by means of that device...

It does not mention that the government has said that this is only to happen at a lawful stop, but there is nothing in here about it having to be a lawful stop. We have asked the government for more information to confirm that. It has not done that. Canadians need to be concerned about this, in my opinion. Is it done at a lawful stop? Is it done at an officer's discretion? The one thing that is clear is that it has taken out reasonable grounds, reasonable suspicion, as something that has to be in place before the testing can be done. Reasonable grounds are mentioned all over the rest of the bill, but I would argue that this section would basically render that useless.

The government has indicated that this will be used only as part of a lawful stop, but as I mentioned, when we asked about that, the Liberals were not able to clarify that. The minister talked about how she has her legal opinion that this will fit within the charter rights. It is pretty clear, from listening and looking up anything the defence lawyers and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have said that this will be challenged very quickly. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has been a proponent of medical marijuana. It opposes invasive searches.

When we go online, there are people such as Sean May, an attorney specializing in DUIs, who has said that these cases are often difficult to prosecute due to problems with evidence, false positives, and other factors.

Another defence lawyer questioned that data and called giving police unfettered power to demand a breath test dangerous. He said, "It allows for police abuse. Now, police for whatever reason they want, can make you do a breathalyzer. If you talk back to them or they feel you're disrespecting them, they have the power to do that. I don't know there is a lot of solid research linking impairment to the level of drugs in a person's system." Unlike the breathalyzer, an

officer must have a reasonable suspicion the driver has consumed drugs before asking for a sample.

A number of lawyers have come forward and said that this is not charter-proof. This will be challenged immediately. The U.S. based National Institute on Drug Abuse has suggested that there is no adequate way to measure THC levels or determine just how drugged a person is in a roadside test, so we will face all kinds of problems with that.

Just to wrap up, there are many questions about the bill. The main concerns focus primarily on the removal of reasonable grounds, the reasonable suspicion provisions, which have protected Canadians for decades. The minister claims to have a charter opinion on the issue, but it is certain to end up in court. It should be worrying Canadians. This entire framework is colossally complicated.

There are a ton of questions that remain unanswered, not just on Bill C-46 but also on Bill C-45. The government has not answered questions on education costs, health impacts, and a number of other issues, and especially on law enforcement, including the important issue of impaired driving.

• (1625)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of questions, if I may. First, I want to point out to the member opposite that in Bill C-46, proposed subsection 320.27(2) says that "the peace officer may, in the course of the lawful exercise of powers under an Act of Parliament or an Act of a provincial legislature or arising at common law..." That is the definition of a lawful arrest. That may be of some use to the member.

I want to reference a statement made by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police on behalf of its traffic committee, in which it said,

The government has put forward strong legislation not only focused on impairment by drugs, but also addressing on-going issues related to alcohol impairment. Steps that have been introduced to reform the entire impaired driving scheme are seen as much needed and very positive.

It goes on to say, "The CACP has called for such changes in the past"—and, as I have already mentioned, several years went by with no action—"specifically in support of modernizing the driving provisions of the criminal code, supporting mandatory alcohol screening and eliminating common 'loophole' defenses."

Government Orders

The people who are tasked with keeping our roadways safe and enforcing these laws have been asking for these changes for very many years now. They have come out very strongly in saying that this is exactly what they have asked for and are in support of. I wonder if that allays some of the members concerns.

• (1630)

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, again, there are number of issues that have been raised here this afternoon, such as cost. Who is going to pay for those costs? Is the government going to dump the costs back on the municipal police forces who have said they think there need to be some changes here?

I guess the real issue is, first, around whether people's civil liberties are being impacted and, second, around the fact that there are no reliable roadside screening devices that we are able to put in place presently. We talked about this in the last Parliament. I think that is one of the reasons that some of the changes were not made in the past. Those devices did not exist. They are still not readily available for police officers to use. I think that might answer the member opposite's question.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member about the lack of roadside tests for marijuana impairment. When I talk with RCMP members across my riding about marijuana, that is the one thing they are concerned about. They want to have the ability to test people for marijuana impairment. MADD Canada has now endorsed the idea of per se limits for marijuana. I think there are 11 states in the United States that have zero tolerance per se limits for marijuana.

I wonder if the member would comment in more detail on whether we should have per se limits and whether they should be based on science with respect to impairment?

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. Again, it shows the lack of preparation that the government has had in putting this bill forward. When it comes to alcohol, they have specifically laid out those limits in the bill, and laid out the process.

If we are going to use the timing method where the police come two hours later, they will be able to measure how much the alcohol has lessened in someone's bloodstream. However, when it comes to the drugs, all the government says is that it will set the regulations later. It is a pretty clear indication that these guys have not done their work. They are talking about six different drugs, so I guess they are going to have to put in place six different frameworks to deal with those drugs. I do not know how the police are going to be able to handle that at the roadside, but the government is certainly dumping a big job on their heads.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with respect to Bill C-226, which deals with random Breathalyzer tests, my understanding is that the member voted against that particular bill. I would be interested in hearing his explanation as to why he chose to vote that way.

We have organizations such as the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police saying that the legislation is in general very good. It is action that they have been calling for, something which the Conservatives sat on and did nothing about. Why would it not be a good thing to be responding to some of the needs that our

professional organizations, such as the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, are calling upon the government to do?

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the terms of limits or whatever, I think we need to take a look at that balance of dealing directly with an issue that has so many negative consequences across Canada. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, there is not one of us who has not suffered from the pain and agony of someone who has been involved in impaired driving situations and accidents. However, on the other hand, we also have the obligation in this country to acknowledge the charter. The Liberals should be the last ones who are refusing to do that. In this case, I believe we need to take the charter into account. That is another question that should be asked.

The minister said that she has no opinion from her Department of Justice. She perhaps should have gone further than that to get a solid opinion. We know that this is going to end up in court. Everyone has known that, right from the minute it was introduced. People are going to try to hold the government to account on this issue. The government should have done more homework on it. It is just one more place where, in my opinion, it did not do its homework before it introduced these two pieces of legislation. I still think that in many ways Bill C-46 is meant to be a cover for the government bringing in a badly prepared Bill C-45 that would legalize cannabis.

• (1635)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am struck by two things with respect to this issue. The first is that we had a private member's bill that dealt with many similar issues which had already progressed through the committee stage. The government voted to kill that bill in favour of bringing forward a government bill that was different but in many ways similar. The Liberals complain about how in their view the Standing Orders do not provide them with enough ability to advance government legislation. If they actually considered the ideas that come through private members' business, maybe they would not have to go through the process of reintroducing some of the legislation, although with certain modifications that we certainly have concerns about.

The second is that in this legislation there is a presumption that the technology is there for impairment testing around marijuana and that it is somehow analogous to alcohol in terms of the relative ease of impairment testing. The reality is that these are different substances with different kinds of impacts. Marijuana is fat-soluble, which means it is retained in the brain, even if it is much less present in other bodily fluids from a testing perspective. This creates major concerns when we establish a test through bodily fluids for determining impairment. There may be impairment, even if it is not showing up in high levels of bodily fluid, but it may show up in higher levels in those fluids when there is not as much impairment.

I wonder if the member can comment on these two major problems with the way the government is proceeding.

Government Orders

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, I think the issue with the private member's bill is a very important one. The government could have moved ahead with that bill, supported it, and worked with its author to make the amendments it needed. However, it seems that the government needed to have something that it could put forward. This makes my argument that it is using this as a cover for what is poorly done in Bill C-45.

In terms of the testing, it is not just with respect to alcohol and cannabis. We need to understand that it is talking about the types of drugs that will be tested for impairment, which include depressants, inhalants, dissociative anaesthetics, cannabis, stimulants, hallucinogens, and narcotic analgesics. Therefore, there are a whole host of things that will have to go on there before police officers would be able to do their job along the side of the road. The government will need to think through its process here to see if it can come up with something more simple and more easily achievable for our policemen and policewomen who are on the road.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a very short question for my colleague. I thank him for listing the litany of concerns that I know are shared by members on both sides of the House beyond the front benches and the parliamentary secretary.

You talked about dumping the regulations for protocols—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If the member would address the Chair, please, I can tell him that I did not list those items.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, through you to my colleague, he mentioned the dumping of the regulations for protocols and procedures in the testing regimes. However, I wonder if he could talk about the costs that the government would be dumping on to the provinces, law enforcement, the cities, and municipalities in different parts of the country, just as the costs for the regulation and security of distribution were dumped.

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Speaker, there are a whole host of costs here. The government is not answering the question as to who would be paying for them. We talked about the necessity for educational programs. The task force identified that. The government is not identifying whether it would be paying for that or what that would look like. There would be medical costs if there is to be roadside testing. There would be medical personnel involved specifically with respect to blood testing and medical costs incurred with that, as well as training costs.

The government claims that it wants to keep drugs away from our young people, for which there will have to be a major program. Some of the programs that are already in place are effective, yet the government has decided that it is not interested in following those.

As well, there will certainly be extended legal costs across the country, and we need to know who would be paying for those: the municipalities, the provinces, the government, or the taxpayer of Canada.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as

follows: the hon. member for London—Fanshawe, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Drummond, Public Services and Procurement.

• (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak on Bill C-46.

Bill C-46 is a very large bill. It is a complex bill. It purports to amend many sections of the Criminal Code relating to impaired driving, among other offences. In the 20 minutes that I have, I will not have the opportunity to address all aspects of the bill.

However, let me say at the outset that there are some good aspects, some positive aspects to Bill C-46. At the same time, there are also issues that I believe are a cause for concern. There is no doubt that once this bill is voted on at second reading, it will make its way to committee. After all, it is government legislation and we have a majority government. What is important is that it is carefully studied and reviewed at committee.

There are two main parts to Bill C-46. Part one deals with drug-impaired driving and drug-impaired offences, and part two deals with transportation offences in the Criminal Code and alcohol-impaired driving.

With respect to drug-impaired driving, among the things that Bill C-46 would provide for is to allow law enforcement, upon having a reasonable suspicion that a motorist is drug impaired, to require a motorist to undertake a screening test to determine whether they are in fact drug impaired. It would be an oral saliva test. It would detect THC levels in the individual.

Additionally, the government has put forward recommendations with respect to three new offences related to drug-impaired driving that would relate to levels of THC. There are some issues of concern with respect to the approach that the government is undertaking in terms of measuring impairment by THC levels. After all, there is not necessarily a direct correlation between THC levels and impairment. THC can depend on any number of things, including how THC came into the body. Also, in terms of whether an individual is a regular user of marijuana or an occasional user, that can impact upon THC levels in the body.

We know that THC can remain in the body, sometimes for days, even weeks, following marijuana use. One of the problems with toxicology tests in the case of marijuana, in terms of THC, is that they tell us that someone used marijuana, but they do not necessarily tell us when they used marijuana, much less whether they are impaired. That is a problem.

It is a problem in the case of the recommended offences that the government has put forward, because it is possible that an individual could have relatively low levels of THC but be impaired to get behind the wheel. In other cases, individuals with higher THC levels might not be impaired, perhaps because they are a regular user of marijuana, again, having regard for the fact that THC can stay in the body for an extended period of time.

Government Orders

●(1645)

It really is a concern that the science is not there. It is not in place to undertake, in all circumstances, a fully accurate assessment when it comes to whether someone behind the wheel is in fact drug impaired.

More broadly on the issue of drug impairment and what impact legalization is going to have on the safety of our roads, let me say what is clear. With legalization, more and more Canadians are going to use marijuana. I do not think anyone disputes that reality. As a result, more and more individuals are going to be on the road who are drug impaired. The consequence of that is that there are going to be more injuries, more deaths, and more carnage on our roads.

One need only look at, for example, the state of Colorado, which, a few years back, legalized marijuana. In the first year following the legalization of marijuana in the state of Colorado, motor vehicle deaths attributable to drug impairment increased by a staggering 62%. In the years since, we have seen an increase overall, a noticeable increase in deaths and injuries attributable to drug impairment in the state of Colorado. That is exactly what we have to look forward to in Canada, courtesy of the government's legalization legislation.

In the face of those kinds of statistics and evidence from nearby jurisdictions, what is the government's plan to deal with issues like keeping our roads safe? It is nice and well to introduce a bill, as flawed as it is in so many respects and with as many unanswered questions as there are, but it is quite another thing to say, once the bill is passed and becomes law, as it almost certainly will, what we are actually going to do when it comes to enforcement and keeping our roads safe.

The answer is that the government does not have a plan. There is no plan to train police officers. There is no plan in terms of assisting municipalities with getting roadside screening devices. As I understand it, there is even some question as to whether there is a ready, usable, reliable roadside screening device that could be utilized today. Notwithstanding that, all we get from the government is a rushed, fixed, arbitrary timeline of July 1, 2018, to move forward with marijuana legalization.

With so many unanswered questions, there seems to be only one plausible explanation for why the government would be moving forward with the July 1, 2018, timeline. I guess it is so that the government can say that it actually kept one promise from the 2015 election campaign. Imagine that. We have a government that is putting politics ahead of public health and public safety. That really is an abdication of leadership by the government and all Canadians should be concerned.

I want to turn to the second part of Bill C-46, which deals with alcohol-impaired driving. There are some good aspects to the second part of Bill C-46. Among the changes brought forward by Bill C-46 is to strengthen some penalties for alcohol-impaired driving. Among the changes would be to increase the maximum penalty for individuals who drive impaired and cause death, from a maximum term of imprisonment of 14 years, up to life behind bars.

●(1650)

I commend the government for moving forward with that change. It sends the right message that when one chooses to drink and then drive, it is more than just a bad choice. It is a serious crime with serious consequences that can result, and far too often has resulted, in the loss of lives. In that regard, it is perfectly appropriate to say that individuals who commit such a crime need to be held, must be held, to the fullest extent of the law with a penalty of as long as life behind bars.

One of the biggest changes in Bill C-46 is in respect to mandatory alcohol screening. This is a major change. I know there are differences of opinion, including in my own caucus, on this issue, but whatever one's view of mandatory alcohol screening is, one must recognize that this constitutes a significant shift in the law. It really changes the relationship between an individual and law enforcement. Arguably, it reverses the presumption from the presumption of innocence to the presumption of guilt. While my mind is open to mandatory alcohol screening, I believe that caution is required, having regard for the significant infringement on individual liberty that mandatory alcohol screening will mean.

At present, law enforcement can require a breath sample when the officer has a reasonable suspicion that the individual has alcohol in his or her system. There are some who would argue that mandatory alcohol screening, which would do away with the requirement of a reasonable suspicion, is really not that big of a change. They would note, and rightly so, that driving is not a right; it is a privilege. It is a highly regulated activity. In that regard, a police officer can stop a vehicle, at random, to ask for the driver's registration or proof of insurance, or to assess their sobriety.

What Bill C-46 would do is replace the requirement of reasonable suspicion with saying, effectively, that a police officer could require a breath sample from a motorist at any time, anywhere, under any circumstances, absent even the slightest level of suspicion.

I would submit that what we are talking about is a fairly significant infringement on an individual's liberty. It is something far more significant than a police officer merely stopping a vehicle on the road, asking for the vehicle registration, and in the course of conversing with the individual motorist, determining that the person seems to or may have alcohol in their system, and consequently requesting that the individual undertake a breath sample.

In the case of mandatory screening, we are talking about a mandatory bodily sample, absent even the slightest level of suspicion. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing, a needed thing or not, it is a big change.

Government Orders

•(1655)

It is something that certainly would contravene section 8 of the charter, the right against unreasonable search and seizure. It is quite possible and I know the Minister of Justice has said that the Department of Justice lawyers have advised her that it would be upheld under section 1 of the charter. Professor Hogg, an esteemed constitutional expert, has given his opinion to suggest so similarly, but nonetheless, we are talking about a breach of charter rights, sections 8 and 9. Whether it is saved under section 1, that is a matter to be litigated, but it highlights the fact that we are talking about a breach of charter rights.

The question becomes whether it is justified, having regard for the seriousness of impaired driving and the, frankly, too many Canadians who have lost their lives on the road as a result of an impaired driver. We see the statistics, which are in some ways encouraging. Over the last 30 years, the number of people getting behind the wheel when impaired and causing injuries or death is being reduced. The numbers are going down, but nonetheless Canada's level of injury and death as a result of impaired driving is well above most other countries in the western world. It is a concern and as a result, there is a legitimate debate and reason to have a serious look at mandatory alcohol screening.

In terms of determining whether or not mandatory alcohol screening is justified, having regard for the charter rights of Canadians, one must look at the powers that law enforcement presently have and assess whether law enforcement officers are using all of the powers that they have. What is, for example, reasonable suspicion? Reasonable suspicion is not a reasonable suspicion that an individual is over the Criminal Code limit of 0.08. Reasonable suspicion is not a reasonable suspicion that an individual is impaired. Reasonable suspicion is a reasonable suspicion that an individual has alcohol in their system. That is an incredibly low threshold.

To that end, police officers, in order to establish reasonable suspicion, can do any number of things upon lawfully stopping a vehicle. Factors such as red eyes, the smell of alcohol on a motorist's breath, an admission of alcohol use, all of those things and other factors would go toward establishing reasonable suspicion. They do not require a mandatory alcohol test.

I know there have been some statistics brought forward that say mandatory alcohol screening will reduce impaired driving, the number of deaths and injuries, but also at the same time point to the fact that according to some statistics about 50% of the time law enforcement does not detect an impaired driver by simply talking and interacting with the motorist.

Those are issues that need to be addressed. They need to be fleshed out. It is why I support the bill in principle and support sending it to committee for further study and further review. While there are some good aspects to the bill, there are also many unanswered questions that need to be answered, and frankly, it probably requires many amendments to get the bill right.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for St. Albert—Edmonton for his support in principle of Bill C-46. I, like him, am looking forward to

the bill's coming before the justice committee to listen to some experts.

I want to respond to one of the concerns the member raised. I want to assure him that the legislation as proposed only authorizes the minister to approve a device. I want to reassure him that approval is based on a recommendation from the Canadian Society of Forensic Science, which has a drugs and driving committee. It looks at the best available science and at all of the devices, and they are put through the most rigorous testing standards before they are recommended by the committee to the minister.

The legislation as proposed only authorizes the minister to approve a device, but that approval is dependent entirely on the recommendation of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science and based on the best available advice and science. I wanted to provide the member with that assurance and I hope that allays some of his concerns.

•(1700)

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice for his work on this incredibly complex file. He certainly brings a lot of background, depth, and experience, and I thank him for that.

I would say that it nonetheless highlights, though, that the science is not necessarily there in terms of a device that is ready to go. To that end, I will quote the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, which says:

Although the accuracy of oral fluid screening devices has been improving, they are not perfect. Some drivers who have used drugs will test negative and there remains a small probability that some drug-free drivers will test positive. When a driver who has used drugs is missed by the screening procedure, it has implications for road safety...

That is from the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction, and it highlights the fact that there is still work to do in terms of ensuring that we have screening devices that provide a consistent scientific method of detecting impairment.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to let my colleague know that I agree with him 100%. For the Conservative government, the health and safety of Canadians was always the priority, and he is bang on when he says the science is not there.

With all due respect to my colleague across the way, when we look at the science that is out there, it is new. It really has not been tested. It has been tested in very few jurisdictions. When we look at something as complicated as driving while impaired, the tests just do not live up to what Canadians are expecting for maintaining safety. Parents have asked me about school bus drivers. Union members have talked to me about heavy equipment.

We know that for alcohol, the tests cost pennies per test. So far, we know a marijuana swab is going to cost somewhere between \$20 and \$35, and then there will be a cost on top of that for the blood test.

I want to ask my colleague to tell us who is going to pay for these costs. Who is going to pay for the training of the officers, for the toxicology, for the tests? My community is worried that these costs are going to be downloaded to the provinces and municipalities.

Government Orders

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Oshawa raises a very good point. It goes back to my earlier point that while the government is moving forward with legislation, at this time there does not seem to be plan for implementation and enforcement, or to the degree that there is one, it is coming up short.

In terms of the costs, there are significant costs to this measure. My hon. friend mentioned blood tests and screening devices, equipment that police departments have to acquire. Who is going to pay for them? At this point in time, it seems it is largely the municipalities that are going to pick up the tab. There is absolutely no funding commitment from the government.

In terms of police officer training, my hon. friend and others mentioned that testing for drug impairment is far more complex than testing for alcohol impairment. It requires significant training. Right now there are approximately 600 officers who have this training to meet the impact of legalization. That number has to reach, it is estimated, at least 2,000. Again the question is about who pays for it, and again it is the provinces and municipalities. The government would like to pat itself on the back and say it kept a promise while downloading so much of the responsibility to the provinces and municipalities.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for that well-documented speech.

My understanding is that everyone will end up paying for this vague and arbitrary approach.

Does he agree that the whole country, all of the municipalities, and all of the provinces will end up paying for an election promise that was nothing more than a flight of fancy, a tasty treat tossed out on the fly to tempt voters?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the member is bang on that this arbitrary date of July 1, 2018, without any funding or support to assist the provinces or municipalities with implementation and enforcement, is nothing more than a way for the government to take political credit.

In answer to the member for Oshawa and to follow up on the point that was raised by the member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, in terms of the cost for training police officers, the cost of training one police officer is estimated to be somewhere in the range of \$17,000 to \$20,000. That is a huge chunk of change from municipalities.

It is an abdication of leadership from the government to say that it is moving forward with this legislation, provinces and municipalities will have to pick up the tab, and it will wash its hands clean.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in relation to costs, I appreciate the member's careful and thoughtful analysis.

In relation to costs, could the member speculate on the costs of not taking more of these impaired drivers, whether impaired by drugs or alcohol, off the roads? One tragic death is a huge human and physical cost.

I have a second part to my question. In the last Parliament there were a number of bills that would have included massive costs to the justice systems of the provinces, territories, and municipalities. What provision was made to cover those costs for those other bills?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, to the question raised by my colleague, the member for Yukon, one death as a result of impaired driving is one death too many.

The question, however, in responding legislatively, is what is the best approach to take? That is pertinent to the issue of mandatory roadside testing.

One of the issues that we have with impaired drivers is that we have seen this general drop. It is still too high, but we have seen a significant drop year after year as a result of a combination of public awareness, changes to the Criminal Code, and other legislative changes. The people who are responsible for the deaths are a relatively small group of repeat offenders, hard-core drunk drivers. Those are the people we have to go after. Whether this bill fully does that is a question that needs to be thoroughly considered at committee.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Windsor West. I think we need to hear from as many people as possible so we can get to the bottom of a bill that seems pretty poorly put together to me, thanks.

Notwithstanding the arguments I am about to lay out against this bill, I will be voting in favour of it at second reading. I will do so not because I think it is any good, but because I really need the answers that I hope to get from the expert witnesses who appear before the committee. Then I will be able to have the conversation with voters in my riding, many of whom have questions not just about marijuana legalization, but about its effects on driving.

Bills C-46 and C-45 were introduced together. At the time, I thought it made perfect sense to introduce a bill to legalize marijuana together with a bill detailing how these measures will be handled and consequences for things like impaired driving.

Unfortunately, when I started reading the two bills, I quickly became disillusioned. After 18 months of work, the Liberal committee came up with some real gems to include in Bill C-45, like saying that marijuana would not be sold to people under the age of 18. It seems to me that it did not take 18 months of work to come up with that. That is, however, the first recommendation.

We know very well that there are several studies showing that marijuana use has an impact on the development of the brain of regular users. A number of experts say that we should prohibit marijuana use until a person is at least 21 years old, or even 25. In their bill, the Liberals say that the provinces will be free to set the legal age as they see fit.

Government Orders

We will be in a mess if some provinces decide to set the legal age at 25 years, others at 21, and others at 18. How does this correlate with driver's licences? In Quebec, when a person is given a temporary driver's licence, there is zero tolerance for alcohol. That is because a person is given a licence at the age of 16, and that takes them to the age of 18 when they play by the same rules as everyone else, with demerit points.

If Quebec, or another province, or several provinces together decided to set the legal age for using marijuana at 21 or 25 years of age, how would this be harmonized with driver's licences? How would zero tolerance be harmonized, and to what extent should it be considered? These are all questions for which there are no answers, because in both the first and second bill there has been virtually no consultation with the provinces, with aboriginal groups, or with the municipalities.

After 18 months, the second conclusion in the report is that the THC level in the marijuana that will be sold has not established. A corollary to this is that the level of THC at which a person would be considered to be driving under the influence has not yet been established. We are being told that regulations will follow. Once again, they are kicking the can down the road, saying we do not have an answer and so we will put that off until later, hoping to perhaps find an answer some day. These are all considerations that do not offer any reassurance for people who are trying first to get their heads around the marijuana legislation so they can then see how it will be enforced.

There is also nothing about the profits generated by this new state enterprise. Will they be reinvested in health care? The Liberals seem to have said in the past that health transfers, which have already been cut and allocated, included all that and there was no new money to give the provinces, although most of the responsibilities under the bills that we are discussing fall in the provinces' court.

I would also like to make a connection with the survey released this morning. First off, the survey results show that 50% of Quebecers are opposed to legalizing marijuana.

• (1710)

It is almost the reverse in the rest of Canada, where about the same percentage of people agree with legalizing marijuana. What I understand from the 50% of Quebecers who are saying no to legalization is that the measures the Liberals are proposing in their Bill C-45 and Bill C-46 are not giving Quebecers any reassurance. I have mentioned a few of those measures, relating to driving, but there are many others.

In addition, many rental housing owners are wondering how they are going to manage their contracts with their tenants when the tenants are allowed to grow and smoke pot at home, because that would be legal.

A lot of questions arise in some very broad areas, and Bill C-45 is entirely silent on them. Obviously, the purpose of Bill C-46 is different.

As a result, 54% of Quebecers are opposed to legalizing marijuana, to be on the safe side. If there were answers to their questions, those percentages might change. That is why I am going to put so much effort into trying to get answers in committee. The

members of my party will be proposing quite a few amendments, so that Canadians, wherever they are, can finally get answers to their questions and feel reassured about their concerns.

Also, and I am now coming back to Bill C-46, in the same survey, 65% of Quebecers and 60% of Canadians reported that the link to road accidents was their primary concern.

Personal use of marijuana to relax, as weekend recreation, when someone wants to trade their bottle of wine for a joint, seems to be relatively accepted and acceptable. However, when it comes to impaired driving, we have a serious problem.

The problem is not resolved in Bill C-45, because this legislation provides no tools. First, the level of THC is not defined, and evidently there are no precise measurement instruments for determining, beyond a reasonable doubt, that a person drove while impaired.

I am going to refer to another statistic, but this one relates more to alcohol. The leading cause of death in criminal cases is impaired driving causing death. This is our primary source of criminal mortality in Canada. Out of all the OECD countries, we have one of the worst records. If we add other substances that may be difficult to measure, along with mixtures of those substances that we are even less able to measure, this becomes a big problem. This is something of great concern to all Quebecers and Canadians who think about this issue and who, like me, do not find answers to their questions in these bills.

I have the feeling that we are putting the cart before the horse. During the Conservative era just before the Liberal government, the Conservatives were all about minimum sentences, criminalization, and longer sentences, but they were not able to show that these measures had a direct impact on the crime rate. Nevertheless, a lot of Liberals seem to be following in their footsteps when they say, and this is in Bill C-46, that if someone were convicted of impaired driving, the penalty might be raised from 14 years, as is currently the case in the Criminal Code, to life in prison.

Here they are legislating about the consequences of a problem that they are not able to identify. It seems to me that there is a serious problem.

• (1715)

I will be voting for the bill, not because I believe it to be sound, but because I want to get clarification.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the 20 minutes of comments and reflections. He is quite right in saying that it is important that we ask questions.

I would like to know the logic behind the NDP's position, which is to immediately decriminalize the simple possession of marijuana even before we have the bill and the committee's recommendations. The party has stated its position several times in the House. However, the member says that we are putting the cart before the horse and that we have no answers. Does the NDP believe that we should take action immediately without even thinking about it?

Government Orders

What is the logic behind this position? We have one year to debate this matter. We have one year to draft a bill that will finally resolve something that has not worked for 100 years. Legalizing cannabis must be done properly and that is what we are doing.

I would like my colleague to respond to that.

• (1720)

Mr. Robert Aubin: Madam Speaker, the answer is very simple and is even found in the poll released this morning. Many Quebeckers, 35% as I recall, referred to diversion, which is equivalent to decriminalization. This means that, in general, people want marijuana, the softest drug that can be consumed, to remain illegal.

As a secondary school teacher for 25 years, I saw this happen time and again. Parents did not want to go through a trial. If their children used marijuana just once, parents did not want them to have a criminal record that could thwart a potential career or potential trips to the Untied States. That is the number one concern. Everyone recognizes that smoking a joint is not a serious enough crime to warrant a criminal record.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question about the impairment testing aspects of the bill. I have some significant concerns about the legalization of marijuana in general, mainly because of the impact it will have on the roads.

The government talks as if there is readily available, clear, reliable testing for marijuana and other drug-related impairment. The reality is that the testing for that is much more difficult and the tests are not nearly as clear or readily available as they are in the case of alcohol. This is because of differences in the physical properties of the substances we are talking about. As much as we can look at more effective ways of combating marijuana use, our party favours a ticketing alternative within the context of maintaining the criminal prohibitions.

I want to hear the member's thoughts specifically on how we can move forward, recognizing the real concerns about whether we can effectively test for impairment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Madam Speaker, one of the campaigns that struck a chord with all Quebeckers and likely all Canadians was the one that said that drunk driving is a crime. It is now part of our mores. Obviously, people break the law, but everyone understands that drinking and driving is a crime. If drinking and driving is a crime, then driving under the influence of marijuana should be too.

It is difficult to determine what the threshold will be for people who drive while under the influence of marijuana. How will that threshold be determined when a person has consumed both alcohol and marijuana? Until we have a scientifically determined threshold and screening equipment, I think that it would be difficult to move forward.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am glad to join the debate today on Bill C-46, an act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances) and to make

consequential amendments to other Acts. This deals with the decriminalizing and legalization of marijuana in our society.

The issue facing us today is rather ironic for me. Legalization of marijuana is comparable in many respects to a bill I brought before the House of Commons on single-event sports betting. It was about the legalization of something that the public wanted, and the cost of the criminality element to it was very robust. I still get the comparisons to this issue from people who are lobbying to legalize single-event sports betting activities in Canada. My bill was defeated by the Liberals, primarily the Prime Minister and his cabinet.

Therefore, when this passes, people will be able to legally consume cannabis, but they still will be unable to bet on single-event sports. That is around a \$10 billion a year of loss that goes to primarily organized crime. Those funds could have been diverted to health care, education, as well gaming addiction and other things related to it.

I say this now because I have seen some of this work develop and specifically why this did not even get moved to a committee. There clearly was a design by the Prime Minister, his cabinet, and his parliamentary cabal to keep that from going to committee for their own purposes, and there are some very debatable reasons for that.

However, I want to focus on this bill. It would move to the legalization of a consumable product, being a drug, which has consequential, sociological, and social elements that will frame our society around the use of it. In particular, we are talking about drug-impaired driving. Since 1925, it has been illegal to have drugs in one's system and to drive a motorized vehicle. Driving while under the influence of alcohol is the largest killer of Canadians under a criminal offence for murder, and we have not yet found the proper repertoire of responses to it.

Listening to the debate today, the Liberals have not really participated much. This is a common thing that happens here. I would invite all those viewing to visit an independent site called "openparliament.ca". People can actually track their members' participation. Many members just sit here and do not participate on a regular basis. People can even look at the volume of what they have chosen to intervene on and what they have chosen not to intervene on.

I have listened with intent to some of the concerns raised by the Conservatives. They relate to some of the practical problems we have with the identification of those who are intoxicated or under the influence of a drug while driving. There is the difficulty that science has right now. There is the expansion of police powers, which are very much challenged under the environment of some of the issues we have had such as racial profiling and a number of different civil liberty issues that have taken place, not only with regard to the police, but also with regard to other different types of services provided by public institutions, which are paid for by all.

Government Orders

One of the concerns raised by the Conservatives was the cost of this, which is legitimate to raise. However, it is rather unfortunate that it has been a discussion point in this. It is to the embarrassment and shame of the government. It should have put this to rest immediately.

● (1725)

When we consider the cost in terms of human death related to this and the mere fact of the gross amounts of profit that the government gets from alcohol sales and consumption, and now of drug consumption, it is nothing short of shameful for the Liberals to come into this debate and not do that appropriately by taking care of those costs and ending that right away. If not, I know as a former councillor and many others also know that they will offload these issues onto an inappropriate tax base to deal with them.

For a law created from a federal standpoint, there should be no debate whatsoever about those costs. We should be getting on with it given the fact that we have such human tragedy associated with this, but we are debating whether it costs \$20 a swab or 2¢ a breathalyzer. It is absolutely shameful that we would change laws and have that debate when the government is receiving significant revenue from current sales of alcohol and other types of prohibited substances, and now drug sales. It is absolutely shameful. It is a black mark on the government for taking this process forward, and it becomes a distraction of what is so important, which is the change to our society with this new drug being legalized in our country. It is extremely unfortunate.

The Liberals always have money for their friends. They always have money for their pet projects. They always have money for the shiny objects they find to chase after, but they never have money when it really counts. It is a scapegoat to have the provinces or the municipalities to have to pick up the slack. They are clear that it is okay; it is all right. I would tell the councillors, the mayors, the provincial representatives, and the premiers that it is all on them, because the decision rests right here. The buck stops right here in terms of the potential from revenue source and the amount of money that is already capitalized by the federal government's taxation of those products that are currently legal that have some conditions on them.

We have serious issues to deal with. For example, what are the levels of drug influence? Then we have a positive in this bill, which I like, which is making the penalties for drinking and driving under the influence of alcohol stronger. It is interesting because, given the severity of alcohol and drinking and driving under the influence, the Liberals have only just matched other transportation-related death issues. They did not choose to take it to a higher level. They did not choose to do anything else with it. They chose to put it in line where it should have been from day one.

Gone are the days, and they should have never existed, when we passively allowed being under the influence. It was "Oh, it was just a few drinks and it was just an occasion." No, the serious consequences of that should have always been the case. There was a cultural shift, just like we are going to have a cultural shift with this.

With that, we have to look at the consultations that have taken place. What I worry about and why I talked about the levels and the

cost related to this is that it relates to regulations being in place, not legislation, to allow unelected people to set even the lowest and the highest level of bars for the testing, the failing of the testing, and the consequences of the testing. Why would we kick the buck there? I have no idea. It does not make any sense in terms of responsibility.

I represent a border community, and the consultation elements have not been there. The Minister of Public Safety has no answers for consultation with the United States, for example. They have not consulted with the municipalities. For example, if a truck driver happens to be around people who are smoking marijuana and gets it on his or her clothes and in the cab, what is going to be the cost of crossing the border and having the detection in the United States go off?

● (1730)

What is the cost for just-in-time delivery trucks for the auto sector? What is the cost for agricultural trucks? What is the cost of putting all that on our roads to create delays of other goods and services?

There is no answer, which is rather unfortunate because it was all ready to be done, had they simply asked.

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

First and foremost, the government has been deeply engaged on this discussion, not only in the House of Commons but in every region of the country. Whether it has been the minister responsible or the parliamentary secretary, they have done their homework. It is not just a collective group of individuals in this chamber who are given the entire responsibility of making a change of this nature.

There is a great deal of consultation that has taken place with different stakeholders, such as provincial and municipal governments, law enforcement agencies, and first responders.

I am a bit confused about the NDP's position on this issue. It seems to me that this particular member does not support the general direction our communities want us to go. Could the member tell us, from his perspective, what the NDP's position is on this legislation?

● (1735)

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I would argue that consultation is actually hearing from people and then acting on it and providing legislation that reflects that. It would be similar to an inclusive process that takes place.

We have not heard the government talk about what it is doing in the border communities. Specifically, who did the government talk to at the U.S. administration, on a federal level, a state level, and a municipal level? We have not heard about any of that.

We have heard the Minister of Public Safety say it is an ongoing process. That is not consultation. That is not enough for the public. It is actually a shame. It is sad. We have to deal with this situation. The reality is that the public deserves answers, open accountability, and consultation, which also means listening.

Government Orders

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the member's persistence in raising issues around his private member's bill. I do admire that. Clearly it is a cause that is very important to him and important to his constituency.

I want to ask his opinion about this issue of consultation around municipal governments. It is interesting that in the government's marijuana legislation there is no provision for municipalities to be informed or engaged around who is involved in home grow. There will be people growing marijuana at home and the government does not have a mechanism by which municipalities are going to be engaged in that process.

I wonder if this creates some concerns for municipalities, in terms of how they ensure compliance with these issues. The member mentioned a past in municipal politics, so I wonder if he can reflect on that and on how the government could do a better job of fixing the legislation on some of those details.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. With regard to my previous bill, it was on the \$8 billion to \$10 billion annually going to organized crime and offshore companies, many of them with nefarious backgrounds, that could have actually gone to the government's revenue stream. That was per year.

It is important for tourism, but it is also important to fight against organized crime, which is connected to marijuana. It would have given us the revenue that is necessary. As previously mentioned by the member, with regard to my municipal experience, things used to get downloaded. That came from the Conservative Harris government, in terms of the lingo that was used, the "downloading" that took place from the provincial to the municipal level.

That is what we have here. I think it is very valid that they have raised financial costs related to it. That is why I am talking about the fact that the shame here, and the difficulty about all of the things that are taking place, is that the government could have had a revenue stream, or it currently does have a revenue stream, to take all those concerns away. Why not take them off the table? That would be the simple thing to do.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour to speak on this important issue of impaired driving.

In a previous life, before being elected federally, I was an employee with the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia. One of my responsibilities was to try to make our streets safer. After every fatal accident in my area, I had to write a report on the causes, on why somebody died. It was often very simple issues, such as not wearing a seatbelt or there was impairment involved.

I would work with the local police and the RCMP. These were very sad stories, which were very traumatic for the families and very traumatic for the police officers and first responders from the fire department or with the ambulance service who were involved. It was very traumatic. The RCMP and police forces across Canada are recognizing the impact this has on first responders and the PTSD they are experiencing, too.

It is not a simple issue. It is a very complex issue when people drive impaired. Impairment can be caused by many things. It could

be caused by a lack of sleep. It can be caused by forms of dementia or a loss of cognitive skills. It can be caused by prescription drugs. However, the focus of tonight's debate has to do with the use of drugs and alcohol, and legislative changes.

For the last three and a half years, I have been honoured to present petitions in the House. I have received hundreds of thousands of petitions from across Canada from an organization called Families for Justice.

A woman who lives in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove is Markita Kaulius. Markita and Victor lost their daughter Kassandra. I forget if she was just coming from a baseball game or going to a baseball game, but she was very engaged with the community. She was a beautiful young woman. Her life was tragically lost when, as she was driving through an intersection on a green light, somebody who was badly impaired from the use of alcohol blew the light and T-boned Kassandra and killed her. I forget the speeds that were involved, but it was a severe crash. The impaired driver ran from the scene and hid. He was caught, charged, and convicted.

As happens so often in Canada in the justice system, the person receives a sentence that will never bring the lost loved one back. There is no justice, in that sense. We cannot bring their loved one back. While the sentence may be conditional sentencing, house arrest, or just months, the family, for the rest of their lives, is going to have to deal with the loss of not being able to see that daughter graduate, get married, or have children. I am thinking of Kassandra, but to lose any loved one prematurely because they were killed by an impaired driver is a travesty. It happens way too often in this country.

Families for Justice has been presenting these petitions, with thousands of signatures, saying to Parliament, "Please, change the laws." After presenting petitions time and time again and week after week in the last Parliament, the government introduced the impaired driving act. Unfortunately, it was at the end of the Parliament. To get legislation through, normally it takes two years. Since there were not two years left, it was not going to get through.

● (1740)

Families for Justice contacted all of the political leaders. It contacted the Conservative leader, the Liberal leader, and the NDP leader, and asked if they would support the legislation, the impaired driving act. To the Prime Minister's credit, he responded to Families for Justice, for Kassandra Kaulius, and said he would support legislation like that. Sadly, we should call that what it is, vehicular homicide. If a person kills someone using a car, a 2,000-pound or 3,000-pound weapon, while impaired, the individual choosing to become intoxicated through a drug or a drink, driving a vehicle knowing that he or she is putting the community at risk, and then kills someone, there should be a consequence much more serious than a few months in jail. It asked for mandatory minimum sentencing and for calling it what it is: vehicular homicide.

Government Orders

The impaired driving act, as I said, at the end of the last Parliament had mandatory minimum sentencing. It did not call it vehicular homicide, but Families for Justice continued asking for it. It has a letter, which is a public document, from the Prime Minister, saying that he would support that type of legislation. The closest thing to it that has been received by Parliament was Bill C-226. Unfortunately, the government, which dominates the justice committee, all too often getting orders from the Prime Minister's Office on whether to support something or not, was directed not to support Bill C-226.

The government has introduced legislation that we are dealing with today, Bill C-46, which uniquely and not strangely, is tied at the hip with Bill C-45. Bill C-45 would make it legal for young drivers 18 years and older to smoke a joint, or a number of joints, and to possess 30 grams legally. The Canadian Medical Association is saying that it is dangerous, we should not do that, and that people should be at least 21. At age 25 and older, developing minds will not be affected as severely. It is recommending 25 as the ideal legal age, but would agree with 21. The government ignored the scientific evidence and has gone ahead with the age of 18. Has the government introduced legislation to protect our communities and keep our roads safer? No, it has not. We know from other jurisdictions that it will make our roads less safe with impaired drivers.

We have a problem with alcohol impairment, but we have some tools to indicate whether someone is impaired through blood alcohol testing and breathalyzers. We have devices that test. Whether it is .05 or .08, we know if somebody is impaired. The government has suggested that it is going to pass this new legislation not within a two-year period, but within a one-year period. Why is that? Why would a government want to ram through, speed through, rush through legislation to have it in place by July 1 of next year? It is because it is the marijuana legislation, the one promise it will keep. Its flagship legislation in this Parliament is to legalize marijuana that will allow someone to smoke a bunch of joints. Someone can have 60 joints in his or her pocket, the car, or whatever, all totally legal if the person is age 18 or older. Someone cannot smoke 60 joints, so maybe he or she will be giving them to friends in the car and they will have a big party while driving. It is extremely dangerous.

The government then introduced Bill C-46, the impaired driving legislation, that would keep our roads safe.

● (1745)

Bill C-45 would legalize up to four marijuana plants to be grown in homes. However, are four plants four plants? No. We know through medical marijuana usage that four plants is 12 plants because they grow. There are crops. With a new seed, there are four plants, and when it is halfway grown, it will be another four. Mature plants that are producing will have another four plants. We know how the legislation works: four plants are 12 plants. There will be plants growing in homes where there are children. Does that protect our children? No. Does easy access to recreational marijuana being grown in homes make us safer? No. How about 18-year-olds with developing minds being able to smoke and drive? It creates a disaster scenario.

I think back to the letter that the Prime Minister sent to the Families for Justice saying that he would support this. Support what?

Mandatory minimums. The Liberals believe that the courts needed some guidance. Courts need discretion to provide appropriate sentencing if someone is convicted of an impaired driving offence. We are now introducing even more impaired drivers, I believe, so the courts need guidance.

The government has said that it is going to increase the maximum. If someone is killed, the driver would get 14 years to life imprisonment. Let us look at how often people are being sentenced to 14 years. It is almost never. I would argue that we are not seeing that ever, so by increasing the maximum sentencing from 14 years to life, does that make our roads safer? It does not. These are horrendous crimes against society, taking the lives of Canadians, driving while impaired. Families for Justice is saying it should be called vehicular homicide and that there should be mandatory minimum sentences.

We know from the rulings of the Supreme Court on mandatory minimums that if people kill someone, they would receive at least five years. That is what was being asked for. If there were additional victims, there would be consecutive sentencing, a minimum sentence on top of a minimum sentence. There would not be any freebies. If they kill multiple people, they get multiple consequences. That is what Canadians believe is justice. My point is that we cannot bring back someone who has been lost, and there is tragedy and grief that comes to a family and anyone associated with that crash.

I want to share a little research that I did. We have a government that sadly, I believe, is a government of smoke and mirrors. The letter that the Prime Minister sent is another broken promise to a family who trusted him and hoped he would keep his word to provide the legislation that he promised. That is now a broken promise. Liberals are going to provide smoke-and-mirror legislation to legalize marijuana. One can have lots of marijuana from age 18 and on, but if they drive, they are going to pay the consequences. What kind of consequences will there be? If they kill someone, the maximum goes up to life. We know, through what is happening in the courts right now, there is a very minor consequence for killing someone.

Government Orders

This is a tragedy. How often is this happening in Canada? Impaired driving causing death is the number one criminal offence in Canada. We keep asking the government about how many times. How many times has the Ethics Commissioner met with the Prime Minister? He will not answer that. How many times are people being killed by an impaired driver every year in Canada? Is it a dozen? How serious is this problem? It is the number one criminal cause of death. That is not what I asked. I asked how many times. On average, 1,200 people die every year in Canada from impaired driving.

• (1750)

That means that three or four people die every day. Today, there will be three or four people killed by an impaired driver, and that is with alcohol. We will now add drugs, new drugged-up drivers, because of the legislation that the Liberals are introducing. It is a very serious problem.

I looked at this very interesting document, a report from the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Liberals have said they are back and that sunny days are here. Canadians are realizing that sunny days are not sunny days. Communities have to be sustainable, and the commissioner said this about previous Liberal governments.

The 1998 report said the Liberal government “is failing to meet its policy commitments”. In 1999, the report said there is “additional evidence of the gap between the [Liberal] government's intentions and its domestic actions. We are paying the price in terms of our health and our legacy for our children and grandchildren.” Does that sound familiar?

In 2000, it was that the government “continues to have difficulty turning...commitment into action”. In 2001, “the continued upward trend in Canada's emissions [demonstrates that] the government” has not transformed “its promises into results”. In 2002, the federal government's “sustainable development deficit” continues to grow. In 2003, it said there is gap between what the Liberal government said it will do and what it actually is doing. Good intentions are not enough. In 2004, why is the progress so slow? After all, the mandates and commitments are there. In 2005, it was that bold announcements are made and then often forgotten as soon as the confetti hits the ground. The federal government seems to have trouble crossing the finish line.

That was the Chrétien Liberal government, the Paul Martin government, and here we are with another Liberal government. The Liberals are back, involved with controversy, concerns with the Ethics Commissioner, investigations, and smoke and mirrors. We are now talking about smoke and mirrors regarding the safety of our communities.

If legislation would be introduced to protect our communities, a reasonable person would say that if we are to have any enforcement, we have to have people trained. Remember the Phoenix system where people were not trained? It is a system where the Liberals will legalize marijuana for use and they will not have any approved devices to test and confirm impairment. They do for alcohol, but the new drug impairment testing has no approved devices and no new people are being trained.

A previous speaker talked about new costs to municipal governments. I was elected in 1990 until 2004, and I served on a municipal council. The Chrétien and Martin years were extremely difficult for those in municipal government because the Liberals kept downloading more and more. They would make announcement and they would download those costs on to local governments. The tradition is that the cost of infrastructure would be one-third, one-third, one-third. The local governments could plan for that, but not under the Liberal government. They would download those costs.

In the cloudy days that we see ahead there are impaired drivers and no new devices to determine whether they are impaired. There will be legal challenges on charges of impairment, and if we do not have an approved device, likely the government will not be successful. We do not have training. With regard to the police, the drug recognition experts, who will pay for the new officers, the training, the devices that are yet to exist?

One would think that the government would wait until the science is ready to support that with devices. The search for this device is not something new. Experts have been looking for this for the last 15 years. They cannot find a device that can be used to confirm impairment, and yet the government is moving ahead.

• (1755)

I will support it going to committee because at committee we will see how poorly planned this legislation is and how it will hurt Canadians. I wish the government was not doing this and had thought it through more carefully. It is a poorly hatched plan, and it likely will not be supported by a large number of members in this House in the future. However, at this point, we will support it going to committee.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of points of clarification. Perhaps I have not done a good enough job of explaining to the member that the government's actual proposal with respect to Bill C-45 is to legalize, regulate, and restrict cannabis in order to keep it out of the hands of our kids, to take the profits away from organized crime, and to create a safer, healthier, and more socially responsibly environment for all Canadians. For some reason, he did not catch that last part, and I wanted to share that with him.

There have been a number of comments with respect to waiting. I take the member for Langley—Aldergrove's point. He appears to be quite adept at waiting.

The measures that are proposed under Bill C-46 have been introduced in other jurisdictions. For example, in Ireland there was a 23% reduction in impaired deaths as a result of the measures we are now proposing to enact here in Canada. In New Zealand, it was up to 54%, and in New South Wales, Australia, it was 48%.

Government Orders

I have spent many years being responsible for road safety and the safety of my communities, and in my experience tough talk does not keep people safe. What does keep people safe is the absolute certainty that they will get caught. The measures that are proposed in this legislation will do precisely that. Introducing a new measure to ensure that everyone who is legally stopped by a police officer roadside must submit to an alcohol-screening breath test has been proven in many jurisdictions to save lives, so I am confident that although tough talk has not worked for over a decade, the smart action that is proposed in this legislation will do just that.

With respect to the member's concerns about the technology and the devices, his information is a little out of date. In the United Kingdom, oral testing is being used in a jurisdiction with very similar laws to those being proposed here, and the positive results of those tests are used to demand a blood sample, exactly as our legislation proposes. Also, those devices have been in use in Australia since 2009 and have resulted in criminal charges in that jurisdiction.

We have relied on the advice of the drugs and driving committee of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science with respect to which devices should be approved. We have tested two of those devices in Canadian conditions. They work exceptionally well, and we are very confident going forward.

Now is the time to act. The country has waited a decade for action and did not get it. Now we are prepared to provide the right response, the tools, the technology, and the training.

• (1800)

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member that now is the time to act. Now is the time to act to keep the promises made by the Prime Minister to support legislation with mandatory minimum sentences.

I also agree that it is time to act to deal with impaired driving, but if the member is basing his comments on fact, he has to acknowledge that although the testing can confirm the presence of a drug in a person's bloodstream, it cannot confirm impairment. That is the problem. A drug can stay in one's system for days, but it will not necessarily impair that person. That is why we need to have a drug recognition expert, a DRE, to confirm the kind of drug and whether there is impairment. It might be multiple drugs.

Will these saliva test pads that can be placed on one's tongue make our roads safer? Will allowing people 18 years of age and older to have multiple joints in their possession make our streets safer? Will they be afraid to smoke these 60 joints that are in their pocket because they may get pulled over, since the Liberals have said that they will get pulled over?

The Liberals are living in la-la land. It will not work. We need to get tough, and the Prime Minister needs to keep the promises that he made to Canadians to get tough and put in minimum sentencing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I can certainly understand his point of view, which may sometimes differ from ours. However, one thing is for certain: he has a sincere and documented

concern. It is a health and safety matter, and I obviously appreciate the member's thoroughness.

I cannot help but notice how the government is constantly in a spin. Earlier, Liberal members were saying that profits from the sale of drugs were going to the mafia and organized crime. Everyone knows that. What is sad is that the Liberals are living in la-la land, as the member said. The Liberals are telling Canadians that they are going to fix all this, that everything is fine, that it is nothing but sunny ways when it comes to this issue.

Does the member not think it is pathetic that the bill does not at all reflect his sincere desire to protect people on the roads and to ensure that there is a set regulatory framework in place? The government is going to flounder around at the expense of Canadians, municipalities, and the provinces, and lives will be lost on our roads.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I shudder to think of the additional cost, responsibility, and challenges this measure would put onto local government. It is, frankly, not fair. Our streets will not be as safe. Our homes will not be as safe. It would create environments within neighbourhoods where there would be tension because people are creating noxious fumes. It would be intolerable to some.

The irony is that we have the government saying this will be good. It says one thing and does another. No matter what the topic is, it says one thing and does another. The Liberals are helping middle-class families, but are raising tax burdens. They are going to make our communities and roads safer, yet they are allowing more impaired drivers. The statistics in Colorado and Washington indicate that our streets will be more dangerous and it will be more expensive for local governments, but the Liberals bring other statistics to argue that point. That is very sad.

We will support this bill going to committee, but I am really saddened by the government's smoke-and-mirrors approach.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we just heard the government say is that it would provide the equipment and training, but did it say it would pay for it? When it comes to municipalities, that is going to be one of the big issues.

Someone who has been in municipal politics knows that 20 years ago it took an RCMP officer an hour, for example, to deal with an alcohol-related incident. It now takes six or seven hours. That means our manpower costs to keep our streets safe would be hugely impacted by either taking our forces out or by additional costs.

I know my colleague has experience with municipal politics. Would he like to speak on that matter?

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, under the former Liberal government, cost-sharing went from one-third, one-third, one-third to nothing from the Liberal government and 50% from the local taxpayer and 50% from the provinces and territories. The Liberals did that because the debt load that was growing under the previous Liberal governments was going so high. Does it sound familiar? A \$30-billion growing deficit is being passed on to our children and grandchildren. As I shared earlier, year after year there were reports from the commissioner. There was lots of smoke and mirrors and lots of confetti, but they just cannot get it done.

It was Stéphane Dion who said, “Why can't we get it done?” They are not getting it done.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there is an issue. We have more young people in Canada using cannabis than in any other country in the western world. What Stephen Harper demonstrated was that he could not get the job done. Now we have something that is advancing the issue of cannabis in a very responsible fashion. Stakeholders from every region of our country are recognizing that.

Do not get me wrong. I appreciate the concerns and the support for sending this legislation to committee. We hope the committee will do its fine work—to improve it if possible, but at least to continue to advance it.

I wonder if the member would not at the very least acknowledge that for the first time in decades we are finally dealing with the issue.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, the proof will be in the pudding. If the government is willing to accept reasonable amendments to Bill C-46 and we end up with something that is reasonable, it would be good for Canada, but I am not optimistic because of the baffle-gab that we hear from the government and the smoke and mirrors that they want a consultation with Canadians.

I sure hope that the government is sincere in what it is saying, but I am not optimistic.

* * *

● (1810)

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Government Business No. 14, I wish to give notice that at the next sitting of the House a Minister of the crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-46, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences relating to conveyances) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-46. Just as clarification for folks watching on

television, this is not the bill to legalize marijuana, but the bill to deal with offences related to the conveyance, and also to deal with offences and procedures related to impaired driving for both cannabis and alcohol.

It is important to note at the outset that the Conservatives support measures that protect Canadians from impaired drivers. Impaired driving has needlessly taken away too many lives far too early. Unfortunately impaired driving remains one of the most frequent criminal offences and it is among the leading criminal causes of death in Canada. The legalization of marijuana must be considered with this reality in mind.

Let me be very clear. I do not support the legalization of marijuana. The Conservative Party has adopted a much more measured, responsible approach to keep minor marijuana possession illegal but to make it a ticketable offence. This is a position that has long been adopted by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. However, if Liberal backbenchers are willing to support the Prime Minister's dangerous proposal, which sadly appears to be the case, we have a moral responsibility to soberly consider the consequences of legalizing marijuana in so many areas of Canadian life, including on the safety of motorists on our roadways.

As I said, we on this side of the House always have supported measures that protect Canadians from impaired drivers. The mandatory fines and higher maximum penalties send a strong message that Canadians will not tolerate impaired driving. Indeed, this is the type of common-sense legislation the Conservatives regularly brought forward when we were in government and the Liberals opposed. I am pleased to see that on this issue the Liberals seem to have come around somewhat, but we also know there are many factors to take into consideration other than just penalties, and those concerns must also be addressed.

For one thing, the Liberal government has indicated that it plans to rush both Bill C-45, the legalization of marijuana, and Bill C-46, this legislation, through Parliament by July 2018. This is a hurried and unrealistic legislative timeline that puts the health and safety of Canadians at great risk, given the immensity of the task and the volume of the questions that have been left unanswered. One such challenge lies with law enforcement.

While I certainly have confidence in our law enforcement officers, as is to be expected with such radical change, police do not currently have the resources or the training required to manage the increased threat of impaired driving associated with the legalization of marijuana. Moving forward with this legislation prior to properly resourcing and training police in a classic “cart before the horse” scenario but with profoundly dangerous and deadly consequences is reckless.

Government Orders

The chair of the Liberals' marijuana task force has said that the best solution for the issue of impaired driving is to give researchers additional time to develop proper detection tools, yet time is something the Liberals seem unwilling to give. Addressing these issues must be a priority of the Liberal government long before legalization, and adequate time is needed to get it right.

The marijuana task force report highlights a number of the complications that exist when it comes to cannabis-impaired driving. "It is clear that cannabis impairs psychomotor skills and judgment", it reads, before launching into a list of considerations when it comes into actual testing for impairment.

Here are several of the points raised.

While scientists agree that THC, or the tetrahydrocannabinol, impairs driving performance, the level of THC in bodily fluids cannot be used to reliably indicate the degree of impairment or crash risk. Whereas evidence was gathered over many years to arrive at an established metric for alcohol intoxication, the blood alcohol concentration levels, these types of data do not exist for cannabis. In contrast to alcohol, THC can remain in the brain and body of chronic heavy users of cannabis for prolonged periods of time, sometimes several days or even weeks, far beyond the period of acute impairment, potentially contributing to a level of chronic impairment. Some heavy, regular users of cannabis, including those who use cannabis for medical purposes, may not show any obvious signs of impairment even with significant THC concentrations in their blood. Conversely, infrequent users with the same or lower THC concentrations may demonstrate more significant impairment. There is a significant combination effect when cannabis is consumed with alcohol, leading to a greater level of intoxication and motor control problems than when either substance is consumed individually.

• (1815)

Other challenges exist, including the need to account for the rapid and sharp decline of THC levels in the blood in the hours following consumption through smoking. With edibles, the decline is more gradual. When these complications are coupled with the fact that there is still really no reliable testing device for marijuana impairment, it becomes clear that the July 2018 timeline is pushing the limit. Even with an effective testing device, the task force report noted that there was little agreement among experts on what the limit for THC should be.

With this bill, there are more questions than answers. This does not mean that we cannot find answers; it just means that we need more time to research. The report suggested additional research in these areas: to better link the THC levels impairment; to develop effective and reliable roadside testing tools to detect THC levels and help law enforcement enforce the rules that are put in place; and to hire and train more drug recognition experts and officers able to conduct standardized field sobriety tests.

Second, as the minister of youth, the Prime Minister should understand that adolescence is a critical time for brain development. Research shows that the brain is not fully developed until around age 25, so youth are especially vulnerable to the effects of cannabis on brain development and function. This is because the THC in

cannabis affects the biological system in the brain that directs its development.

Health Canada has noted several negative effects of using cannabis, including how:

The THC in cannabis can impair your ability to drive safely and operate equipment. It can also increase the risk of falls and other accidents.

This is because THC can affect one's coordination, reaction time, ability to pay attention, decision-making abilities, and the ability to judge distances.

Health Canada also says:

Impairment can last for more than 24 hours after cannabis use, well after other effects may have faded. People who use cannabis regularly may have trouble with certain skills needed to drive safely for weeks after their last use.

The consequences for driving are obvious and the potential harm this can cause to young Canadians is alarming. Taking the time we need to consider the long-term impact on young Canadians is so much more important than a self-imposed deadline.

Third, public education plays a significant role in ensuring that Canadians do not get behind the wheel when they are impaired. However, we know that even the most effective public education campaign does not achieve success over night. The Liberals have yet to take proper steps to develop effective educational campaigns to deter Canadians from impaired driving. Without a doubt, the government must ensure that Canadians fully understand the risks of impaired driving before moving forward with legislation.

When the Prime Minister expressed his intention to push these new laws through Parliament by July of next year, his main concern was not with the safety of motorists on our roads, but instead about the symbolic optics for him and his party. This should not be the focus of the Liberal government with so much at stake for public health and safety.

While doing some reading on this issue, I came across several articles that I thought would be helpful contributions to this discussion.

In a 2015 *Globe and Mail* article, data was presented detailing how four emergency rooms in British Columbia surveyed 1,097 drivers and found that cannabis was the most common recreational drug, after alcohol, used among injured drivers; 7.3% were found to have consumed marijuana in the hours preceding their crashes; and 12.6% still showed traces of the drug from earlier use.

Another article shared on the Mothers Against Drunk Driving website, originally in the December 9, 2015, edition of *The Province*, tells the story of a constable from the Abbotsford police reviewing the report from a Saturday night's roadside counter attack effort aimed at combatting impaired driving. This overnight report included four driving suspensions for drivers impaired by marijuana while there were no mentions of drivers impaired by alcohol. The constable even shared about what he called "a 'Cheech & Chong' scenario, where the windows come down and the billowing smoke comes out of the car."

Government Orders

● (1820)

In the article, Andrew Murie, CEO of MADD, stated, “There’s this impression out there by young people, especially, that they’re safer (driving) stoned than drunk...If you’re high on pot, your skills to drive a motor vehicle are deteriorated and you’re at risk of being in a crash.”

It is precisely this sort of myth that must be tackled before marijuana becomes not only more accessible to Canadians, including young people, but more acceptable in a recreational context. It must also be considered in the legislation. Time is what is required, time to study this, time to hear from the experts and get the proper research and data we need. I urge the Liberals to take the appropriate amount of time to engage with Canadians in a public education campaign and to abandon their reckless rush on this legislation.

Numerous voices have sent these same messages to the Liberals. In fact, their own marijuana task force recommended extensive marijuana and impaired driving education and awareness campaigns before the drug's legalization, noting in its report, “Public opinion research shows that youth and some adults do not understand the risks of cannabis use.” Worse yet, youth underestimate the risks of cannabis use.

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health points out that cannabis affects a person's ability to drive by impairing depth perception, attention span, and concentration, slowing reaction time, decreasing muscle strength, and hand steadiness. Do Canadians, and Canadian youth in particular, know these essential facts? The Canadian Automobile Association concurs on the need for public education and adds “It’s clear from the report that work needs to start immediately in these areas, and that the actual legalization should not be rushed.”

In the states of Washington and Colorado, public education campaigns did not begin until two years after legalization. The task force report noted, “Officials from both states strongly advised starting educational campaigns as soon as possible.”

As a *Globe and Mail* article highlights, both states have “seen significant increases in the proportion of fatal accidents involving drivers who tested positive for the drug.” It goes on to say, “the percentage of those accidents in which the drivers tested positive for marijuana increased considerably.”

Colorado saw about 10% of drivers involved in fatal accidents test positive for the drug in 2010. In 2014, a year after recreational marijuana sales were legalized, that percentage nearly doubled. A similar doubling occurred in Washington in the same period from about 6% to 12%. Without a proper public education campaign, this legislation will lead to the same tragic mistakes seen in these two jurisdictions.

The task force also identified a need for immediate investment and to work with the provinces and territories to develop a national, comprehensive public education strategy to send a clear message to Canadians that cannabis caused impairment and the best way to avoid driving impaired was not to consume. The strategy is also to inform Canadians about the dangers of cannabis-impaired driving, with special emphasis on youth and the applicable laws and the ability of law enforcement to detect cannabis use.

Much can be learned from the way public education has changed the way Canadians look at drinking and driving. Although we still have far too many tragic incidents, there is a better understanding of the consequences of alcohol-impaired driving today than there has been historically.

● (1825)

If legalization proceeds without taking into account the lessons learned from drunk driving prevention education, including the amount of time it took for public education campaigns to yield meaningful results, it will be a fatal mistake.

I want to reiterate that I have many serious concerns about the legalization of marijuana. If the Liberals are going to move forward with this legislation, it is incumbent upon all of us to lay the proper groundwork for the protection of the Canadian motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians who share our roads.

We must also ensure that young people understand the risks inherent in marijuana usage so that we can avoid needless loss of life based on myths that suggest that marijuana causes somewhat less impairment than alcohol. These assertions must be countered with the truth for the safety of everyone. The Liberals must abandon their politically motivated, rushed timeline to allow more time to prepare for the consequences of marijuana legalization and to ensure that Canadians are protected from impaired drivers.

This legislation is being rushed to committee. It is being rushed through the House. The debate has been curtailed. As Conservatives, the right thing to do is to support it, because we know that the Liberals are going to push it through anyway. We need to get it to committee. We need to study it thoroughly. We need to bring in expert testimony. We need to consider the effects cannabis could have on our youth. We need to consider whether the age limit is correct as is currently prescribed in the legislation.

The medical community has indicated very clearly that the brain is developing until the age of 25 and that the early use of marijuana does irreparable damage to the brain. The medical community strongly suggests that we not legalize marijuana prior to the age of 21, yet the Liberal government has recklessly proceeded with legislation that would legalize it at the age of 18.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Liberals have said that they want to keep marijuana out of the hands of children and youth. I would suggest that it currently is not as abundantly found in homes as it would be once this legislation was passed. People would be allowed to have four mature marijuana plants up to 100 centimetres. I do not know if that is 100 centimetres in height or length or what, but if it is actually 100 centimetres in height, they would start growing horizontally, and that would create other problems. We know that four mature marijuana plants also means that there would be non-mature marijuana plants growing in the same household that would reach maturity at different stages. As we heard in earlier testimony, that could mean upwards of 12 marijuana plants per household in Canada. Law enforcement would not make a huge effort to ensure that those limits were maintained. That is going to be problematic.

The good thing is that the Liberals are being somewhat proactive with Bill C-46 by at least trying to address the concerns with respect to impaired driving from both cannabis and alcohol.

Something that has not been mentioned, at least I have not heard it mentioned, is what the impact will be on employers. I own a construction company that deals with heavy equipment. What burden will this place on employers to properly test that their employees are not coming to work stoned and under the influence of marijuana? When I am looking at machines that operate 150,000 to 200,000 pounds of payload, and I have a guy operating that equipment who is under the influence of cannabis that I cannot properly detect, that is going to put not only him but many others at grave risk.

There are lots of things in this legislation that need to be carefully examined. I am hopeful that the Liberals will allow for proper time at committee to examine this legislation carefully and to bring in expert testimony. Contrary to what I have seen at committee in the past, I am hopeful that the Liberals will allow for meaningful amendments to be considered and passed.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: This being the usual end of time allowed for government orders, I will let the hon. member for Provencher know that he will have 10 minutes remaining in the time provided for questions and comments when the House next returns to business on the motion.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this past February, we learned of a veteran who was evicted from her home because of delays in receiving her pension. After suffering through a botched surgery, this veteran was medically discharged because she failed a physical fitness test by nine seconds. Despite 27 years of service, and six tours of duty, she was denied a civil service job upon discharge. The needs of this veteran, a single mother and

two-time survivor of cancer, could not even be acknowledged with the promise of financial security.

In November 2016, she was evicted from her home outside Ottawa. Just before Christmas, she finally received her pension, five months after her medically mandated release.

Her story is not unique. In fact, the transition process to civilian life has long been a concern. The Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, the current and former chiefs of the defence Staff, the Auditor General of Canada, and the National Defence ombudsman have all raised concerns about the transition process.

Recently, the defence ombudsman issued a report to the Minister of National Defence outlining the convoluted transition process and offering recommendations to remedy the issues plaguing medically released veterans.

Each year about 5,500 uniformed Canadians transition to civilian life. Of those, about 1,500 are discharged due to illness or injury. The process these ill or injured members go through to receive benefits is extremely complicated. Members must independently prove to VAC that their injuries can be attributed to their service, despite the fact that the Canadian Armed Forces has all necessary records available. This puts an extra burden on former CAF members. It forces them to tell their stories again and again, preventing them from moving on from traumatic experiences.

Additionally, the information systems of Veterans Affairs Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces, and service income security are not integrated. Veterans are left to navigate pages and pages of paperwork on their own, filling out up to 21 separate applications to receive the necessary benefits. Finally, veterans are typically discharged well before their benefits are confirmed and distributed. This is what caused the eviction of a young woman who had faithfully served her country.

The benefits decision process can take up to 16 weeks, not including the time VAC takes to obtain records from CAF or the time members take to obtain and submit their own records. This means that at the very least, medically discharged veterans are left with four months of financial uncertainty.

Adjournment Proceedings

The recommendations suggested by the DND ombudsman would remedy these problems. The first and most important recommendation is to retain medically releasing members until all benefits and services are in place. The second is to establish a concierge service to serve as a focal point to assist members and their families with administrative matters regarding that transition. The final recommendation is to phase in a web portal to integrate the VAC, CAF, and service income security. This would allow members to input relevant information only once and would help them automatically apply for all services and benefits consistent with their needs.

Talk of creating a seamless transition process has been circulating for more than 13 years. The ombudsman has released clear and objective recommendations. It makes sense to honour these recommendations. We have a sacred obligation to provide care for our veterans.

When will the minister acknowledge and act upon these recommendations to ensure that medically discharged veterans receive their benefits in a timely and unobstructed manner?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her work and advocacy on behalf of Canadian veterans. I had the great pleasure of sitting on the committee with her prior to my nomination.

We all can agree that the country owes a great deal to all men and women who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. As the member opposite knows, due to federal privacy laws I cannot comment on individual cases. However, I can say that this government is committed to ensuring that Canadian veterans, and the families that support them, receive all the benefits, services, and support they require and deserve, including the Canadian Forces pension and superannuation.

I can assure this House that when a specific case is raised, the Department of Veterans Affairs makes every effort to address the underlying issues and to find ways to improve the outcome for the veteran.

Both Veterans Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence recognize that there can be gaps, which is why the Minister of Veterans Affairs was also named the Associate Minister of National Defence. The two ministers and the departments are working closely together to reduce the complexity of the programs and processes, to overhaul the delivery of services, and to strengthen the partnership between Veterans Affairs Canada and National Defence for the benefit of veterans. We want veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces to have harmonized services, clear guidance, and an understanding of what is available; timely access to benefits and services; and coordinated case management between both departments during a member's transition. The goal is to help transitioning members become re-established and to help them through this process with the dignity, respect, and support they so fully deserve, however long it may take.

In budget 2016, we delivered \$5.6 billion for veterans. By making changes and improvements to the disability award, the earnings loss benefit, and the permanent impairment allowance, we are recogniz-

ing the sacrifices made by veterans and ensuring their financial security.

Budget 2017 focused on veterans and their families. We are closing a number of current gaps in the system, restoring critical access to services, and improving the long-term financial security and independence of ill and injured veterans in a fair and equitable way.

Considerable work has already been completed to date to simplify the transition from service in the Canadian Armed Forces to civilian life. The departments are committed to ensuring that the transition is as streamlined as possible. We call it "closing the seam" between National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada.

The minister and I recognize that there is more to be done, and we are working diligently to fulfill the goal of a seamless transition. Moving forward, we remain committed to fulfilling the minister's mandate and to improving the health and well-being of veterans and their families.

As always, I encourage any veteran, or the family of a serving member, who has an issue or a question to reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada. I would say the same to any member of this place who may be aware of an issue affecting a veteran or his or her family. Together we can make things better for members of our Canadian Armed Forces and the veterans and the families that support them.

● (1835)

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the threat of financial uncertainty imposed upon medically discharged veterans is unconscionable. We were handed a guide to help us work towards a solution. This is a tremendous opportunity for positive action. Why will the minister not act on these recommendations and protect the sacred obligation we have to aid veterans as they transition back into civilian life?

I heard a promise to return to pre-new-veterans-charter pensions. When will this happen? It needs to happen now. Financial security is key to looking after our veterans and their families, as we have promised.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the current system can be complex and difficult to navigate, which can add additional stress. Veteran Affairs Canada has many initiatives under way to improve the services veterans and their families receive and to make them more veteran-centric. This work includes reviewing and updating policies, processes, and tools to improve the veteran's experience and reduce complexity.

Adjournment Proceedings

In addition, VAC is committed to a review of the financial benefits offered to veterans to determine how best to meet the needs of veterans and their families and to ensure that they have access to the right programs and services at the right time, where and when needed. That is why we re-opened all nine centres for veterans.

Our goal is to ease that transition process and to ensure the health, well-being, and financial security of veterans as they move into a new phase of their lives.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to follow up on a question I asked about problems at the Translation Bureau.

In early 2016, the Translation Bureau made headlines because it was in a shambles and its interpreters and translators were under intense pressure. The Standing Committee on Official Languages did a study to get to the bottom of things. A report about the Translation Bureau was tabled, and then came a second report, and that is what prompted me to ask the question.

We put so much pressure on the government that we got a response from the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to our first report on the Translation Bureau, but all of the members, not just me, disagreed with the government's response. Even the committee's Liberal members disagreed.

After even more pressure was brought to bear on the government, we received a second response that offered us a little more substance and information. That is why I asked the following question. The Translation Bureau does extremely valuable work to promote our two official languages, but over 400 positions have been eliminated over the past four years and there are plans to cut 140 more this year and next year. Morale is therefore very low at the Translation Bureau. Things have started to get a little better, but there are still problems.

On February 9, 2017, I asked the Minister of Public Services and Procurement whether she thought that the 19 employees who had been hired would be able to replace the 540 employees who would be leaving.

We are told that everything is fine and there is going to be investment in the Translation Bureau again, but there will be only 19 employees to do the work of the 540 employees who have left through attrition. This makes no sense. That is not going to move things forward. This is why I asked this question in February. In fact, of course, the answer was vague.

The Translation Bureau was an institution of renown on the international stage. People from all over the world were inspired by it and came here to train. Unfortunately, for several years now, the Translation Bureau has lost that reputation, first under Stephen Harper's Conservatives, and now under Liberal rule.

The second response from the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is much more encouraging. There seems to be a desire to get back to quality, instead of constantly lowering the quality of

services and looking for the lowest bidder. However, the Canadian public still needs a lot more answers.

First, we want to know whether the government is going to reinvest in the Translation Bureau, which needs not just 17 new employees, but maybe a hundred or so.

Second, will the focus be on quality and not on seeking the lowest bidder? This is extremely important. It is one of the two questions I would like my hon. colleague to answer.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Drummond for his speech and his contribution, which were very constructive.

In fact, he has identified a large part of the problem. As in the case of the Phoenix payroll system, we inherited a very unfortunate situation, a mess, if you will, from the previous government. It seemed that the objective on the other side was to tear down the major institutions of government. Fortunately, as I will explain, we have plans for rebuilding in all these cases.

We are obviously proud to be the party of official bilingualism. We will continue to promote, support, and protect bilingualism in Canada. We are determined to put an end to the previous government's era of cuts and to reinvest in our capacity to offer high-quality translation and interpretation services. This is a good time to thank the interpreters who follow us every day, who are here for us every day, and who do world-class work.

Our government is taking steps to ensure that the Translation Bureau is able, now and in future, to provide high-quality linguistic services. What we are doing is restoring the Translation Bureau's reputation. As an officially bilingual country with one of the largest francophone populations in the world, Canada is a global leader that must uphold the most stringent standards when it comes to terminology, translation, and interpretation. The Translation Bureau is a core contributor to these rigorous standards, and it has a solid reputation for excellence throughout the government of Canada and at the international level.

The services provided by the bureau have been the subject of a study by the Standing Committee on Official Languages, as my hon. colleague mentioned. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement appeared before the committee on February 9 to outline the measures that she and our department have taken to strengthen the bureau's capabilities. The work to revitalize the organization of the Translation Bureau and act on the minister's commitments is well under way. I am proud to report on it.

A new chief executive officer was recently appointed to lead the Translation Bureau. The position was filled not long ago, on May 23, 2017, following a rigorous competition. The bureau has developed a quality assurance framework that includes a quality control system, a rigorous process to recruit world-class employees and freelancers, and world-class training programs for its linguistic experts.

Business of Supply

To further guarantee the quality of its linguistic services, the bureau has created a new position, namely, chief quality officer, and it is also hiring new employees to provide federal departments with access to high-quality linguistic services. Twelve new translators are now providing linguistic services in specific areas, such as parliamentary proceedings, national protection, and meteorology. Seven new interpreters have also been added to bureau staff. I want to underscore that the association of translators and interpreters has expressed its satisfaction not only with the commitments we have made but also with the measures taken in the past budget presented by the Minister of Finance.

In addition, the bureau will hire a minimum of 50 students per year in each of the next five years and is also restoring a co-op program. Many Canadian universities, including the University of Montreal, the University of Ottawa, and my alma mater, the University of Moncton, are participating.

Our government also allocated more funding to the Translation Bureau in budget 2017, as I said. The government proposed to invest \$7.5 million per year ongoing, beginning in 2017-18. With these new initiatives in place, the Translation Bureau is embarking on a new era. It is an exciting time for everyone at the bureau, who deserve greater recognition for the excellent work they do.

● (1845)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that a good step in the right direction has been taken. However, there are still some grey areas that I would like to have clarified. For example, will the \$7.5 million be used to hire translators and interpreters on a permanent basis rather than just on contract? That is what we want to know. Right now, we do not know whether the 25 new jobs per year will be permanent or contract positions. That is a problem.

What is more, we need to ensure that we have a system in which the quality will be certified or, in other words, we need a system that establishes one all-inclusive rate for each of the streams, regardless of the mode of interpretation. If that is not the case, interpreters who are more versatile, specialized, and experienced will lose out. It is extremely important that we not go with the lowest bidder or we will end up in the same mess we were in before. We need to know exactly what investments will be made regarding employees. Will there be 25 new contract or permanent employees? That is what I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell me.

● (1850)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague once again. As he knows, the budget indicated that an additional \$7.5 million would be allocated in addition to the measures, policies, and statements of intent provided by the department. I am very proud of that. When I was appointed parliamentary secretary, I was proud to participate in those deliberations. This is a vote of confidence in the work of the Translation Bureau, to help restore it to its former glory.

With regard to hiring, we are going to leave that up to management, but I think that we have made our hopes and vision known and set out clear policies to help restore the Translation Bureau to its former glory. The measures that we are taking will improve the bureau's capacity and allow it to continue to provide

high-quality language services, as it has been doing for over 80 years.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering all votes under National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

NATIONAL DEFENCE—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2017-18

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under National Defence in the main estimates, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

The Chair: We will proceed with the House in committee of the whole on all votes under Department of National Defence in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

I am going to start with a brief preamble for tonight's committee of the whole. Tonight's debate is a general one on the votes under the Department of National Defence. The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government, and then the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

[Translation]

Each member will be allocated 15 minutes at a time, which may be used for both debate or for posing questions. Members wishing to use this time to make a speech have a maximum of 10 minutes, which leaves at least 5 minutes for questions to the minister.

When a member is recognized, he or she should indicate to the Chair how the 15-minute period will be used, in other words, how much time will be spent on the speech and how much time will be used for questions and answers. Members should also note that they will need the unanimous consent of the committee to split their time with another member. When the time is to be used for questions and comments, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question, as that time counts toward the time allocated to the party.

Business of Supply

•(1855)

[English]

I also wish to indicate that, in committee of the whole, comments should be addressed to the Chair. I will ask members to recognize this issue because in committee of the whole the chair occupant does not have the occasion of being on the *fauteuil* behind me. Otherwise, we would normally stand up to terminate the member's time. It will be difficult for members to see when their time is up, so I would ask members to direct their attention to the Chair when they are posing questions and responding. In this way, it is easier for me to indicate when their time is up. Normally, when a member's time is coming close, I will give a time indication and give the member a few seconds to wrap up. After that, the member's microphone will be cut off, and we will go back to the other question or response, as the case may be.

I ask for everyone's co-operation in upholding all the established standards of decorum, parliamentary language, and behaviour.

We will now begin tonight's session.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Chair, we are looking forward to tonight's committee of the whole as we raise a number of questions and issues surrounding the defence budget and where the government is taking our Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence.

I want to also welcome the support the minister has here tonight, with the deputy minister, the vice-chief of the defence staff, and those in ADM positions. I thank them for supporting the minister tonight and for the work they do in supporting our men and women in uniform.

This has been a rough session for the minister. He has misled Canadians on a number of occasions now. There was the issue of danger pay on Operation Impact for everybody who was stationed in Kuwait. It took our efforts as the opposition to bring to light that some members in the fight against ISIS were being treated unfairly. The government instead doubled down and then embarrassed itself and ultimately had to correct the problem.

We also know the capability gap surrounding our CF-18s is an imaginary one. We are going to dive into that more completely.

We also want to talk about the continued stand-down by the government in pulling resources out of Iraq and Kuwait that were in support of our troops who are fighting ISIS and in support of our allies, and of course about how the minister has misled the House in saying our allies were happy when we pulled our CF-18s out of the fight.

We also have that situation again, with the government pulling our Auroras out of the fight against ISIS and leaving the heavy lifting to our NATO allies, who have had to move in AWACs.

We have the famous architect issue. That report came up over Operation Medusa, and the minister has apologized for it.

This budget is nothing to celebrate either. There have been \$12 billion in cuts made in two consecutive budgets by the government. The finance minister has said that the Department of National Defence is appropriately provisioned, but the minister himself has

said that there need to be significant investments going forward in the DPR.

The budget cuts that we are seeing right now are decreasing the amount of training that our troops can do and the amount that they can do in maintaining readiness to do the jobs that we call upon them to do.

I am going to first talk about the defence policy review. It is being rolled out, but it is much delayed. Originally the minister said that we would have the defence policy review in front of us by the end of last year; here we are, six months down the road, and we still have not seen it. The government has said that it will be released on June 8, and we are going to be looking at it.

I want to dive into that a bit, because we have already seen a number of shell games going on with the budget. In the cuts in this budget, the government has taken \$8.5 billion and punted it down the road for up to 20 years. We were able to find in the budget that there was some re-profiling, as the minister likes to call it, or stuff that lines up better with our fiscal framework, but there is still \$5.6 billion of shifted funds that are not accounted for, and we need to find out where those funds are going. We know there is some deferred spending coming from LAV modernization and some funding for the fixed-wing search and rescue planes that was moved down to better fit when the planes are being delivered, but we want to know if the shell games are going to continue.

We want to know whether or not there is going to be adequate funding in the budget to support the defence policy review or if the minister is going to defer all of that funding until after the next election. One thing of which the defence minister is the architect is the defence policy review, but can he guarantee us that the funding is going to be there, or is it going to be, as Dave Perry said, underfunded and under-ambitious?

•(1900)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have stated many times that our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces require predictable and sustainable funding. That is exactly what our government has promised them and that is exactly what we are going to provide. We have increased the escalator by 1%. Now it is at 3%, a half-billion-dollar increase in the budget.

With respect to the defence policy review, we are making sure we do a very thorough consultation to make sure that we have a good understanding of the current state of the Canadian Armed Forces.

I have been very honest with Canadians that we are starting in a hole. We are going to make sure that we create a long-term plan that will provide predictable and sustainable funding. We have promised this as a government. Our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces deserve it, and that is exactly what we are going to deliver.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, there is no commitment there and there is no investment. Our troops need the equipment and they need the investment in training. They need the investment to make sure that we continue to increase the number of men and women who are serving our nation, and it does not sound as though there is a plan there.

Business of Supply

I am going to switch gears a bit and go over to the Super Hornets. We know that the minister has this imaginary capability gap. We heard testimony at committee and we have heard from other sources, including General Hood, commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, who said at committee that there was no capability gap. We know that a Defence Research and Development Canada study showed that going to an interim measure would be more costly and more expensive and would reduce our capabilities. We have had 13 former commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force who have said that buying the Super Hornet on a sole-source deal as an interim measure would be detrimental to the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The minister has claimed that there is this capability gap, yet his colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, through the trade fight that we have with the United States now, said in her statement of May 18 that “Canada is reviewing current military procurement that relates to Boeing.”

If there is a capability gap, why is the government prepared to walk away from the Super Hornet buy, and what other options has the minister looked at, other than just buying the Super Hornet?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government committed to making sure our men and women in the Canadian Forces have all the right tools. Our CF-18s are aging. They should have been replaced a long time ago. Our government committed to replacing them. We have taken a number of measures, which I have announced, in terms of steps we will be taking, which includes investment into the legacy fleet to make sure that our current fleet can last longer and making sure that we have enough pilots to be able to live up to those commitments.

However, we are going to be replacing the entire fleet through a full competition. That is exactly what the member opposite was asking, and that is exactly what we are doing.

We also have our NORAD and NATO commitments, and currently we cannot meet those simultaneously. That is a fact. Our government wants to ensure that we make the investments into the equipment and make sure that we are not risk-managing our commitments. That is the plan that we are putting forward. We are making sure that we spend on our Canadian Armed Forces so they have all the necessary equipment to carry out our obligations.

• (1905)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, the commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force has said that if we started a competition right now and made a decision and purchased a new plane within five years, there would be no problem in making sure our current fleet of CF-18s, with the life-extension project under way, would be able to fly until 2025, when the new planes would come in, but the plan that the minister has rolled out would actually take our current fleet of CF-18s beyond 2025, and that would actually make it more dangerous for our pilots and give us a less capable air force overall.

I know that the minister has to be aware of this. The commander of the air force actually said just a year ago that he is confident that the decision was taken that I have already talked about. The Agreement on Internal Trade says, in paragraph 506.11(a), that it allows the use of alternative procurement procedures only when an unforeseeable situation of urgency exists. If the commander believes that if the decision can be made in five years and there is no urgency,

does the minister really believe what he is proposing in bringing forward the sole-source purchase, when there is not a capability gap? When the government is prepared to trade away the purchase of the Super Hornets because of the trade war that is going on with Boeing and Bombardier, will the minister admit that he is actually in violation of paragraph 506.11(a)?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our aging CF-18s need to be replaced. Even if we have the competition, that can take up to five years, and the transition of the fleet takes much longer.

We have done the studies in terms of the investments that are needed into the legacy fleet and we are investing into that, but there is no guarantee that the airplanes can actually last that long. What we require is to make sure we have the right equipment to be able to do this transition. This is one of the reasons that if we cannot currently live up to our obligations to NORAD and NATO commitments and we have absolutely no guarantee moving forward—yes, I have confidence we can move forward, but that is not a guarantee—we have to make sure that we have the necessary equipment. We cannot continue to risk-manage our commitments. We owe this to the Canadian Armed Forces.

We are going to be replacing the permanent fleet through a full competition and we are going to be making additional investment into our air force—which, to me, is a good thing—to make sure that we have all the necessary aircraft for our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Chair: Based on the pattern we are using, we have time for probably two more questions and responses.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I appreciate the time warning.

Again, annex 3.1 on Treasury Board questions for sole source states that contracting officers may allow for major procurements to occur without competition only when it is fair and reasonable, given all other options.

Again I ask the minister, what other options were explored? When we look at other countries, we see they have been able to make decisions quickly. We know that all the homework has already been done on finding a replacement for our CF-18s. The surveys have been done of aircraft manufacturers. The former Conservative government did them and the current Liberal government has done them.

We know that Denmark selected its planes in 11 months. Norway's took one year and 11 months. South Korea did its selection in one year and four months. It has been a year since the minister made the decision and made the announcement that we are sole-sourcing Super Hornets, yet we still have not signed a contract for them, as was confirmed by the deputy minister when he was at committee just a couple of weeks ago. What other options were explored, or is this being done strictly for political reasons so that the government does not have to buy an F-35, because that is what it told Canadians in the last election?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to investing in our fighters, we are making sure that we have done our due diligence. We have looked at many different options. We have looked at our current contingency. To do the full replacement, which we are committed to do with a full competition, we are investing in the legacy fleet, but we cannot guarantee that we are going to have the current aircraft. Yes, there were options for buying old ones. No, we do not want to buy used equipment; we want to invest in new planes.

When we say we want to make sure we have the right equipment for our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces, we are very serious about it. We are taking this commitment seriously, and I look forward to announcing defence policy on June 7, as well as the long-term commitments for the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1910)

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Chair, I want to switch gears a little. In this final question I want to talk about Operation Impact.

As we know, the government has put more trainers on the ground, put more of our troops and more boots on the ground, and put them in danger when it took away our CF-18s that provided air support and offloaded that responsibility to our allies. Now the Liberals have pulled the Aurora aircraft out. We are also coming up on the deadline of Operation Impact. Its deadline is June 30. We have not heard anything from the government on whether or not it is going to be extending the mission so that we can continue to fight radical jihadi terrorism.

Is the minister going to extend the mission or is he going to be the architect of the retreat of Canada from the fight against ISIS?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I understand the member's desire to defeat Daesh. We all hope to see that, as they committed absolute atrocities and we are committed to the fight, as we stated. This is going to require making sure that we train Iraqi security forces, because this is how the problem came to be in the first place, when the Iraqi security forces were not able to hold the ground.

The coalition required additional training. That is why we tripled our trainers. We put the intelligence in so the coalition has the right information to be able to target as well. We actually added helicopters to make sure that our troops had the flexibility to be able to respond.

When it comes to the Aurora aircraft, we have two. On the advice of the military, we had to pull one out for operational reasons, and there is one that continues. We made this announcement to make sure there is no impact, and we are going to continue. I look forward to announcing the revised mission that is going to go into the future.

The Chair: We will now resume debate and go to the hon. Minister of National Defence. This is a bit of an unusual spot, because the minister is given 15 minutes for his time, but of course he cannot use the five minutes of questions to pose questions to himself. Therefore, other parliamentary secretaries will be able, in this particular case, to pose questions to the minister during the five minutes for questions to the minister at that time.

The hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for last year, the first time I was in

committee of the whole. I want to begin my remarks tonight by thanking all members opposite for choosing committee of the whole to learn more about my file and spend more time in the House on a very important topic. As I have always stated that I think all parliamentarians want to ensure our Canadian Armed Forces are looked after.

I am grateful for this opportunity once again, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about the incredible work done by members of the Canadian Armed Forces and national defence. It allows me to take stock on the progress we have made in the past 18 months, as measured against my mandate letter, and gives me the chance to engage with my fellow parliamentarians.

As I have stated in the House, my job as minister is to serve the men and women in uniform, who proudly serve our country. It is a privilege to have been given this responsibility. I welcome the chance to present these estimates and to answer questions as well.

To that end, I will be requesting total funding in the main estimates of \$18.66 billion for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, as well as just under \$596 million for the Communications Security Establishment. As directed in my mandate letter, this will maintain current funding levels and planned increases. I will also be commenting on a few differences in the estimates that were presented last year.

First, operating expenditures for DND have gone up by \$436.5 million. This is mainly due to a change to the defence escalator, which increased from 2% to 3% beginning this fiscal year.

Second, capital expenditures are down by \$293.2 million. This is a result of the normal variance in large projects, such as the Arctic patrol vessel and the *Halifax*-class modernization. As announced in this year's budget, some capital funding has been re-profiled into future years. We have protected these funds to ensure they are available to meet the schedule of major projects, such as the fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. We will seek additional funding in supplementary estimates to support our international missions. This is sound and prudent management.

The estimates we are discussing here today provide the funding that is needed to support every aspect of the defence team's mission. This includes shielding Canadians from harm at home. One of the priorities identified in my mandate letter from the Prime Minister 18 months ago was disaster relief. We have seen many examples of this in just the past few months, whether it was dealing with the flooding in Mud Lake, Newfoundland, or across Quebec and Ontario or helping the people in New Brunswick deal with the effects of the devastating ice storm. When the women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces have been called upon, they have delivered.

Business of Supply

Beyond our shores, this year's funding is required to train, prepare, and support the more than 1,400 members of our Canadian Armed Forces currently deployed on 14 overseas missions, contributing to international peace and security. As the Minister of Finance and I announced two weeks ago, Canadian Armed Forces members deployed on all of these missions will now receive income tax relief. This includes the refocused mission in Iraq and our continuing fight against Daesh. The coalition is maintaining its movement and Daesh has lost more than half the territory it once held. It includes the missions supporting our commitment to NATO, which was another priority in my mandate letter. We are demonstrating our commitment, solidarity, and resolve to our allies.

The Canadian Armed Forces' upcoming deployment in Latvia is a prime example of this commitment. There we will lead a battle group composed of soldiers from six allied nations. This includes our own troops, which will be deploying in June. Together, with our existing air and maritime task forces, this represents the Canadian military's most significant activity in Europe since the Balkan conflict. It is especially important today, on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, to note that we will be making commitments to peace support operations.

I was at the UN last week meeting with allies and doing our due diligence, and I will be pleased to host the United Nations Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial conference later this fall. This ambitious agenda requires our support to help ensure the Canadian Armed Forces have the tools they need to do this important work.

I will continue to work with my cabinet colleagues to improve on defence procurement. We are acquiring and replacing our legacy fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. We will continue to invest in our navy. Our Arctic offshore patrol vessels are now under construction and the Canadian shipbuilding strategy continues to progress.

● (1915)

We are committed to investing in the air force, as directed in my mandate letter. We will procure a replacement for the CF-18 fighters, while examining an interim solution to meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously. These funds are also needed for our most important assets, and that is of course our troops.

I am sure all members of the House agree that our women and men in uniform form the core of our national defence, and their families are very important and play a tremendous role in the success of the Canadian Armed Forces.

With the funds provided in these estimates, we will provide better support to our members so they can maintain that degree of excellence that Canadians expect of them. The funding in these main estimates will support that work in the form of several ongoing initiatives to improve the workplace culture of national defence and the well-being of the serving members. The most notably is the military's ongoing efforts to eliminate harmful and inappropriate sexual behaviour through Operation Honour.

All these efforts, brought together, will help create a highly dynamic, skilled, and diverse force that can succeed in the modern security environment. They will also help to ensure support is provided to our Canadian Forces members and to their families, both

when they are in the ranks and when they leave uniformed service. This funding we debate today will support our efforts to close the seams between national defence and veterans affairs.

Both my associate minister and I committed to reducing complexity, overhauling service delivery, and strengthening the partnership between our two departments. That is what we are aiming for, and the funding being debated today will help make that possible.

These main estimates will provide the defence department with the funding it needs to meet the needs of today. We must also ensure that our military is set up for success in the future and that we address the results of the underfunding by successive governments. On June 7, we will demonstrate the government's commitment to the future of the Canadian Armed Forces by announcing the results of our new defence policy. This will provide our armed forces with the funding and support they need to meet the challenges of the future.

● (1920)

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think we all agree that providing support in caring for our men and women in uniform is and should always be a priority. The minister touched briefly on that in his opening remarks.

Our Canadian Armed Forces members are our most important asset, and we greatly value their dedication to our country. Could the minister provide more detail about what the Department of National Defence is doing to support our military personnel?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I said in my earlier remarks, the women and men in uniform who serve their country form the core of our national defence. Military families are the strength behind the uniform. Supporting Canadian Armed Forces members, the veterans, and their loved ones is of the utmost importance to the Department of National Defence.

It is essential that military personnel continue to benefit from the best possible health care. We recognize that more needs to be done, especially early on, for those who are suffering from mental health issues. That is why, on top of the salaries for the armed forces personnel, these estimates will provide more important benefits related to health and mental wellness programs, family resource centres and training opportunities.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, the minister is right in saying that our most important asset is our military personnel, but without the proper equipment, Canadian Armed Forces members will not be able to accomplish their mission. To support them in the tremendous work they accomplish every day, they need the best tools.

Could the minister inform the House about what the Department of National Defence is doing to give our men and women the equipment they need?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to ensuring that the Canadian Armed Forces have the right tools to defend Canada and North America and to contribute to global peace and security with our partners around the world.

We are taking action to make improvements on defence procurement, notably by increasing defence authorities to contract up to \$5 million to allow Public Services and Procurement Canada to focus on higher value, complex procurements.

We are also making significant capital investments in our military, including an open and transparent competition to replace our CF-18s; acquisition of the interim aircraft to supplement our current aging fighter fleet; the acquisition of the new fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft, the first airplane expected in 2019; and recapitalization of the naval fleet through the national shipbuilding strategies.

All of these investments in equipment and infrastructure represent an important contribution toward the government's goal in delivering a more integrated, agile, and better equipped military.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, in his opening remarks, the minister spoke about the numerous activities of the Canadian Armed Forces and determined the work they had been doing at home. I think Canadians want to know more about what our military is doing to protect them.

Could the minister provide more details on the important work the military personnel has been doing on behalf of Canadians?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, Canadians expect that the Canadian Armed Forces are ready and able to defend Canada, protect Canada, defend North America, and continue to contribute to international peace and security when and where the government directs. Defending Canada is, and always will be, the highest priority for the Canadian Armed Forces, whether it is patrolling our air and maritime approaches, assisting in search and rescue operations or responding to natural disasters. Our military is ready to defend Canada and to protect Canadians.

For example, to highlight a few examples, most recently in Quebec, over 2,600 personnel responded to the emergency flooding. In April, the Canadian Rangers responded to emergency flooding in Kashechewan. In January, 200 personnel responded to the ice storms in New Brunswick.

• (1925)

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, in answering my previous question, the minister spoke about domestic operations in which the Canadian Armed Forces were engaged. I would like to ask him about the international operations of the Canadian Armed Forces. Our military has always punched above its weight when it is deployed, and it does great work abroad.

Could the minister provide more details on the important work our military personnel has been doing around the world, working closely with our allies and partners?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government has increased our international obligations. Our government is committed to actively contributing to greater security and peace in the world. The women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces are in many parts of the world, making a significant contribution to global peace and security.

For instance, in Iraq, as I stated earlier, our air force, our special forces, are playing an important role in the global coalition fight to dismantle Daesh. In Ukraine, our land forces are training hundreds of Ukrainian military forces. At sea, our navy is performing interdiction operations in the Caribbean, counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East and in the Indian Ocean, and NATO assurance measures in the Mediterranean as well.

So far we have pledged up to 600 members for deployment on UN peace corps operations as part of a whole-of-government approach. We continue to work closely with our allies, partners, and other multilateral organizations to do our part in meeting today's security challenges.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it was greatly appreciated that the Minister of National Defence came to Winnipeg North, met with members of our Ukrainian heritage community, and shared with them that sense of pride in our Canadian Armed Forces. Maybe the minister would provide some sense of what other types of outreach the minister does in Canada with respect to Canadians as a whole.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as we in the House talk about the important challenges around the world and we talk about the illegal annexation of Crimea and what is happening in Ukraine, we have communities of Ukrainian Canadians, like in Winnipeg, that are deeply concerned about what is happening. It was very important and very heartwarming for me to explain what our great men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces were doing, what our government was trying to do, and what the concerns of all parliamentarians were for that region.

I think that sense of direct engagement brought a sense of peace and an assurance to them so they had a better understanding of what their government was doing in Ukraine.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am going to be doing a brief preamble that is related to some of the questions I am going to ask, but I will primarily be focusing on questions this evening. I thank the minister and his staff from the Canadian Armed Forces for being here this evening, allowing us to perform one of these important accountability functions in Parliament.

Earlier this month we had a non-confidence motion in the minister, which was put forward by the Conservatives. We, in the New Democratic Party, supported that motion because of the conflict of interest problem that we believe the minister still has with regard to his role in Afghanistan and the varying stories that he has told about that role, and that is related to the question of Canada's complicity in torture in Afghanistan in the transfer of detainees. This has become much more important today, as we argued that it would. I am not going to talk about that conflict tonight because we have another complaint from our leader, the member for Outremont, with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, which we hope will be followed up on.

Business of Supply

Why this has become extremely important this week is the fact that the minister, on Friday, March 31, announced the extension of our Canadian mission in Iraq until the end of June. At that time, there was a shift in the Canadian role. Whereas previously we had been advising, assisting, and training only the Iraqi Kurds, we now apparently have taken on a role in advising, assisting, and training Iraqi government forces. What we have just seen in a publication on May 25 are the disturbing photos by Iraqi photojournalist, Ali Arkady, of the allegations of torture, very brutal treatment of prisoners in Iraq by the government forces, including extrajudicial killings. There are actual photographs of killing of prisoners by military forces.

My question for the minister is very much an important question today. What specific measures has the minister taken to ensure that Canada's current role in training and assisting the Iraqi government forces does not make us complicit in the use of torture, which was documented by those pictures published in the *Toronto Star* on May 25?

• (1930)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have not seen the photos, but I have heard the reports and I too am appalled by what I have heard. When it comes to our Canadian Armed Forces, they are well trained in the law of armed conflict, our own laws, international laws, and the Geneva Convention. In all the advising and training the Canadian Armed Forces does there is a component where we actually train and focus on this effort because it is our opportunity to be able to train other forces. We take great pride in this. Our Canadian Armed Forces are obligated to report any type of misbehaviour as well.

With this current case, our Canadian Armed Forces were not involved, and we will always be very vigilant when it comes to this. We want to make sure that we are the leaders. That is one of the reasons our Canadian Armed Forces, whenever we do any type of training, will focus on the law of armed conflict so that the type of work that is needed and the professionalism that our Canadian Armed Forces show is also passed on to the members we are training.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, I am going to ask the minister again. What specific measures do we have in place? If Canadian Armed Forces were to come across instances of torture like this that have been well documented, how do they report those? How do we make those known to the Iraqi government? How do we make sure the Iraqi government does something about it? What do we have in place to make sure that we do not become complicit in the torture that we have seen by the Iraqi forces?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in the work they do in the training I talked about, they are obligated to be able to report. When it comes to the chain of command, there is a very good, structured chain of command within the Canadian Armed Forces on how this system would work. They are obligated to make sure that they document and report this all the way up. In this particular case, Global Affairs Canada has made démarches to the Iraqi government and made representations to the government on this matter.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister to give us the assurance in the House that if Canadian Armed Forces do come across these instances of torture or similar kinds of

instances that we will stop our co-operation with the Iraqi government forces.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, our men and women are obligated to be able to report.

I also want to emphasize that we actually focus on that training to make sure that professionalization is there, to make sure that the law of armed conflict is taught. We will always take this extremely seriously.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, I have to say that I am disappointed with that answer. I was hoping to get a clear commitment since we all know that information derived from torture is not only illegal under international law, but is almost always useless, as people under torture will say exactly what they think people want to hear in order to stop the torture. I am very disappointed that the minister has not given us that assurance.

I want to move on to some other things since we only have a short time this evening with the minister. I actually want to talk directly about the budget. I know the people sitting in front of the minister have huge books full of numbers and I have numbers on my desk. Numbers are difficult to discuss, but the one thing that we have seen in the budget is that the operational budget for the Canadian military peaked in 2012 and began to be cut by the Conservatives.

Where it has not been literally cut, it has been increased by less than the rate of inflation. When it is increased by less than the rate of inflation, obviously something has to give. We cannot keep sustaining the same activities year after year if the funding does not go up with the rate of inflation. The rate of inflation in the military, as we all know, is somewhere between 3% and 4.5%.

In the main estimates and the operational budget for the military this year, the Canadian Armed Forces appear to have received significantly less of an increase than the rate of inflation. How can they continue all the things we are asking them to do on our behalf when they get less money than they need to carry out those tasks?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the budget and the planned increases, our government has maintained the planned increase and this year we increased it by 1% for the operating budget. That is a total of 3%, so the budget has increased by over half a billion dollars for the operating budget.

Also, I think the member opposite knows I made a number of speeches where I talked about the analysis of the defence policy review that we conducted and that even with this increase, we are still definitely on a decline. I am sure the member will be there on June 7 when I have the privilege of being able to announce our defence policies, where we are going to be talking about our plan to be able to fix and fill this hole and create a long-term plan for the Canadian Armed Forces.

• (1935)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, we are also seeing the Canadian Armed Forces right now in a period when we have the largest recapitalization needs we have ever had in the history of the Canadian Forces.

Business of Supply

In particular, I, of course, am concerned as a member who represents a naval riding with the national shipbuilding strategy, which was approved by all parties in the House and which is really going to be the mechanism by which we renew the navy. My concern is that we have had deferrals, or reprofilings, and putting things off into the future, all kinds of terms have been used, first, again, started by the Conservatives and then followed up by the Liberals so that we now have about \$3 billion deferred by the Conservatives, then another \$3 billion deferred by the Liberals, and now another \$8 billion deferred off to the future.

When we are talking about buying equipment, with the rate of inflation in the military of 3% to 4% to 5%, and we are putting off things 10 years down the road, how are we actually going to buy the same amount of equipment we were supposed to buy with this money? We are obviously going to get 40% to 50% less, at minimum, of the same kinds of equipment, the same kinds of ships that we were going to get with the original allocation. Where is the funding to sustain things like the national shipbuilding strategy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I could not agree more and I think all parties agree that the national shipbuilding strategy is very important to Canada. We are committed to this and are going to make sure that the Royal Canadian Navy has all the ships that are necessary. The increase we made of 3% is for the operational budget and I look forward to addressing a lot of these concerns.

I have said many times that we need to be able to look at the full costing when we do procurement and the new defence policy has been rigorously costed and fully funded. We want to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces has the right investments to be able to plan and to provide predictable, sustainable funding so that the military can continually plan into the future.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, the minister has referred several times to the June 7 date for announcing the defence review. I would like to ask him now for a specific commitment that the defence review will be presented in the House, tabled in the House, and that we will be able to hold hearings, either a debate in this general House or at committee, so that all parliamentarians can participate in evaluating what the minister is proposing in the Canadian defence review.

Will it be presented here on June 7, or will it be somewhere else? Will we be able to debate this new defence strategy here in the House?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, all parliamentarians took part in the defence policy review and I thank everybody for their input. I look forward to presenting it to Canadians. We will be presenting how the departmental plan will be conducted as well so that everybody has an opportunity to take part in the debate.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, once again, I am not getting the answer from the minister that I would like. As a parliamentarian who was sent here to represent my constituents, I would like for us to have a chance to have a full debate of that Canadian defence review here in the House, followed by a debate or a reference to the committee, so that hearings could be held in committee on that defence review. Otherwise, it is the Liberal defence review, not the Canadian defence review, if it is not presented in the House.

The other peculiar thing I find with the defence review is that the minister keeps saying that it will be the solution to the funding problems. Therefore, why, in this budget, was there no set-aside for new initiatives under the defence review? If you were really serious that the defence review was going to provide this extra money, where is the set-aside in the budget? Where is the funding in this budget, or do we have to wait for another future budget down the road for any of these new initiatives from the Canadian defence review to actually take place? Where is the money for it? Why was there not a set-aside in this budget?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I want to remind hon. members to pose their questions through the Chair.

The hon. minister.

● (1940)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, with the consultations that have been conducted and expert reviews that have been done for this defence policy, we wanted to make sure that we not only present the plan but also the funding that goes behind it. I look forward to announcing this defence policy, which I have stated many times before. It is a defence policy that has been rigorously costed and fully funded. It will take the Canadian Armed Forces way into the future, for the next 20 years.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, given that the Prime Minister and the minister attended the NATO summit on May 25, did they present the outcome of this defence review there? Did they talk about what our priorities are going to be at NATO before it was presented in the House or to Canadians, or did they go there and have nothing to say? Which is it? Either they went to NATO with empty hands or they have already presented the findings of this review to our allies in Europe before they ever presented it to Canadians.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in this defence policy, as I have stated, Canadians all across this country had input. Parliamentarians held consultations and there were expert consultations. This defence policy will be presented in Canada to Canadians.

We can all be extremely proud of our contributions at NATO. We talked about how we are taking the lead in Latvia, one of the four framework nations, how we have air policing in Iceland currently that will be moving on to Romania in the fall, how we have a frigate in the Mediterranean consistently, and how we are in Ukraine as well. We have a lot to be proud of, because Canada has been stepping up for our multilateral commitments, which is extremely important to show leadership in the world and to stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies. That is what we talked about.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, certainly New Democrats have been very supportive of any of the leadership initiatives taken.

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Back in August of 2016, the defence minister and the former foreign affairs minister together announced Canada would be committing about 600 troops and 150 police officers to peacekeeping missions in Africa. Here we are, almost nine months later, and these plans appear to be on hold. Can the Minister of National Defence tell the House what Canada's official position is on contributing to the global peacekeeping efforts in this increasingly unstable world? Are we going to be committing to a peacekeeping mission in Africa, or not?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government has committed to supporting peacekeeping operations. We have committed up to 600 personnel and 150 police officers to peacekeeping, but this cannot just be a military contribution. This is going to be a whole-of-government, integrated, comprehensive approach. We want to make sure we take the time. When we launch missions like this, they are not just about checking a box. We want to make sure when we make a contribution, that when we send our troops, we have looked at everything so that when they go into places like that, we will have a meaningful impact.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity to share a few thoughts this evening. I am going to focus on the importance of sovereignty projection and sovereignty protection.

Yesterday Chancellor Angela Merkel was quoted as saying, "The times in which we can fully count on others are somewhat over... [W]e Europeans must really take our destiny into our own hands."

Historically, Germany has always looked after its own sovereignty. After World War II, it permitted itself to have a military only for defensive purposes and resolutely stayed out of conflicts that were extraterritorial. Lately, however, it is being drawn in another direction, away from relying on others and proactively being invited to assert itself.

Outsourcing one's sovereignty to another nation can be a dangerous business. Canada has a long history of doing just that. As part of the British Empire, we outsourced our sovereignty to England. For a long while, that worked as a bulwark against American expansion. It was a refuge for United Empire Loyalists, slaves, and others looking for an alternative to the American way. Mostly it worked. However, the quid pro quo was that we were dragged into British wars, some say adventurism, such as the War of 1812, South Africa, World War I, et cetera. If the empire was at war, we were at war, whether we liked it or not. If Great Britain was going to be the guarantor of our sovereignty, then we were expected to contribute to the defence of the empire.

Many asked what British wars had to do with us. We were geographically and economically separated from those historical grievances and should not have been expected to contribute. However, those who objected forgot that Britain made sure that Canada was not American.

British interests have not always lined up with Canada's. For instance, does anyone wonder how we lost the Alaska panhandle? How is it that boundary drawing always seemed to work against Canada's best interests? The simple answer is that British interests always trumped Canadian interests. That is what happens when a nation outsources its sovereignty protection to someone else.

Britain was exhausted after World War I and could no longer protect Canada. The state of the Canadian military was alarming. General McNaughton presented a report to Prime Minister Mackenzie King outlining the serious deficiencies in our defensive structure. As you will recall, Mr. Chair, General McNaughton is the grandfather of the member for Orléans.

As James Eayrs described it, King had inherited from a Conservative prime minister "armed forces without arms." The Americans knew it. The British knew it, and if the Canadians did not know it, they were wilfully blind.

In 1936, President Roosevelt came to Canada on a state visit and advised Prime Minister King that if Canada was not prepared to look after its sovereignty, someone else would have to do it for them. At that time, the Americans were particularly concerned that the Japanese would take advantage of the largely undefended B.C. coastline to gain access to North America. They wanted a highway through Canadian territory to foreclose access. The concerns of the Americans were well founded.

Directly or indirectly, we transitioned our sovereignty to the Americans, and by the end of World War II, there was absolutely no doubt that our defence policy could be summed up in one pithy phrase: "Don't get too far ahead of the Americans, and don't get too far behind the Americans."

The architecture of our defence institutions was created at that time as well. The best known, for our purposes, is NORAD. Equally well known, or possibly better known, is NATO, which is an American-dominated treaty alliance that has served us well over many years. Less well known, possibly, is the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, a formal informal meeting of senior, civilian, and military personnel who jointly manage defence issues as they arise. The next meeting is here in Ottawa next week.

There are, of course, other arrangements, both formal and informal, that allow us to be more efficient and effective when dividing up tasks. Needless to say, the Americans are the senior partner. However, there is a genuine respect and collaboration between the respective forces.

● (1945)

However, there is also a growing expectation on the part of our senior partner that Canada will pick up a larger share of the load. That is perfectly understandable. Defence is not cheap. Defence of our sovereignty is not cheap.

When President Obama stood in this very chamber, he was quite explicit:

As your ally and as your friend, let me say that we will be more secure when every NATO member, including Canada, contributes its full share to our common security, because the Canadian Armed Forces are really good and if I can borrow a phrase, the world needs more Canada. NATO needs more Canada. We need you.

That was just about a year ago.

The irony is that we are very good. Our military is very good, and therefore we are in demand, yet we have been somewhat reluctant to be more forthcoming. At times we seem almost coquettish. Just as Britain expected us to contribute to the defence of the empire, so also the Americans expect serious contributions from Canada. This expectation preceded President Trump by many decades, and for a while, post-World War II, during the Cold War, Canada did contribute 2% of GDP to defence. However, as time has gone on, we have been in a steady decline, and for the last 20 years, we have bumped along at around 1% of GDP. For all the Conservatives' harrumphing about their love of all things military, they started out at slightly more than 1% in 2006, plateaued at 1.38% at the peak of the Afghan conflict, and then steadily rode it down to less than 1% by 2015. Friends like these do not require enemies.

I have heard all the arguments about the quality of the Canadian military and the willingness to actually take on dangerous missions, all of which are true, but as the minister has been arguing for the last few months, in fact for his entire mandate, to anyone who will listen, Canadians need to get serious about funding our military needs so it can do what we ask it to do.

The most important task is the protection of our sovereignty. Does anyone think that outsourcing our sovereignty to President Trump is a good idea? That is the effect of reduced resources; we necessarily over-rely on our American cousins for our own protection. It is a great idea as long as it works. We get to act superior to the cousins while getting them to pay the bill. It is a neat trick, as long as it lasts.

However, the times they are a-changing. Russia is militarizing the Arctic. It is the only nation that has icebreakers worthy of the name. It is opening up new military bases. It conducts significant military exercises there annually.

China launched its first aircraft carrier recently. China routinely transits the Arctic Ocean and is keen to exploit the mineral wealth under it. The U.S. and Canada do not always agree on our sovereignty claims, particularly off the Alaska coast. Denmark and Canada have agreed to disagree on Hans Island. It is not likely that we are going to war anytime soon with the U.S. or Denmark, but if we do not have a robust military, we may as well wave the white flag of compromised sovereignty and move on.

I have had the great honour of seeing our military up close and personal. Without exception, we are represented by some of the finest people I have ever had the honour of meeting. It embarrasses me when we do not stand behind our people with the right resources. Lord knows, this minister has been really trying to appropriately make the resources available to our excellent military.

Canadians live on an island of self-contentment, oblivious to the seas of trouble at all our borders. We are indeed a blessed nation and have for decades been able to count on the longest undefended border on earth, a frozen Arctic Ocean, a weakened China, two large oceans, and a Russia incapable of projecting a serious military threat. All of those assumptions are more and more open to challenge.

● (1950)

A more able and robust military is not the only answer to those assumptions, but surely it is one of the most important ones. A more capable military protecting and projecting our sovereignty is a *sine*

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qua non of an independent nation and a foreign policy worthy of the name. Chancellor Merkel is right. "The times in which we can fully count on others are somewhat over." We ignore her at our peril.

Now, if I may, I have a few questions for the minister. The argument I am making is that the military is not a luxury. It is a core responsibility of government to protect and project our sovereignty. Would you be so kind as to outline, over the last 18 months, how you, through your mandate letter and your actions, have enhanced the projection and protection of our sovereignty?

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I want to remind the hon. members to speak through the Chair and not directly to the minister, even if it is very quaint surroundings in committee.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to protecting Canadians and our Canadian sovereignty, it is the most important aspect of our Canadian Armed Forces' work.

In the last 18 months, we have been focusing on making sure that our men and women have the necessary training, making sure that we are able to respond up north with Operation Nanook, making sure that we are able to respond to Canadians during national disasters, as we are doing now, and making sure that we move ahead with the procurement of equipment.

We cannot be an island of stability in an ocean of turmoil. Our navy needs new ships. Currently we have no joint support ships. We have an interim ship that is being worked on right now. We were talking about capability gaps. If we do not invest in our military, a capability gap will eventually turn into a capability loss. That is exactly what happened with our joint support ships. We are working very hard to move the process forward as quickly as possible so that we can project our power and support ourselves.

At the same time, we believe that we can work with our allies. We focused, as part of our defence policy review, on our sovereignty, looking at the north, looking at the Arctic. How do we complement what the military does? We are working with other departments, like the Coast Guard.

We are really focusing on this. I look forward to talking more about this in the coming weeks.

● (1955)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Chair, in my association with this minister, I was always amazed by his incredible energy and his willingness to travel literally around the world, sometimes two or three times over, for meetings.

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One of the most important alliances we have, of course, is NATO. He has been present for the ministerial meetings. I would be interested, as would this House, in his reflections on those meetings, and particularly on his reflections with respect to this possible change in the German posture.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it was an absolute privilege to represent Canada at NATO at my first defence ministerial meeting.

The feedback I received, with our re-engagement in NATO, was on the importance of Canadian leadership that was felt in the past and how we are doing it now by continuing the presence of our frigate in the Mediterranean and the air policing we have increased.

We are taking that leadership role. Only four framework nations have taken up that role: the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Germany. More importantly, the demonstration that we are making is that this is a battle group, a multinational battle group of many European countries coming together. It is because of the great experience we have in our Canadian Armed Forces that we are able to put this together, show great leadership, and show that message of deterrence. It is one thing to put things together but another to actually demonstrate that message of deterrence to Russia to complement some of the other work we are doing in the Ukraine as well.

There is a lot more work that needs to be done. When we conducted our defence policy review, my advisory panel went to NATO and discussed these things with them. We had that input into NATO defence policy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to get back to the air force capability gap and put things into perspective for the minister.

Back in 2016, on April 14, Lieutenant-General Hood said, “We have just recently established that the end of the F-18s’ useful life will be in 2025.” Right after that, he said, “I’m confident that if a decision were taken, certainly in the next five years, we’ll be in a comfortable position changing that aircraft.”

It just so happens that on April 18 and 21 and May 3 and 10, Boeing lobbyists met with officials from National Defence, the Prime Minister’s Office, and Public Services and Procurement Canada. Then, on May 16, the minister mentioned the capability gap for the first time. He said:

Talking about previous governments, we are facing capability gaps. We should have had a fighter replacement by now, rather than trying to extend...

Curiously, a few days later, a 2014 report by Defence Research and Development Canada disappeared from the National Defence website. The report contained very important information about things such as the importance of not running a mixed fleet and having two different kinds of planes. A Super Hornet may have the number 18 on it, but it is not at all the same kind of plane as a CF-18. It is a totally different machine. The report covered life expectancy and the need for new jets. It stated that 65 jets would get us to 2025 just fine, and that a mixed fleet was a very bad idea.

On May 24, Boeing lobbyists were again making the rounds in Ottawa. On May 26, at CANSEC, the minister confirmed that our CF-18 fleet needed replacing right away. He was talking about the

whole fleet, not just a few jets. He added that failure to replace it exposed us to a future capability gap.

The meetings continued. On July 6, the minister made a few little changes. The Liberals said they were going to drop the 2010 requirements for fighter jets. They made a few changes here and there.

There were other meetings after that, this time with elected officials. MPs met with lobbyists from Boeing on July 17, September 21, October 7, and October 18. Two ministers, two deputy ministers, and two parliamentary secretaries met with lobbyists from Boeing.

Then, on November 21, we received the response from the Department of National Defence confirming what General Hood had said on April 14. The general’s response was confirmed. We received an official response in writing.

On November 22, the minister announced that the government was going to begin negotiating with Boeing for a sole-source purchase of 18 Super Hornets, while launching an open and fair competition that would last five years, when we know that, in other countries, it takes one year when you have the information to conclude a competition.

On November 28, General Hood appeared again before the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence and said that the air force’s policy on the number of fighter jets had been changed and that he was not consulted. He was not even a member of the committee that did the evaluation.

On this issue, I would like to know if the minister can tell us once and for all who told him that there was a capability gap.

● (2000)

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to discussing capability, as a nation we have commitments to NORAD and we have commitments to NATO. Obviously, for security reasons, I cannot give the exact number of those commitments. However, currently we cannot meet those commitments simultaneously.

However, one thing I think all members in this House agree with is that we need to replace our aging fleet. We are going to do that with a full competition to replace the entire fleet.

Here is another thing. The previous government said that 65 fighters was going to be enough. We are a G7 nation. We talk about our sovereignty. We had 138 fighters a long time ago, and we are talking about 65 now. We need to make sure that we have the right number of aircraft to meet our obligations.

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We are going to have a full competition. We need to invest in a legacy fleet. A transition for the fleet takes a long time. It is going to take longer than 2025, even with the full competition. We need aircraft in place. At the same time, I would love to be able to snap my fingers and have aircraft by tomorrow. However, we cannot produce the pilots, the training, and the technicians at the same time. We need to make sure it is a transition that it is smooth, because our aircraft are also being used. It is a plan that we have taken a thorough look at. Yes, the planes should have been replaced 10 years ago so that we are not in this situation. It is a problem that we inherited. However, it is our problem now, and we want to make sure that we get this right. That is why we took the time to do a proper analysis. We are committed to making sure that we have the right number of aircraft for our Canadian Armed Forces so that we can meet all of our obligations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I want to remind the minister that the 65 aircraft I was referring to was the minimum required according to the 2014 report. At present, we have 77 CF-18s in the Air Force, which is 11 more aircraft than the minimum required.

I would like to know why the minister has not decided to make the process open and transparent right now. This process would determine which aircraft is the best. It does not take five years to do that, it takes one.

Why not open it now? Is he doing this to impose a deadline? I would like the minister to explain this.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to replacing our fighter aircraft, we need to make sure that we follow a process where we replace all of our aircraft, a process we can go through to make sure that all the requirements are met. The last thing we want to do is to make a decision and end up with something that does not meet our needs. We need a thorough process, because these are aircraft that will be here for a very long time. We want to make sure that we get this right. That is exactly why we are taking the time to get this right, and to make sure we have that process. I would like to speed it up as quickly as possible. I would like to have this equipment here. Unfortunately, we have to be responsible. The last thing we want is to have a lemon, regardless of what company bids in the competition.

• (2005)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I would like to talk about peacekeeping missions. I would like to know whether the minister really believes that the United Nations is the best organization to combat the radical terrorism found throughout the Middle East and in Africa.

Does the minister really believe that the United Nations is the best organization to manage this?

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, multilateralism is important to our government. Today I announced the extension and expansion of Operation Artemis, the counterterrorism measures that we have been part of for a long time, and which the previous government also

supported. However, what we have done is not just take a leadership role to be done every two years, we will have the flexibility for our military leadership to add a frigate every two years, and also a maritime surveillance aircraft. We have stepped up there.

We have stepped up our commitments on the fight against Daesh in Iraq. We are taking a leadership role in NATO. Multilateralism is important, and the United Nations also plays a very key role. We also need to focus on preventing the recruitment into radicalization. We need to reduce the conflict portion so we do not have to deal with it after the fact. The United Nations does play a very important role in this, and all of the allies that I have spoken with. The French are playing an important role. The U.S. talks about the importance of peace support operations as well.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: I want to remind the hon. members that the answer should be about the same length as the question, just as a rule of thumb.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, still on the subject of the United Nations, I would like to know, yes or no, whether we will be contributing troops to a U.N. peacekeeping mission. At the beginning of his term, the Prime Minister promised to send more troops.

I would like to know how many troops have been deployed on different missions.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry, could the member repeat the question, please?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, my first question is whether the government will, or will not, be sending a large number of troops on a UN mission in Africa.

Second, the Prime Minister promised to send more soldiers and police officers to various locations around the world to help the UN.

I would like to know how many troops have been deployed since the Liberal government took office.

[*English*]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there are currently UN missions where we have had troops. When it comes to our peace support operations, we have committed up to 600 personnel in the Canadian Armed Forces, and 150 police officers.

As members know, no decision has been made at this time. I do not have the exact number of UN missions, but our folks have been part of them since we have formed government.

As I said, the UN plays a very important role in stability around the world. Multilateralism is important to our government, and we need to do our part.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, as a former member of the military, the minister must know what the operational situation on the ground looks like.

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Does he believe that the Canadian Forces are able to send a troop of between 500 and 600 soldiers with the proper training to Mali, for example? Does Canada have the resources necessary to be independent and not to depend on any other country?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, any troop recommendations come from the chief of the defence staff, my military adviser, and he would never recommend anything that would overstretch us. I have also stated that we will make sure that any time we send our troops anywhere, we will send them with all the necessary equipment so they can protect themselves. More importantly, we also have to focus on the mandate. It is one reason we are taking the time, so that we have the right mandate, the right rules of engagement, and protection of civilians. All of these things are extremely important, not just for the military, but in a comprehensive integrated approach that looks at other departments as well.

I am also very happy that when I was at the UN, other nations were also taking this on board, so there will be an even bigger impact.

• (2010)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I would like to talk a bit about the reserve forces. The president of *Réserve 2000*, John Selkirk, confirmed that reserve units have had their budgets cut by 10% since last year.

How can the minister explain these 10% budget cuts? As a former unit commander, I know that things were not going well when my budget got cut. I would like to know what the minister thinks about that.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I too was a former reserve CO, and there were times when the budget was cut. However, there are even greater complexities. It is not just about budget cuts. One could also give money and change the rules, which has been done in the past, where the money cannot then be spent. Those are the things that we are also looking at.

I can assure the House that the reserves play a very important role within the Canadian Armed Forces, whether it is domestic operations, such as Operation *Lentus* in Quebec, or overseas operations. We need to make sure that our reserve forces have the right funding, and they will. However, more importantly, it is not just about training and the right equipment, but having a robust goal. We are looking at many other areas and the role that the reserves can play. I have had many discussions with the chief of the defence staff on that, and there is more work that needs to be done.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, I understand that this is complex, but the major problem concerning funding for the reserve is that the money trickles from the top down to the units and part of the money disappears for different reasons. It is up to the minister to monitor the reasons for budget cuts to the reserves.

When the budget of a reserve unit is cut by 10%, the troops lose three weekends of training. That is huge. What effect does the minister think this will have on retention of reservists? They will

want to find a civilian job because the army cannot give them enough work.

Does the minister believe that our troops will have adequate training?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I could not agree with the member more. We need to make sure that the reserves have all the right investments. Currently the reserves have a budget of \$645 million for this year, but this is not just about a number. We need to make sure that the right money is allocated for the training and recruitment. The reserves are a connection to the community as well. There are many things that the reserves do, and we want to make sure the reserves have all the necessary funding. We need to also make sure they have the right equipment and vehicles, whether it is an infantry unit, armoured reconnaissance units, or a signals regiment, and that they have the right radios. Then, more importantly, how do we integrate a lot of this into the regular force?

A lot more work needs to be done. We are also looking at compensation for the reserves to make sure they are better looked after. Improvements have been made, but a lot more work needs to be done, such as possibly making a class A, B, or C system even more easy to manage for everyone.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Chair, the minister spoke about NATO. The former parliamentary secretary to the minister of national defence spoke about Barack Obama, who came to see us in 2016 and who said that the world needs more Canada.

Since we are talking about finances, I would like an explanation of why our contribution to NATO has decreased. In 2016, it was \$92.4 million whereas this year's budget is \$77.9 million.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was speaking with the Canadian ambassador to NATO, Kerry Buck. We are the sixth-largest financial contributor to NATO, in addition to the contributions that we make.

As I stated, we have taken a leadership role at NATO. We have a lot to be proud of in the work and the leadership role that we have taken. We will make sure that we have the right investments for our troops so that we can be incredible partners.

I would like to tell the member to stay tuned for June 7 as well.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will deliver a 10-minute speech and then I will be asking a few questions.

I am pleased to rise today to consider the most important military asset our country has, the women and men who wear Canada's uniform. As the mother of two serving members, I know first-hand the sacrifices that military families make.

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[Translation]

They take an oath of allegiance to the crown, but they also pledge to serve at risk to their own lives and well-being. That risk can be mitigated, but it can never be eliminated.

• (2015)

[English]

While this risk can be mitigated, it can never be eliminated.

[Translation]

Of course, we must provide them with the instruction, training, equipment, and support they need to successfully carry out the duties and missions they are assigned throughout their careers. If military members are unable to continue their military service, we owe it to them to ensure their return to civilian life is successful both through our own efforts and through partnership with industries that employ veterans.

As General Dallaire stated last March before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and I quote:

If you don't treat the injured veteran right, the guy or girl who's going over will realize that if they come back injured they have to fight the second fight, and that's coming home and trying to live decently.

[English]

The funding in these main estimates directly supports our ill, injured, and wounded military members, and I would like to highlight just a few of those initiatives today.

[Translation]

The mission in Afghanistan was a watershed moment for the care of our wounded members.

[English]

The volume of cases from Afghanistan, with 1,859 wounded over the entire combat mission, had not been seen since the Korean War.

Moreover, our improved understanding of mental health allows us to correctly diagnose, and where possible treat, operational stress injuries that militaries of the past wrote off as “shell shock” or “battle fatigue”.

I want to take a moment to add, for any military member or family member who is listening and experiencing an operational stress injury, that they should please reach out for support to those around them.

[Translation]

The Canadian Armed Forces had more ill, injured, and wounded than at any time in recent memory, many of whom were dealing with complex medical conditions, including mental health issues. This required a careful, professional approach.

That is what brought the forces to develop a system to rehabilitate ill, injured, and wounded military personnel called the joint personnel support unit, or JPSU. The role of this unit is to provide personalized support and programs to members who have a medical condition that precludes them from returning to their normal duty for six months or more.

[English]

The JPSU also strives to provide the best possible support and services during a member's recovery so that he or she can return to full military duty or successfully transition to civilian life.

The JPSU and the 24 integrated personnel support centres that form it do outstanding and difficult work in support of their brothers and sisters in uniform.

[Translation]

Because, in many cases, the illness or injury can have a significant impact upon the CAF member's family, they offer a range of services to military families from coast to coast.

[English]

About 1,600 Canadian Armed Forces members are posted to the JPSU for six months or more. More than 4,000 walk-in clients are helped on an annual basis.

[Translation]

The dedication and commitment of JPSU military and civilian support staff is truly remarkable, so much so that the armed forces is now preparing to build upon their model.

[English]

As the chief of the defence staff testified before a committee in the other place, he intends to evolve the JPSU into a new organization that can provide that same level of personal service across the military. He will also ensure that the transition unit receives additional resources to handle these cases, which will address concerns raised by the ombudsman and others. This will mean that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces who experiences a transition receives the same focus on individual, personalized service, both while they are in uniform and when they end their military career.

[Translation]

The goal is to ensure that every member of the Canadian Armed Forces who experiences a transition receives the same focus on individual, personalized service, both while they are in uniform and when they end their military career. All aspects of this transition are key elements of the mandate letters of both the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Veterans Affairs.

The ministers were given a mandate to work together to reduce complexity, overhaul service delivery, and strengthen partnerships between both ministries, and provide better service to our veterans.

• (2020)

[English]

I know this is something every member of the House, some of whom have also served in the Canadian Armed Forces, can support.

Many of us have heard from constituents who have experienced difficulties with this transition, who are experiencing hardship just as they are trying to begin a new chapter in their lives. We must ensure that those who have served with honour are treated with honour and that the families that serve alongside them are also supported.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

When Canadian Armed Forces members retire, their pensions and benefits should be ready as soon as they take off their uniform. In most cases, this is what happens. Since the military pension system was transferred to Public Services Procurement Canada, 96% of retired members now get their first payment within 30 days. That is a major improvement. Other delays, primarily related to benefits, are going to take additional time to resolve because this is about more than just a simple transfer of files.

I will return to the example of mental health. Thanks to our improved understanding of mental illness, we now know that some mental health conditions can take years to materialize. Members could retire from the Canadian Armed Forces seemingly fully healthy, but with latent or undiagnosed conditions that manifest many years later. Demonstrating a link between this new diagnosis and their military service can be difficult. The members themselves may not make the connection. Their civilian doctors may not have access to their full medical files. This is one example of the challenges Veterans Affairs and National Defence are dealing with. They must not only ensure an efficient payment of benefits, but also ensure that those who retired healthy and need to re-enter the system later are both recognized and supported.

I want to stress that these gaps are not the result of an uncaring or unfeeling bureaucracy, nor a lack of will on the part of the Government of Canada. Our people are dedicated and committed to providing the highest possible level of service to military members and the families who love and support them. I thank them for their hard work. That work needs to be enabled, supported, and resourced appropriately so that the vision of a professionalized transition system can be achieved.

[English]

The funding in the main estimates is directly supporting these efforts, which are directly supporting our brave women and men in uniform. I will be encouraging my fellow members to approve them when the time comes to vote. I look forward to the additional transition measures that we can expect from the new defence policy when it is announced on June 7.

[Translation]

The size of the Canadian Armed Forces and its operational tempo can make dealing with transition a challenge, but it is the responsibility of the Government of Canada to ensure that our women and men in uniform have the resources and support they need to continue to excel as they transition to civilian life.

Now I have some questions for the parliamentary secretary.

[English]

Mr. Chair, the minister and the chief of the defence staff have called improving the transition experience for retiring and leaving members of the Canadian Armed Forces a “closing of the seams”. We owe so much to our retiring military members and their service to Canada. Can the parliamentary secretary provide details on what the Canadian Armed Forces has done recently to improve the transition experience for those leaving the military, and what more will be done?

● (2025)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, veterans are definitely one of our government's key priorities. As my colleague said so well, we owe a debt to the men and women who have served their country.

We are committed to reducing the complexity of the processes, overhauling service delivery, and strengthening partnerships between the two departments. The Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada are working closely to facilitate the transition of Canadian Armed Forces members to civilian life. The department is also committed to hiring veterans who are eligible for job opportunities in the public service. In fact, medically released veterans are eligible for priority hiring within the public service.

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces are one of the best trained and most respected forces in the world. They welcome all kinds of candidates of all religions, ethnic origins, and sexual orientations. The members of the Canadian Armed Forces work together as a team and have a zero tolerance policy with respect to all forms of discrimination.

I know that this issue is important to the minister, and I would appreciate it if he would inform the House of what is being done to ensure that diversity remains a priority.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, our government believes that diversity is Canada's strength, and it has committed to have all departments consider this very important issue.

These principles affect all members of the Canadian Armed Forces, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning.

All senior leaders in the departments and in the Canadian Armed Forces are fully committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated by the fact that the chief of the defence staff published the Canadian Armed Forces diversity strategy, as well as his action plan and strategy, in January 2017.

The Canadian Armed Forces is always willing to increase diversity and promote the principles of inclusion among its members.

[English]

Mrs. Sherry Romanado: Mr. Chair, mental health is a key area in which great steps have been taken by the Canadian Armed Forces to improve access to mental health professionals and to destigmatize attitudes toward those suffering operational stress injuries. Can the parliamentary secretary inform the House on what the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces have done to improve mental health access in the past year, and what the plans are for the future?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, our government is determined to ensure that the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces continue to benefit from the best health care possible. The Canadian Armed Forces has greatly improved the support it gives to soldiers who suffer from mental health issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, as a result of their participation in military operations.

As part of budget 2017, the government plans to invest \$17.5 billion over four years, beginning in 2018-19, in a centre of excellence on post-traumatic stress disorder and related mental health conditions. The centre will place a strong emphasis on the prevention, assessment, and treatment of PTSD and related mental health conditions for soldiers and veterans.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am going to be focusing on asking the minister some questions today. If I have enough time, there are roughly three areas I am going to be focusing on. The first one is the issue of transition. I know the parliamentary secretary brought that up. She talked about closing the seam.

Over the past, roughly, 14 years, there have been 10 reports that have made recommendations about transitioning. The defence ombudsman has issued a report on simplifying transition from the Canadian Forces to civilian life. Therefore, I would like to ask the minister if he has read the report from the defence ombudsman.

• (2030)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, closing the seam for our men and women is extremely important. I agree with the member. We have been working on this for a very long time. I have also spoken with the ombudsman about this from the early days, and the discussion also came out with our defence policy review consultation.

We are working very closely with the Minister of Veterans Affairs so that we do get this right. We are going to make sure that the transition to civilian life for our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces is done in a manner so that their pension cheques are done before they are released, and making sure they have all they need from Veterans Affairs. We are working truly hard on that piece. We also need to make sure we get it right so that we can offer up the right type of support for the wonderful service they give to our country.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, the question was whether the minister had read the report. The veterans ombudsman also issued a report last year on simplifying the transition from the Canadian Armed Forces to civilian life. I would like to ask the minister one more time if he has read not just the defence ombudsman's report but also the veterans ombudsman report.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I get briefed on many of the reports. I also talk directly to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. When it comes to the transition, this is one aspect that I, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, our deputy ministers, and the chief of the defence staff have worked on very closely to make sure we get this piece right, so that we take all of the recommendations that we have agreed to and look at how to turn them into a comprehensive way to actually create a practicality for our troops.

Making that piece right is important. We have focused on this, and I look forward to working on it and actually coming up with a thoroughly seamless process.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs also issued a report last year. Again, in our study, we tried to simplify the transition. There were several recommendations made in that report, which were endorsed by both the Department of National Defence ombudsman and the veterans affairs ombudsman. Therefore, I would like to ask the minister if he read that report.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, in addition to the reports, I also talk directly to the members to make sure we have this transition piece right, whether it is for our veterans or for our current serving members. We have taken into account the many recommendations. We need to make sure that we get this piece right, so if someone is injured in the military, that person can actually go back into the military when they are healthy, but if they cannot and they are injured, they can transition into civilian life.

We need to make sure that we actually support our family resource centres, as we have in the recent budget. There is also the great work the Minister of Veterans Affairs is doing with the programs themselves. He is trying to merge everything together so that we can have a transition piece. We are working very hard to make sure we get this particular piece right.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, again, there have been a minimum of 10 reports over the last 14 years speaking about transition. Recently, there have been two since the government has taken over, and one just before that. I wonder if the minister could name any of the recommendations from these reports, and if so, what recommendations the minister feels he can implement as soon as possible from any of these reports.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to reports, I have personally seen the difficulties of our members during their transition periods. One of the biggest ones is where members get released without their pension cheques. We have actually put personnel directly onto this so that we can reduce the number, but there is a lot more work that needs to go behind this.

It is about the care, the programs, and making sure their families are also looked after. There is much work that needs to be done. I have seen the difficulties that our troops have faced in this regard.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, during the last election, the Prime Minister spoke about restoring lifelong pensions for veterans. In fact, he made that statement in Belleville. One of the things that the Prime Minister said at that time, and I believe the Minister of National Defence was standing behind the Prime Minister when he said it, was that no veteran should fight their government in court.

I would like to ask the minister if he agrees with that statement.

Business of Supply

● (2035)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our Canadian Armed Forces members who served should not have to fight their government. That is why we are working very hard to make sure our veterans have this. The government is committed to making sure that we bring this option back, to making sure we have the programs in place to look after not just the lifelong pension but also the other programs as well. It is not just about fixing one thing. We want to make sure this whole seam is done properly. This is something that we owe to our veterans, and something that we do need to get right.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, that is an interesting answer because the previous minister of veterans affairs, who is now the member for Durham, halted the Equitas lawsuit. Even after the Prime Minister said what he said in Belleville, the Liberal government reinitiated the lawsuit in May of 2016.

If the Minister of National Defence believes that veterans should not bring their government to court, why was this lawsuit reinitiated by the government?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to making sure that we look after our veterans. Since the member is bringing up the previous minister, it was a veteran who actually launched the lawsuit during the previous Conservative government's watch. Why did that have to take place?

Yes, we do need to fix this, and we are working very hard to make sure that we get this right. The Minister of Veterans Affairs has stated that he will be coming out with details on this option later this year. He is working very hard. We are also working hard together to make sure we get this transition piece right. It is not just about looking at one thing; we need to look at everything. For our veterans who have served, we want to make sure that we do not have a band-aid solution and that we get this entire piece correct.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, it is kind of an odd answer, when the minister brings up the fact that it was the previous government that caused this. It was in fact the previous minister of veterans affairs who held the lawsuit in abeyance. It was in May of 2016 that the government reinitiated the lawsuit with these veterans. What is also funny about this is that the former parliamentary secretary for veterans affairs, the member for Kanata—Carleton, responded when I asked the question in question period that it is “unfortunate” that the group felt it had to continue the lawsuit.

Is this how the Minister of National Defence feels, that it is unfortunate, after what he just said, that these veterans had to reinitiate the lawsuit?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the one thing that I want to be able to pass on to the House and to all Canadians is that the government and the Minister of Veterans Affairs remain committed to a pension-for-life option. It is in budget 2017, and we outlined that we will announce further details later this year. This is a very important aspect that we need to get right. I look forward to it myself, when the Minister of Veterans Affairs announces the details on behalf of the government.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, the Minister of National Defence helped write the platform that claimed the government would bring back the lifelong pension to veterans. I would like to ask the minister

what his understanding was, when he wrote the platform, of what was meant by bringing back lifelong pensions for our veterans.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to looking after our veterans, one of the reasons I got into politics was making sure that we give the necessary tools to our men and women who have served our country.

We are committed to bringing back the pension-for-life option. We also need to make sure we look after all the other programs as well and offer the choice between this option and the lump sum payment, because we also have older veterans who have different needs. We want to make sure that the two options are done well so that the veteran can make an educated choice as to what better suits their needs and their families'.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, that is where the confusion lies because the government is now talking about a lifetime pension option, and that was never the promise that was made by the Prime Minister, nor was it something that the minister himself was promoting. The minister was in fact the key outreach to CAF veterans. In fact, he and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Canada-U.S. Relations spoke to a group of 800 in British Columbia just prior to the election and said that it is essential to fix the problem of restoring the lifelong pensions for veterans. When the minister said that, he was certainly talking of fully restoring lifelong pensions, not as an option, or at least that was the understanding among those in attendance.

Is the minister going to stand by the pledge that he wrote for his government or is the return to lifelong pensions just an option that, when amortized, could mean only a few hundred dollars a month for our veterans? Is that the sacred obligation that he speaks of?

● (2040)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to our veterans. We have provided the tools to allow the Minister of Veterans Affairs to be able to come up with the proposal and the plan on behalf of our government. I, too, look forward to that. I am working very closely with the Minister of Veterans Affairs so that our veterans are looked after, and not just with those options but also looking at the other challenges that our veterans face. Job transitioning is just one of them.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, again, as we speak about the return to lifelong pensions, I want to make it very clear that was never the issue during the election. It is understood broadly and widely within the veterans community, and in fact I would suggest that many veterans supported the Liberal government because it spoke about the return of lifelong pensions, not an option for lifelong pensions.

I want to talk, again, about the lawsuit. Why is the Minister of National Defence interested in suing or having the government continue to pursue the lawsuit of the very same CAF members that the government claims to support and why will he not tell the Prime Minister to drop this lawsuit against Equitas?

Business of Supply

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, this is one obligation that our government needs to get right, and we are working very hard in this regard. The Minister of Veterans Affairs has been given a mandate to make sure that he looks after the veterans. That is also one of the reasons why he is my associate minister, so that we can get the transition piece right.

When the Minister of Veterans Affairs announces on behalf of our government, we will present our plan to look after our veterans.

Mr. John Brassard: Mr. Chair, I hope that involves dropping the suit and it also involves what the Prime Minister promised when he stood up in Belleville and spoke about the return of lifelong pensions for veterans, not the option of a lifetime pension.

The final question I have is with respect to the Afghan memorial. This was, in one of the previous budgets, a priority. It was to have been done by 2017. What is the status of the Afghan memorial?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I think all Canadians want to honour the great sacrifices with the Afghanistan memorial. This is not one of my responsibilities, so I do not have the answer to this question. It is a Veterans Affairs' responsibility, so I cannot answer his question.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as the previous Chair requested, I will be speaking for about eight to 10 minutes and then I will have a handful of questions for the minister afterward.

I am pleased to take part in this important debate surrounding the main estimates for the Department of National Defence. I want to thank the minister and the members of his team for being here for this grilling this evening.

While Canadians are blessed to live in a country that has not seen war within its borders since the 19th century, this does not make us immune from the repercussions of unrest elsewhere in the world, nor from emerging threats like global terrorism and cybercrime, nor natural disaster and severe weather effects, which are aggravated by climate change.

We have heard today how the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence defend Canadians against these threats at home and abroad. When we have needed our women and men in uniform, they have answered the call time and time again, with the professionalism and expertise Canadians have come to expect of them. These are skills acquired through years of training and experience.

To accomplish their missions, our military members must be properly equipped. This is not a political issue; it is an operational imperative. As parliamentarians, we must ensure we provide them with the funding necessary to acquire the equipment they need and deserve.

There are challenges, however, the first of which is cost. We can all agree on the concept of a well-equipped military, but this must be carefully balanced against our responsibility to Canadian taxpayers to obtain value for money. We are not alone in this challenge. All around the world, our military allies and partners need to be strategic in their investments and limit costs and risk where they can.

Military equipment is built to specific standards. It is designed to be effective and durable, to remain in service for decades, to respond to and withstand emerging threats in a variety of environments. Much of this cost and risk is unavoidable, but it can be managed somewhat by planning for multi-purpose capabilities.

For instance, the new tactical armoured patrol vehicles, which the Canadian army first received in August 2016, was acquired to fulfill a variety of roles on the battlefield from troop protection, to reconnaissance and surveillance, armoured transport, and much more. This vehicle was deployed domestically for the first time earlier this month during the military response to the floods in Quebec. It proved to be of critical use as it was one of the only vehicles in all of the federal, provincial, and municipal fleets that could provide ground transportation in the flooded areas.

This flexible approach guides all aspects of the military's capability planning and it is particularly relevant for equipment.

This is just one example of sound procurement in action. The Department of National Defence manages more than 10,000 contracts per year, with a total value of nearly \$6 billion. This includes everything from vehicles, weapons, and satellite systems to the purchase of items such as clothing and combat boots, rations, and ammunition.

National defence must also plan contracts for equipment maintenance and training as well as storage of equipment, all of which are required to maintain a capacity that is ready to quickly respond to operational needs.

There are challenges to the procurement process. That is undeniable. As we debate these issues and work to strengthen the procurement system, it is important to note that the vast majority of procurement projects are delivered on time and on budget.

The 2017-18 main estimates contain requests for funding for several critical projects for our armed forces, and I will list a few.

First are \$189 million to continue the modernization of our Halifax-class frigates. This project is less than two years from completion and is both on time and under budget. It includes new radar capability, a new electronic warfare system, upgraded communications technologies, combat management systems, and more advanced missiles. These upgrades and several others will maintain our frigates as the backbone of the Royal Canadian Navy until the Canadian surface combatants are built.

Business of Supply

The estimates also call for \$156 million to upgrade the army's light armoured vehicles to provide them with improved mobility, protection, and ergonomics. Already, 409 of these vehicles have received upgrades, and this past February, we announced a multi-year, \$404 million contract to upgrade yet another 141. This contract, which was awarded to General Dynamics, will extend the lifespan of the LAV to 2035 and sustain well-paying Canadian jobs.

● (2045)

To support the Royal Canadian Air Force in its missions, funding in these estimates will maintain and sustain many of our military aircraft, most notably the CF-18 fighter, the legacy Hercules, and the CP-140 Auroras, which continue to do outstanding work patrolling littoral approaches and provide valuable information to the coalition against Daesh in support of our operations in Iraq. This also includes the acquisition of 16 fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft to replace the legacy Buffalo and Hercules fleets, which was a major procurement success following many years of delay.

Moving beyond the current year and into the future, progress is being made on several major procurement projects.

First, we will undertake an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 fighter fleet, as Canada requires an advanced fighter capability to enforce our sovereignty, provide continental security, and contribute to international peace and stability. We are also exploring an interim acquisition of fighters in order to manage our commitments to both NORAD and NATO.

I can also report, being from the east coast, that real progress is being made with the shipbuilding strategy. Work has begun on the second Arctic offshore patrol vessel, which will be known as HMCS *Margaret Brooke*, and the project remains on schedule. A contract will be issued later this year for the design of the Canadian surface combatant, which will become the mainstay of the Royal Canadian Navy's future fleet.

These are significant developments, and we have already taken steps to ensure that funding is available to support these large-scale capital projects for defence by reallocating \$8.48 billion of funding from the period of 2015-16 to 2035-36 to future years. This is done to ensure that funding is available when it is needed. Indeed the total funding available to National Defence for large-scale projects is \$83 billion over the next 30 years.

As we have heard many times tonight, when the new defence policy is unveiled on June 7, I am confident it will contain further measures to improve our procurement process, measures that will be fully and adequately funded in the years to come.

Our women and men in uniform are a source of national pride for Canadians. I know that everyone in this room supports the members of the Canadian Armed Forces because we know they will answer the call, just as they always have. To ensure they can accomplish their assigned missions, we must ensure stable and predictable funding for the Department of National Defence. That is our role as parliamentarians. We must also strive to continually improve our procurement systems, ensuring that military acquisitions provide value to Canadians by being fiscally responsible, while investing in the Canadian industrial base.

I have a handful of questions for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

In the minister's speech, he mentioned the challenges related to the procurement process and our responsibility to Canadian taxpayers. All members in the House can agree that we want to see the Canadian Armed Forces acquire new equipment, vehicles, ships, planes, as quickly as possible.

Could the parliamentary secretary please explain to the House what the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are doing to improve the procurement process and to address the challenges I have outlined?

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, providing the Canadian Armed Forces with the equipment they need is a priority for our government, one that we are proud to be working hard on.

To that end, we are taking action to make improvements to defence procurement, including hiring additional people to increase procurement capability and increasing the department's authorities to contract to up to \$5 million to allow Public Services and Procurement Canada to focus on higher value, complex procurements.

This delegation represents over 90% of the number of DND contracts. We are also streamlining internal departmental approval processes to reduce approval times by 50% for less complex procurements. We continue to look at ways to improve defence procurement to better equip the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

[*English*]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, the minister also referred to the tactical armoured patrol vehicle in regard to the floods in Quebec. It appears to be a great addition to the Canadian army's fleet of vehicles.

Could the parliamentary secretary confirm if this was the first time they had been used by our forces in an operation? Could he possibly elaborate a little more on this new Canadian Armed Forces equipment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, my colleague is correct. Tactical armoured patrol vehicles were effectively used to respond to flooding in Quebec in May 2017 as part of Operation Lentus.

Business of Supply

Tactical armoured patrol vehicles are a general utility combat vehicle that can fulfill a variety of roles on the battlefield, such as reconnaissance and surveillance, command and control, and transport. After extensive testing, the Canadian army started taking delivery of the vehicles in August 2016. Feedback from equipment users has been very positive.

Tactical armoured patrol vehicles will help to ensure that the army is well equipped and properly sustained to carry out its missions.

• (2055)

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, the minister also spoke about some of the current procurement projects of the Royal Canadian Navy, like the Halifax-class frigates modernization, the Canadian surface combatant, and the Arctic offshore patrol ships.

Could the parliamentary secretary please provide some details about the most recent developments on the acquisition of the Royal Canadian Navy's new ships under the national shipbuilding strategy?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, I can see that my colleague from the Maritimes is very interested in this issue.

The Royal Canadian Navy is in the midst of its most intensive and comprehensive fleet modernization and renewal efforts in its peacetime history. The national shipbuilding strategy represents a substantial investment that aims to renew the federal fleets and to rejuvenate our marine industry, support Canadian technological innovation, and bring jobs and prosperity to many communities across the nation.

As a part of the strategy, we are acquiring up to 15 Canadian surface combatants, two joint support ships with an option for a third, and up to six Arctic and offshore patrol ships. The new ships will ensure the navy can continue to monitor and defend Canadian waters, including in the Arctic, and make significant contributions to international operations.

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, the minister also spoke of several procurement projects for the Canadian army and the Royal Canadian Navy. Other than the CF-18 replacement project, he briefly touched on the Royal Canadian Air Force's other procurement projects, such as modernization efforts on some aircraft fleets, as well as some new aircraft.

Could the parliamentary secretary or the Minister of National Defence please provide some detail or provide an update on our other aircraft fleets?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, the Royal Canadian Air Force is acquiring new assets and exploiting existing capabilities to deliver its mandate.

First, the government is acquiring 16 Airbus C-295s to replace Canada's legacy Hercules and Buffalo fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. The acquisition of the Cyclone maritime helicopter is also a priority for the Canadian Armed Forces, and that process remains on track and within its allocation.

Finally, the government is moving forward with the modernization and the life-extension of its CP-140 Aurora strategic long-range surveillance aircraft.

[English]

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Chair, the defence of our sovereignty in the Arctic was spoken of earlier in a previous speech.

The Minister of National Defence briefly mentioned the construction of the second Arctic offshore patrol ship, the *Margaret Brooke*. Could the minister please update the House on the current status of the Arctic offshore patrol ship procurement project and how these ships will be used when they begin service in the Canadian Armed Forces?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, as part of the national shipbuilding strategy, we are acquiring up to six Arctic and offshore patrol ships, designated the Harry DeWolf class in honour of Vice-Admiral Harry DeWolf, the legendary destroyer commander who was Canada's most highly decorated naval officer during the Second World War.

[English]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Chair, this evening I would first like to focus on some issues around the ombudsman's office.

He has been put forward a case for a permanent and independent ombudsman's office and a recommendation that the Minister of National Defence support the enactment of legislation aimed at giving the office of the defence ombudsman organizational permanence and independence from the Department of National Defence with respect to all functional authorities. Could the minister please respond as to whether or not he is in favour of this recommendation?

• (2100)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the ombudsman for his work. I am committed to maintaining a positive and productive working relationship with the ombudsman, and I have encouraged him to come to me should he face any issues carrying out his mandate.

The administrative arrangement between the ombudsman and the department mirrors similar offices across government and meets the test of proper stewardship of resources. This arrangement also respects the findings of the Auditor General in 2015, who recognized the need for better oversight by the department. It does not affect the ombudsman's ability to conduct independent investigations that benefit the defence team.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, in simplifying the service delivery model for medically releasing members of the Canadian Armed Forces, this closing of the seam between the Canadian Armed Forces and VAC is so crucial to supplying the needs of our serving members. It is recommended through the ombudsman's report that the Canadian Armed Forces retain medically releasing members until such time as all of the benefits and services from the Canadian Armed Forces, Veterans Affairs Canada, and the Service Income Security Insurance Plan have been confirmed and put in place.

Business of Supply

This would relieve so much of the tension that our veterans face as they are moving away from their service. Can the minister affirm that he supports this recommendation from the ombudsman, yes or no?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I support the recommendation of the ombudsman. Closing the seam is extremely important in making sure that any time members are released, they have all of the benefits in place before their release, as well as their medical records, so that veterans do not have to resubmit the reasons they were injured. These are the types of things that we need to make sure are done well, as I said earlier. The Minister of Veterans Affairs and I are working closely on this issue.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, the Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs recognizes that anxiety, depressive disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and attempted and completed suicides are scientifically linked to mefloquine. Is the minister prepared to do our part, alongside our allies, in dealing with this issue?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the health and well-being of our Canadian Armed Forces members are paramount, and malaria is a potentially life-threatening infectious disease to which our troops could be exposed in the performance of their duties. A military member's decision on malaria prevention is made in close consultation with his or her health care provider. Mefloquine currently remains as one of the medications approved by Health Canada and recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada that is available to military personnel to prevent malaria. The use of mefloquine is now the exception and not the trend of recent years. The use of mefloquine by the Canadian Armed Forces is in the final stages of being reviewed, and the decision on this matter is expected in the near future.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, in light of the tremendous growth in worldwide research on the effects of mefloquine and new policies being developed by our trusted allies, what funding has our own government set aside in this budget to address the concerns of our own servicemen and servicewomen about their exposure to this drug?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, the surgeon general is currently reviewing the use of mefloquine. The CDS is also seized of this issue. I look forward to hearing the results of their findings.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, we need to know that the government is prepared to set up a Canadian outreach program for veterans exposed to mefloquine. What they want to see is independent research by physicians and scientists to better study the drug's side effects and treatments.

Can the minister recommend and encourage independent studies of this issue?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I need to have the findings from our surgeon general. Once we have those findings, a further determination can be made on the next steps. However, I want to show our trust in the chain of command, the chief of the defence staff, and our surgeon general in allowing them to do their work, and I look forward to their findings.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, all over the world our allies are already far ahead of us on this issue. The Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs has established a dedicated mefloquine support

team to assist the military community with mefloquine claims and to provide them with a special point of contact.

Why has this minister not prioritized funding to address the exact same issue here?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our surgeon general has the necessary resources to define this. Our surgeon general has been placed in a position of trust. I am sure that the surgeon general is doing the type of work that is needed. We need to make sure that we show trust so they can present their results. Once we have those results, we will make a determination on the next step. We need to make sure that our men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces have all the necessary and proper medication.

• (2105)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, we are all very aware that there are other options to treat malaria that do not have the extreme adverse side effects of mefloquine. Our allies, Australia, Britain, the U.S., and Germany, have all responded positively to the cries of their veterans regarding the severe impact mefloquine is having on their lives.

As Canada prides itself on being a world leader, what resources are we setting aside to follow suit?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, certainly a determination can be made. There are other options when it comes to medications. Malarone is another example. Mefloquine is one. I do not know the exact results or the number of people who actually take it.

We need to make sure that those options are there, but we need to make sure that the surgeon general has the appropriate time to do the evidence-based work he is there for. We take the responsibility for health care extremely seriously.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, when will the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs acknowledge what Health Canada has quietly indicated, that the mefloquine drug can have disabling and lasting psychiatric effects and that a significant number of veterans may be suffering from these effects.

What funding has the minister set aside to address this recent acknowledgement by Health Canada?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we will make sure that all the resources are available to the surgeon general to allow the team to do its work. That is exactly what it is doing. I want to make sure that it provides evidence-based results. Once the findings are presented, we will make sure that we take measures. We need to make sure absolutely from the findings that we have all the right medications, and if mefloquine is not the right choice, we will take action accordingly, but we need to make sure that the surgeon general is able to do the evidence-based work.

Business of Supply

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, there has been growing concern regarding the number of soldiers deployed to malaria-prone zones who received the mefloquine drug in the past and later committed suicide. One veteran alone provided my office with the names and deployment dates of 11 men he personally knew and served with who took the drug and later committed suicide.

In light of all the recent suicides, what specific suicide studies is the Department of National Defence funding to test the correlation between this drug use and the recent rise in suicides by past and current armed forces members?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, any suicide, whether it is a serving member or a veteran, is too many. We are working with the Minister of Veterans Affairs to make sure we have all the right resources.

When it comes to this, I encourage any veterans, if they have any concerns, to approach Veterans Affairs so they can get the right programs to look after them. When it comes to this issue, the surgeon general is doing his work. I want to make sure that we give him the opportunity, and I look forward to those findings so that we can take appropriate action.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, at our veterans affairs committee, we received first-hand testimony from eye witnesses to the behaviour of Clayton Matchee and Kyle Brown in the Somali affair, where they were directly required to take mefloquine, and the sense very much was that there was a relationship there, which was never found out because the inquiry was cut short.

When will the minister commit to apologizing to the Canadian Airborne Regiment for the shame they have wrongly endured for these last 25 years, simply because they followed orders and took what was then a legal and dangerous drug. Are they simply not getting the apology they deserve because it may cost too much?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we honour the service of every Canadian Armed Forces member and veteran and the tremendous work that members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment have done. When it comes to the issue of mefloquine, as I stated, we will allow the surgeon general to do his work and make sure that they have evidence-based findings.

I can assure all members of the House that we will take the appropriate action, because there is no greater responsibility than making sure that we look after our troops.

• (2110)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, our veterans who were forced to take and test the malaria drug mefloquine back in the early 1990s were regularly referred to as “guinea pigs”. It is well recorded that this study was botched from the beginning. When will their true sacrifice be acknowledged and their honour restored, and how can that be done if we do not encourage an independent inquiry, an independent study from National Defence, from Health Canada? Would the minister do the right thing and insist on an independent study?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the well-being of the Canadian Armed Forces is a paramount responsibility of our government. The first step for us is to allow the surgeon general, the expert in the Canadian Armed Forces, to do the evidence-based work that he is doing. We look forward to the results so that we can take the next

steps. We will take the appropriate steps, but we need to make sure that the surgeon general has the time to do the necessary work.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, I appreciate that the minister's approach is that the surgeon general needs to do his work. However, the concern here is that there is a bit of an overlap, a lack of confidence from the veterans in whatever might come up from that, even based just on the testimony that we received at our veterans affairs committee.

Would the minister support an independent study into this issue, which would have the confidence of our Canadian Armed Forces and our veterans?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, once the findings are put forward from the surgeon general and the chief of the defence staff reviews them, we will take the appropriate steps to make sure that the right medication is given to our troops. This is one of the reasons we have taken this action with the surgeon general. It is to make sure that he can do the study and come up with the right recommendations for the next steps.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall: Mr. Chair, this issue is directly related to an issue in the past with the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia. Some of our very finest have faced a great deal of shame because of what happened there with Clayton Matchee and Kyle Brown. Quite honestly, numbers of them testified to what that drug did to them when it was not licensed and they were taking it without the proper situations for that study, and then it was licensed by Health Canada as they were sent home in disgrace.

Again, would the minister support and actually stand up and work for an independent study into the issue of mefloquine, specifically with reference to Somalia and every place in which it has been deployed and used since right up until Afghanistan, but especially for those Airborne Regiment individuals who should have an apology from the House?

We need an independent study. Would the minister please stand up and say that he would support such a move?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the service of the former regiment and all of its members, we honour the great sacrifice that was made.

On the issue of mefloquine, we need to allow the surgeon general to do the study. The chief of the defence staff is currently reviewing that, and I look forward to having those results. We will take the appropriate steps to make sure that we put in the right resources and have the right studies and whatever is needed. I need to allow the surgeon general to come up with his findings.

The Chair: That will bring this segment to a close.

Business of Supply

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I have some thoughts to offer on the issue of expeditionary operations, and then some questions for the minister or the parliamentary secretary.

It is my distinct pleasure to be here today to speak to my fellow members about the main estimates for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. This is an opportunity that I welcome, because I believe it is crucial for all of us to understand what our troops are doing to keep Canadians safe and to promote and maintain international peace and stability.

Members of the Canadian Armed Forces are a crucial asset in helping to advance our government's foreign policy. They are representatives of Canada, projecting our values in every corner of the globe. They help to solidify our reputation as a country that values freedom, democracy, human rights, justice, and the rule of law, and our reputation as a country that is ready to defend those values.

When the Government of Canada calls upon our military to engage on the global stage, it does so to defend the interests of all Canadians. Canada may be geographically removed from most of the turmoil and violence that plagues many areas of the globe, but it is not immune to its effects. In today's security environment, threats can take many forms, and what affects one area of the planet has the potential to affect all, because with increased globalization, countries are more interconnected than ever. The individual and collective prosperity of all nations is first and foremost dependent on a stable security environment.

The new defence policy, which will be released next week, will set out the government's ambition for the Canadian Armed Forces. The expectation is clear that we will remain a solid ally and partner and will continue to contribute to operations around the world.

• (2115)

[*Translation*]

Collective defence is a concept Canadians strongly believed in when we helped found NATO in 1949 and established NORAD with the United States in 1958. It is a concept that is just as important today, if not more so. With this collective benefit, however, comes responsibility and the obligation to do our part, both in the context of the NATO alliance and more broadly.

Recognizing this fact, last year Canada announced its intention to renew its engagement to UN peace operations. Canada is also demonstrating leadership by hosting the fourth UN peacekeeping ministerial, which, as the Minister of National Defence confirmed last week, will take place on November 14 and 15, 2017, in Vancouver.

This forum will examine several key issues such as the integration of gender perspectives into peacekeeping, and innovation in training and capacity building. These concepts may help make future peace support operations more effective.

As the members of this House are aware, we are also analyzing how best to employ the up to 600 troops we have pledged to support UN peace missions.

As we continue planning for future deployments, we must remember that, today, there are 1,662 Canadian Armed Forces members now deployed on 18 international operations. These men and women in uniform are making a positive contribution in all corners of the globe, and we recognize the great sacrifices they are making on behalf of all Canadians.

On May 18, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of National Defence announced that the government would ensure all armed forces members and police officers receive income tax relief on all named international operations. This measure, retroactive to January 1, 2017, will obviously apply to those deployed to Iraq and Kuwait.

[*English*]

To set the conditions for long-term success, our armed forces members are providing training, advice, and assistance to Iraqi security forces, and working in Jordan and Lebanon to help these partner nations build their capacity to address challenges created by regional conflict and instability.

Our military has also assumed a leadership role with the coalition ministerial liaison team, which is helping the senior Iraqi leadership to build institutional capacity, and with the coalition role 2 medical hospital facility in northern Iraq, where members provide medical and surgical care to coalition forces. Our troops are making major contributions in the fight against Daesh, contributions that, as was announced in March, have been extended until the end of June.

Turning our eyes to Europe, we also find members of the Canadian Armed Forces engaged in supporting our allies and actively contributing to NATO's strengthened deterrence and defence posture.

As part of Operation Reassurance, we are demonstrating our commitment, our solidarity, and our engagement to NATO and its allies through the protection of allied territories and populations, by reinforcing NATO's collective defence, and preserving stability in the face of a resurgent Russia.

The Canadian Armed Forces is also taking a leadership role in Europe. In June, Canada will be one of four nations commanding a battle group in Latvia, and will deploy up to 455 personnel as part of NATO's enhanced forward presence, making this the largest sustained Canadian military presence in Europe in more than a decade. In addition to these capabilities, more than \$140 million of the funding in the main estimates will be devoted to the NATO contribution program, helping fund key alliance activities.

Under Operation Unifier, which was recently renewed, approximately 200 troops are contributing to our government's overall efforts in Ukraine to help that country remain sovereign, secure, and stable. Since 2015, Canada has trained more than 4,300 Ukrainian soldiers, helping them build military capacity.

Business of Supply

Our military contributions in Iraq and Europe may be the most sizable, but on any given day, Canadian military members can be found in just about any part of the globe. This includes the Sinai Peninsula where Canada has kept a presence as part of the multinational force and observers since 1985, or in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific, where for the past 11 years the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force have been working with partner nations to fight illicit drug trafficking and narco-terrorism as well as deter criminal activity. During that time, Canadian ships have helped to seize and disrupt more than 66 tonnes of cocaine and four tonnes of marijuana.

These are just a few examples of the contributions that members of the Canadian Armed Forces are making on the world stage day in and day out. Wherever they go, our military personnel are respected for their professionalism, their leadership, and for their ability to work with other nations.

• (2120)

[Translation]

They are making a difference, and Canadians have every reason to be proud of them. The defence policy review undertaken last year carefully looked at how our military contributes to international operations. I know all members of this House, and indeed all Canadians, are eager to see the results of this review when the new defence policy is released in just over a week.

[English]

However, going forward we can expect that the government will continue to call upon the Canadian Armed Forces to engage in the global security environment and to promote Canadian values and interests.

The operational costs in the main estimates provide a glimpse into the investments required for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces to continue their contributions to security and stability around the globe. I think that all members will agree that these are essential investments, as they will provide our women and men in uniform with the resources necessary for them to accomplish the demanding tasks that we ask of them.

Mr. Chair, with your indulgence, I will turn to some questions that I have.

My first question is about Operation Impact. We have all read the headlines about the threat posed by Daesh. The horrible and tragic events at Manchester just last week are a testament to that. This organization advocates a radical interpretation of Islam and claims religious authority over all Muslims. Since 2014, Canada has participated in the U.S.-led global coalition to defeat Daesh.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary how the Canadian Armed Forces are contributing to coalition operations in Iraq.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, as the Prime Minister said last week with regard to Iraq, Canada is actively engaged in the fight against terrorism and instability as a strong member of NATO, as a strong member of the coalition against Daesh, and as a positive actor on the world stage. We renewed and enhanced our whole-of-government approach to the fight against Daesh, with a focus on training,

advising, and assisting local security forces. We have also expanded our intelligence capability; are conducting air-to-air refuelling as well as aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions; and are leading a coalition medical facility in the Erbil region. Our government extended Operation Impact until June 30, 2017. Our mandate has not changed. Our troops will continue to provide training, advice, and assistance to Iraqi security forces who are engaged in combat.

[English]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, my second question relates to NATO.

In the minister's earlier remarks, he referenced the importance of NATO as well as the concept of collective defence. The government has reiterated its strong commitment to NATO, and that it participates in NATO operations, activities, and decision-making bodies, including the recent NATO leaders summit meeting in Brussels.

Can the minister or the parliamentary secretary please explain the importance of NATO to Canada's defence and security?

• (2125)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, NATO has been a central pillar of Euro-Atlantic security, and since 1949, a cornerstone of Canadian defence. As the Prime Minister said last week, in this day and age, NATO remains essential to maintaining global peace and security. For example, Canada is leading the establishment of a multinational NATO battle group in Latvia as part of Operation Reassurance, is deploying CF-18s to Iceland and Romania as part of NATO's air surveillance and policing operations, and maintains a frigate in the NATO maritime task group. Canada is a strong contributor to NATO operations and is currently the sixth-largest financial contributor

[English]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, on the issue of Operation Reassurance and our enhanced forward presence, Russian aggression in eastern Europe, which includes the annexation of Crimea, has prompted NATO assurance and deterrence measures in central and eastern Europe.

Canada is a strong NATO partner and remains committed to the alliance's mandates and mission. Through Operation Reassurance, the Canadian Armed Forces has deployed air, land, and maritime assets to Europe in support of NATO.

Could the parliamentary secretary please explain the reason for NATO's enhanced forward presence and how Canada will be contributing to this mission?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, we stand side-by-side with our NATO allies working to deter aggression and assure peace and stability in Europe. We are leading the establishment of a multinational battle group in Latvia, deploying a land task force of up to 450 personnel in June 2017 to contribute to NATO's enhanced forward presence in central and eastern Europe. This deployment is defensive, proportionate, and fully in line with Canada's international commitments as it aims at preserving stability and preventing conflict. Canada's recent and ongoing contributions to NATO are clear demonstrations of this government's commitment to the alliance and international security.

The Chair: There is probably enough time left for a question and an answer.

The hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

[English]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces are also engaged in smaller international operations. We hear a lot in the news about the major operations of our forces, like Operation Impact in Iraq, and Operation Unifier in Ukraine.

In his remarks, the minister noted that more than 1,600 Canadian Armed Forces personnel are deployed in 19 international operations. Each of these 1,662 individuals are making essential contributions abroad.

As members of this House, we do not often hear much about these smaller missions. I am wondering if the minister or the parliamentary secretary could tell this House about the contributions that our women and men in uniform are making in these types of operations.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, indeed, more than 1,600 Canadian Armed Forces members are currently deployed on 19 international operations. This includes nine CAF members deployed to Kinshasa and Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as 10 CAF members deployed to Juba in South Sudan in support of UN operations. In the Middle East, 70 CAF personnel are deployed to the multinational force and observers, an independent peacekeeping operation in the Sinai Peninsula.

Another four officers work as UN military observers in the UN Truce Supervision Organization in the Golan Heights. We currently have 21 CAF members and one police officer deployed on Operation Proteus in Jerusalem. Lastly, we have five staff officers serving in MINUSTAH, the UN mission in Haiti.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces has established a goal of 25% for the representation of women within 10 years, but in a report published in November 2016, the Auditor General said they are unlikely to achieve that goal because they have no strategy in place.

Can the Minister of National Defence explain what strategies have been put in place so that the armed forces can achieve the 25% goal within 10 years?

• (2130)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the beginning of the question?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces has said that they have a goal of 25% women in the forces 10 years from now, but they do not have a strategy, according to the Auditor General. Do they have a strategy now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Yes, Mr. Chair, we need to do more when it comes to the recruitment of women into the Canadian Armed Forces. The chief of the defence staff has set a goal of 25%, ensuring that the recruiting advertisement reflects this as well.

We also have to be mindful that this is not just about attraction. We have to ensure we continue full steam ahead with Operation Honour, ensuring we root out any type of inappropriate behaviour and also ensuring we have a good training mechanism and creating an environment so not only can we recruit more women into the Canadian Armed Forces but have greater retention as well.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, the question was not whether the minister would reiterate the goal; it was whether he had a strategy, so I will ask again. Does he have a strategy to meet the recruitment objectives for women 10 years from now?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, yes, the Canadian Armed Forces has a strategy. The chief of the defence staff not only has put it as a goal but also has made sure that the recruitment advertisement is focused on women. We have an outreach as well. We have gender-based analyses done in all our policies. Yes, we do have a strategy.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, because there is a strategy, presumably it is in a document. I wonder if the minister could table that strategy in the House.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to recruitment or any other issues, as the critic for his party also knows, our department is available. When it comes to information like this, I am happy to make the right people available to direct the information.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, we appreciate that very much. We are just wondering if the minister would table it in the House so that information is available for all members. It is an efficient use of his department's time, after all, to make it available to us all at one time instead of in one-offs.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, absolutely. Once we develop the strategies and progress, I am happy to present the information, as we do with many different things. I just thought the member had raised the question, and he is very passionate about it, that he wanted something even more direct, and I would be happy to provide that.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, if you will pardon my confusion, in the first questions were told that there was a strategy so presumably then it could be tabled. Then we were told that it could be tabled after the strategy was developed. I am afraid I will have to leave it at that, with a slight bit of confusion. There are other issues we would like to cover.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Canada has begun a process of reconciliation with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. What do DND's strategy and action plan look like in terms of calls to action for truth and reconciliation?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to our aboriginal community, our recruitment and our focus, we have an advisory group within the Canadian Armed Forces. We have three other advisory groups as well. The aboriginal advisory group advises the chain of command. There is also the champion for aboriginal groups. There are programs like bold eagle. We work very closely with our indigenous communities.

The Department of National Defence is one department of a wider government, and we take our relationship with the aboriginal community just as our government has put a priority to this.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, could the Minister of National Defence tell us how much his department is investing in activities to promote the engagement, recruitment, and retention of first nations, Métis and Inuit personnel?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to recruitment within aboriginal groups and all the greater diversity, we have put a greater emphasis on ensuring we do more to reflect the population in the Canadian Armed Forces when it comes to recruitment. In fact, when it comes to the defence policy review, we did a separate consultation with the aboriginal community. We put a lot of emphasis on this, and we want to ensure that in the Department of National Defence, as wider government initiatives, we also do our part.

• (2135)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Therefore, Mr. Chair, if there is a separate strategy for the recruitment and retention of indigenous people in the Canadian Armed Forces, how much money has the government allocated for that strategy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, for our target of indigenous peoples and women, we have put aside \$85 million in total.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, is that a combined strategy for the recruitment and retention of women and indigenous people, or are there two separate strategies?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, this is for the total recruitment.

I want to also stress for the member that we as a government take the recruitment of women, indigenous communities, and diversity extremely seriously. Let us not stop there. We also have to look at how we train and how they are integrated into our units. We have to focus on the environment. We are taking a look at the entire picture. That is what we are focused on.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, Canada has a long-standing and proud global peacekeeping tradition.

Over seven months ago, the government announced that Canada would reclaim its place as a peacekeeping leader, but no money has

been allocated to peacekeeping operations, and the government has not told us where or when Canada will deploy its peacekeeping troops.

Can the Minister of National Defence tell the House what resources have been allocated to peacekeeping and what the budget is for these activities?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, our government has committed to supporting the United Nations in peace support operations. I was just at the United Nations headquarters last week, attending one of the ceremonies. I spoke with the leadership of various countries.

We will be announcing our support for peace support operations, but we need to ensure we get this right. This is not just about sending troops and picking a mission; it is about making a contribution. We have pledged up to 600 Canadian Armed Forces personnel and 150 police officers. Let us not stop there. We have to look at this from a whole-of-government, comprehensive approach, what the UN is now calling an integrated approach, from capacity building. We need to look at development, because bringing support and reducing military conflict is just one piece of the puzzle.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, we hear that we have to wait on the peacekeeping commitment, the defence policy review, and to replenish our air force and navy. Does the minister think it is appropriate that *Waiting for Godot* be the unifying theme of our defence policy?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud that within 18 months we have been able to accomplish this. On June 7, we will be announcing a defence policy. We will be committing troops to United Nations operations. We have taken a leadership roll at NATO. Within 18 months, our government has a track record of being a credible partner around the world. I am very proud of the efforts of the Canadian Armed Forces, and all the efforts within our government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I am curious to know if the details of that defence policy review were shared at the latest NATO conference.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, at the NATO conference, we talked about the great contribution and leadership that Canada had undertaken. The Prime Minister talked about our leadership role with the Framework Nations. We talked about our frigate that was in the Mediterranean, our air policing, but also a wider look at what we were doing in Ukraine. We are very proud of the leadership role we have taken at NATO.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, was that a yes, details were shared, or a no, they were not?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I have made many speeches on this. I have said that when it comes to our defence policy, this is a defence policy Canadians have had input into and this defence policy will be presented to Canadians.

Business of Supply

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I am wondering if the representatives of Canadians will have an opportunity to weigh in on that defence policy. Will the minister present that policy in the House and provide an opportunity for debate either in the House or at committee?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I hope the member provided input into the defence policy review. All parliamentarians had an opportunity. Canadians had an opportunity. Experts did as well. We received tremendous feedback. I hope the member provided input, as members from the other parties opposite have. We take that very seriously. This is Canada's defence policy for all of us.

• (2140)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, members are of course always glad to weigh in at the beginning to what goes into what the government ultimately produces, but we also like to have input and the opportunity to evaluate what comes out of that black box of government. That is why we want to know if the government is going to be tabling that in the House and providing an opportunity for debate either in the House or committee.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when we announced the defence policy, as we have always done, we also discussed the many methods and opportunities that parliamentarians would be able to take part in once it was announced. We will be ensuring that the feedback we received from Canadians from across the country has been inputted into the defence policy.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I hear in that response that the minister will not be providing an opportunity for debate either in the House or in committee. Does he deny it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, on June 7, we will also be announcing the method for parliamentarians to take part in that debate. We have taken a very open and transparent methodology when it comes to the defence policy review with respect of how we put this together, and we will do the same once we announce it.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe it is the prerogative of government to decide how Parliament will weigh in, or does he think it is the right of Parliament to weigh in on defence policy decisions?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, all Canadians, including parliamentarians, have the right to weigh in to ensure the defence policy will set the stage for the Canadian Armed Forces for the next 20 years.

When it comes to defence policy, or any issues in defence, I have made it very clear. I wrote two letters to members of Parliament. His colleague next to him also knows that I made the Department of National Defence open to members of Parliament.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, it stands to reason we cannot weigh in on a policy when we do not know what it is. Until we know what that policy is, then we need to have the opportunity for debate and discussion. That is why I have asked if the minister would bring it either to the House or committee for that discussion.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we will be presenting, like we have always done, the methodology and how people can weigh in. However, when it comes to the early portions of the defence policy review, I hope the member actually provided the input into it, because we have taken that extremely seriously. We have ensured

that their input was taken into account, as well as the input of all Canadians.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, did the minister take that input more seriously than the minister for democratic reform took the input on democratic reform?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am very proud of the consultations we have taken across the country. As I said, I hope his input was provided to the department. I will look into ensuring that was done.

I made extreme efforts to ensure accessibility for all parliamentarians, not only for the defence policy review but also to the Canadian Armed Forces, to allow members of Parliament to be able to understand the military more. The decision for members of Parliament to even go to bases rests with the commanding officers and the base commanders, including an engagement plan in which I know many members have taken part.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, I recently had the honour of accompanying the men and women who crew the HMCS *Vancouver* on the west coast. I got a little window into their operations, how they ran the ship, and how they conducted operations while at sea. Upon my return I was interested in the issue of the equipment they needed to do their job well.

Recent announcements about the Canadian surface combatant program say that the submission deadline for applications for the naval warship design phase has been backed up, but we do not know up to what date. Could the minister provide us with the date those applications will close?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the Canadian surface combatant is an extremely large project. When it comes to ensuring we go through the right process, there was a request by different companies to have more time. We need to ensure we get this right. We do not want to rush the process. There has been a small delay on this, and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement will deal with this issue directly.

We, as the Department of National Defence, deal with the requirements, but we want to ensure the whole national defence strategy, including the combatants, moves along as fast as possible. However, at the same time, we need to ensure the process goes right so we actually have the necessary and right equipment at the end of it as well.

• (2145)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be speaking for 10 minutes and then I will follow with questions.

Business of Supply

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the Communications Security Establishment, known as CSE, one of Canada's critical security and intelligence organizations within the national defence portfolio. With estimates of \$599 million for the last fiscal year and approximately 2,300 highly-skilled staff, the contribution CSE provides to the security, stability, and prosperity of the country cannot be underestimated.

While it is not a household name, CSE has a long and proud history. Indeed, over the course of the year, CSE has been celebrating its 70th anniversary.

[Translation]

CSE's mission is derived from the authorities enshrined within its three-part mandate in the National Defence Act. First, CSE is Canada's national signals intelligence agency. It serves the national interest by providing foreign intelligence in accordance with the government's intelligence priorities.

[English]

I want to emphasize that what CSE does is foreign intelligence. By law, it cannot direct its activities at Canadians or anyone in Canada. In terms of results, CSE's intelligence helps to uncover foreign-based extremists' efforts to attract, radicalize, and train individuals to carry out attacks in Canada and around the world. CSE's foreign intelligence informs Canada's government decision-making in the fields of national security, defence, and international affairs.

[Translation]

The second part of CSE's mandate is cyber-defence and protection. CSE provides advice, guidance and services to help ensure the protection of electronic information and information infrastructure of importance to the Government of Canada.

[English]

CSE's sophisticated cyber and technical expertise helps identify, prepare for, and respond to the most severe cyber threats and attacks against computer networks and systems, and the important information they contain. It helps to protect Government of Canada systems from foreign states, hackers, terrorists, and criminals. It tracks cyber threats from around the world and it works with government departments to defend and strengthen systems that have been compromised. Finally, CSE helps protect sensitive information held by the government, including the personal information of Canadians, from theft.

[Translation]

The third part of CSE's mandate is to provide technical and operational assistance to federal law enforcement and security agencies in the performance of their lawful duties. Under the assistance mandate, those capabilities may be used to assist a Canadian law enforcement or security agency, under the requesting agency's legal authority.

[English]

The principles of lawfulness and privacy are critical to the work of CSE. As they work to protect Canadians against threats, CSE knows that they have a responsibility to protect privacy and they take that responsibility very seriously. Protecting Canadian privacy is not an

afterthought. It is a fundamental part of the organizational culture and is embedded within CSE's operational structures, policies, and processes.

Security and intelligence agencies have capabilities and powers bestowed upon them in order to maintain the security of our country. They also have the important responsibility to protect Canadians' rights and freedoms. In order to uphold the trust and confidence that Canadians have in their government and in their security and intelligence agencies and departments, this government has introduced legislation to establish the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. The creation of this committee is part of our demonstrated commitment to openness and transparency. CSE will support and fully co-operate with this committee in its important work.

In today's dynamic security environment, CSE's efforts to protect Canada and Canadians against threats are more critical than ever. We were all sadly reminded of these threats just last week, when people simply enjoying a concert, many of them children and teenagers, were tragically killed in a horrible attack in Manchester, England.

• (2150)

[Translation]

CSE is working to help its allied partners to gain further insight into this act of terror, and to help prevent future similar acts. The threats are not limited to terrorism. Across this country, and indeed around the world, governments and citizens are relying on continuously evolving technology to communicate, to work, and to live.

[English]

We expect to be able to interact with our government in the digital world and we want to access government services online. In the face of the cyber revolution, CSE is focused on improving the government's cyber defences by building specialized cyber tools and developing resilience within our systems. We are better positioned to resist and protect ourselves against cyber threats than ever before. However, as new and sophisticated communications technologies emerge, we face the challenges of an interconnected world.

[Translation]

Just two weeks ago, we saw the impact of a ransomware attack that took critical services offline around the world. This is the world in which CSE works diligently to protect Canada. In responding to this threat, CSE has proven itself to be an innovative leader and a trusted partner.

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[English]

Because of its sophisticated understanding of the cyberworld, CSE was asked by the Minister of Democratic Institutions to assess the cyber-threats that face Canada's democratic processes and to provide advice about best cyber-practices to all political parties in the House. Trust in our democratic processes is essential for our democracy to work. Our democratic processes and the ways in which we choose our politicians are an attractive target for nation states and non-state actors seeking to influence our country. We asked CSE to provide this assessment in a publicly available format and we expect to deliver that report in the coming weeks.

CSE has, throughout its 70-year history, served this country proudly while adapting to enormous changes in technology and how people use it in the international security environment and the threat landscape. Today, cyber is clearly a part of that threat landscape. In responding to this threat, CSE has proven itself to be an innovative leader and a trusted partner.

[Translation]

In the past year, CSE has also taken several unprecedented steps to be more open and transparent about its work for the country, telling Canadians more about the work it does to protect their security, their personal information, their privacy, and their rights and freedoms

[English]

It has posted new content on its website about CSE's critical cyber defence work and launched an advertising campaign to recruit the next generation of cyber and intelligence experts. CSE is embracing an open approach to communicating with Canadians about the important work it does. While CSE continues to play an invaluable role in Canada's security, it is ready to support the important government initiatives on the national security, cybersecurity, and defence policy review fronts. The breadth and depth of knowledge and skill that CSE brings to the security and intelligence table is highly regarded and unique within government. As Canada's and Canadians' reliance upon connected technology increases, so too will the need for CSE.

I will now ask the parliamentary secretary some questions.

We know that CSE provides foreign intelligence to a number of government departments and agencies to keep Canada and Canadians safe and that CSE also works with other government departments to ensure that government communications are secure. To fulfill this mission, CSE has unique capabilities and powers, which it uses in accordance with its authorities. At the same time, Canadians value their privacy and expect security and intelligence agencies to protect it. Canadian law includes clear measures to protect the privacy of Canadians.

What are CSE's accountability measures and how does the organization ensure that the privacy of Canadians is protected while CSE carries out its mandated activities?

• (2155)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, CSE is prohibited by law from directing its activities at Canadians or anyone in Canada. It is vital

that the privacy of Canadians be protected, and CSE takes that responsibility seriously.

CSE has a strong privacy framework in place, and its activities are governed by the applicable laws, ministerial directives, ministerial authorizations, and policies. To ensure CSE employees fully understand and respect their obligations to protect the privacy of Canadians and people in Canada, CSE regularly trains, tests, and verifies their knowledge and compliance with those policies.

CSE activities are subject to external, independent review conducted by the CSE commissioner. The commissioner's reviews determine whether CSE's activities are compliant with Canadian laws, including verifying that CSE is not directing its activities at Canadians or anyone in Canada.

[English]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Chair, I mentioned in my speech that Canada's democratic processes and the ways in which Canada chooses our politicians are attractive targets for nation-states and non-state actors seeking to influence us.

Recently, we have seen evidence of election campaign hacking, from targeted hacks against the U.S. Democratic National Committee to attempted hacks against a French presidential candidate. These hackings raise serious questions about the threat of foreign interference and the integrity of election systems.

Can the parliamentary secretary tell me, given the risk of similar hacks in Canada, what measures is CSE taking to defend the Canadian electoral process from cyber-threats?

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport asked a very interesting question. Recent high-profile attacks against election campaigns have threatened democracy by undermining public trust in the democratic process.

CSE helps the Minister of Democratic Institutions, who leads the government's efforts to defend the Canadian electoral process from cyber-threats.

For example, CSE analyzes the risks to Canada's political and electoral activities from hackers in order to offer advice to Canada's political parties and Elections Canada on best practices when it comes to cybersecurity.

CSE is Canada's centre for cyber excellence. It has internationally recognized cyber and technical expertise, which enables it to respond to threats and attacks against government networks and systems.

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[English]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon: Mr. Chair, I mentioned that CSE helps protect the Canadian Armed Forces in their international operations. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could describe the spending in the main estimates for 2017-18.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, CSE possesses unique technological capabilities and expertise, which it uses to support the government's intelligence requirements, including those associated with Canadian Armed Forces missions abroad as part of CSE's foreign signals intelligence mandate. CSE has helped identify threats to Canada, protected the lives of Canadian Armed Forces members serving abroad, and ensured that senior government decision-makers have access to the best available information.

Here is an example. CSE has helped protect our forces from threats on the ground. Intelligence is an important aspect of this mission, and CSE is contributing to this initiative. The 2017-18 budget includes an increase of \$13.7 million to support this mandate.

• (2200)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoulo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say good evening to the minister and thank him for being here with us.

I will be asking questions in quick succession, and I would like the answers to follow suit. It will all be fine. It will last 15 minutes, and then it will all be over.

What does the minister think of the Davie shipyard's new administration since 2013? Also, is he confident that the *Asterix* supply ship for Project Resolve will be ready in time?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the Davie shipyard is working on our interim auxiliary ship. It has been doing great work, and we are hoping that it provides the necessary equipment for our navy, on time and on budget.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, the minister says they are doing great work. Does that mean he has a good opinion of the administration of the Davie shipyard?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I was briefed that the work is progressing well. I have not visited the shipyard. I have not had the opportunity. I would like to. I look forward to assisting the work, because the capability they are providing is necessary for our navy.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, I understand the lack of capacity, even if I do not believe him. The minister cannot tell us exactly who told him about the lack of capacity for official reasons and strategic reasons, etc. What I would like to know is whether it was an employee of his political cabinet who told him about the lack of capacity, or was it the DND staff, who are not political?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am assuming that we are talking about the lack of capacity for the navy ships. In this case, we do not have joint supply ships. This gap has turned into a loss. Right now, we are relying on other navies to supply our ships.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, I made a mistake. I was talking about the lack of capacity with regard to fighter jets in our actual air fleet. I should have clarified that point.

I will ask my question again. Exactly when was the minister informed of the lack of capacity in the air fleet and who informed him? Was it an employee of his political cabinet or a DND staff member?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the NORAD commitments and our NATO commitments, the chain of command has provided this information. We need to be able to make decisions for the commitments we have based on the right data, and that is what we talked about. We cannot meet our NORAD and NATO commitments simultaneously based on the number of aircraft that we have.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, when the minister was made aware of the lack of capacity in the Canadian air fleet, did that information come from an employee of his political cabinet or a DND staff member?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, it is the Department of National Defence where I get my military advice, from the chief of the defence staff and the chain of command. We need to make sure that when we talk about numbers and what we need, it is based on solid data. We need to look at our commitments. Our NORAD and NATO commitments cannot be met simultaneously.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, on what date did the minister inform the Minister of Public Services and Procurement that his fleet's needs were so urgent that he would be going ahead with untendered military procurement?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we have promised, as a government, to replace the entire fleet. We have been working on a replacement of the fighter fleet right from the get-go. I have worked very closely with the minister for procurement so that we can speed up the process, and we will continue to do so.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is responsible for administering the Government Contracts Regulations, which apply to government procurement.

Did the minister have a discussion with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement regarding the Government Contracts Regulations for the potential acquisition of 18 Super Hornet jets?

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• (2205)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, of course, we have had many discussions, not just about our fighter jets, but with all our procurements. Instead of having a file where I build the requirements and then it gets handed off, we are trying to speed up the process. Sometimes we even do joint briefings, having these discussions so we can speed up the process, so that we can have this equipment. These planes should have been replaced a long time ago, and our government is committed to making sure that we get this job done.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, did the minister's staff and the staff of the Minister of Public Services and Procurement communicate at a meeting, or by telephone, email, mail, or courier with respect to the valid exceptions to the process set out in the Government Contracts Regulations?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I said, we are committed to making sure that we not only replace the fighters and all our equipment, but that we follow the appropriate steps. This is one of the reasons that when it comes to the time frames as well, that we take the right steps. This is important. We are accountable to Canadians, and we are required to take the right steps, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, I would like to know whether his department informed the minister that procurement must be carried out in accordance with the government's procurement policies, especially when there is no call for tender?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member that when it comes to government deciding on the purchase of the Canadian fleet and any other purchase, we follow the Government of Canada's policies and regulations on defence procurement. We want to move as quickly as possible, but we need to follow all the necessary steps, in a manner that is cost effective for Canadians but also provides the right capability for our troops. We are committed to that.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, the next question absolutely requires an answer. Otherwise, we will know that the minister has not done his homework.

Which exception to the Government Contracts Regulations does the lack of capacity put forward by the government fall under?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the capability gap, as I stated, we cannot meet our NATO and NORAD commitments simultaneously. We are a nation that lives up to our commitments. We are going to make sure that we have the necessary aircraft based on the right information and by following the appropriate steps. We are committed to making sure that we move forward in a manner that gets the equipment in a timely manner for our men and women.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, fortunately, the deputy minister responsible for procurement answered my question. The government referred to subsection 3(1)(g) of the Government Contract Regulations:

...a contract whose purpose is, for operational reasons, to fulfil an interim requirement for defence supplies or services or to ensure defence logistical capabilities on an interim basis, and any related contract.

This is the subsection used by the government to proceed without a call for tenders, unless it does not really want to proceed without a call for tenders, or unless it does not really want to buy interim aircraft.

If the government does want to proceed, my next question is as follows: did Public Services and Procurement approach the present minister's department in order to obtain a letter with respect to the exception under subsection 3(1)(g) for the purchase of a fleet of aircraft without a call for tenders?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the replacement of our fighters and especially when it comes to the interim, we are exploring this option.

Since we are talking about procurement, I want to remind members that the Royal Canadian Air Force has been risk-managing our commitments for a very long time.

When it comes to the capability gap, members should also note that we were talking about Davie shipyards just recently. That was a capability gap that we had, but it turned into a capability loss. We want to make sure that we do not get into another situation now where our capability gap turns into a capability loss. That is why we are moving ahead for a full replacement in a full competition, investing in the legacy fleet, exploring the options of the interim fleet as well, and making sure that we have enough pilots and technicians.

We need to be able to move ahead and be proactive in this manner so that we do not lose our capability as we did with our joint supply ships.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, did the minister's department write a letter to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement explaining why it was necessary to proceed without a bidding process?

• (2210)

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to all procurements, all the rules and regulations are followed. Those are the necessary things that we need to do. It takes a certain time frame as well. We want to speed up the process, but we need to be able to follow the rules, making sure that we also get a fair deal for taxpayers as well and making sure that we have the right capability for our troops. We want to make sure. This is a large purchase for the long term, and we need to make sure that we get the decision right.

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[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, this is very important. The Minister of Public Services and Procurement has a legal obligation to request that the reason why the government is not holding a bidding process for the Super Hornet fighter jets be written in black and white, even if it is just in a simple letter.

Did the Minister of Public Services contact the defence minister's office? If not, did the defence minister intend to move forward diligently and honourably on his own initiative by providing his partner department, Public Services and Procurement Canada, with the necessary explanations that would ensure that the two departments properly comply with the Government Contracts Regulations? It is a law after all. I am not the one saying it. It is the law.

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I also stated, both the minister of procurement and myself and even the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development work closely together so that we can move in an expedient manner. We discuss the various challenges. We look at all types of procurement. We are doing this in a manner so that we do not have a file that gets looked at by one department and then gets looked at by another and then gets passed on. We are trying to do this as efficiently as possible.

All members of the House would agree that our procurement system needs to be improved. A lot of work has been done on this and a lot of work will be done in the future. We also need to make sure that we follow the rules, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, the Liberals discussed the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces' air fleet among themselves. If letters have not yet been exchanged between the two offices, it is basically because they have not gotten very far in the process to potentially acquire 18 Super Hornet fighter jets without tender. They basically have done nothing to date.

I am asking the minister where the Liberals are in terms of the work that has been done between the two departments. This has to happen at some point. It is not me that is saying it. It is the law. The two departments have to work together. It is the law.

If they are not at that point yet, when will they be?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the replacement of our fighters, we have announced a full competition to replace the entire fleet. We are investing in the legacy. We are taking many measures to make sure we are looking at all aspects, so we do not have a capability gap that turns into a capability loss. Currently, we are in discussions with the U.S. government on this. No decision has been made. A letter of request to the U.S. government has been sent for information. We are following the necessary steps that are required for us to move ahead, and that is exactly what we are doing.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, okay, that is too bad. In 2012, Mr. Ferguson, the Auditor General, said that Public Services would have to request a letter from National Defence, but that went nowhere

because they did not do anything. We all know what is going to happen. They will not go forward with this. That is why they have done nothing. The law does not even matter, because they have done and will do absolutely nothing.

I would like to know if the Seaspan and Irving shipyards can satisfy military needs under the national marine strategy.

Does the minister think that these two shipyards can meet the needs set out in the marine strategy?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to our shipbuilding, our navy does need to replace its ships. This is one of the reasons that we, as a government, agree with the national shipbuilding strategy that the previous government put forward. Investments have been made with the Irving and the Seaspan shipyards. We want to make sure that we continue to improve. We have made certain choices to speed up the process as much as possible. That is one of the reasons that all three ministers work closely together. There are always challenges that come up, but we have a very good working relationship with the shipyards, within our department as well, to look at those issues and address them quickly so that we can get the ships delivered on time.

• (2215)

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Chair, there is an excellent table in the report by the Senate Standing Committee on National Security and Defence. It shows that, beginning in 2005, when the Conservatives came to power, the percentage of GDP allocated to the armed forces started to go up. During the economic crisis, it started going down, unfortunately. If only the economic crisis had not happened. However, in 2015-16 and 2016-17, it kept going down: 0.92% and 0.88%.

Will the percentage of GDP allocated to military spending start going back up in 2017-18?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I have stated publicly, successive governments had not been investing in the Canadian Armed Forces. Since the member brought up the GDP, the defence spending per GDP when the Conservatives came into government had decreased by the time they left.

However, this is not about putting blame; this is about our taking ownership of the current state. We are going to make sure that the defence policy review addresses these challenges. All parliamentarians want to make sure that the Canadian Armed Forces is looked at, and I want to be able to work with the members to achieve this.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will speak for about 10 minutes, and then I will ask a few questions.

Business of Supply

I am honoured to have this opportunity in the House this evening to discuss the work of the Minister of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces in the context of the main estimates.

The Canadian Armed Forces have an important role to play on the international stage, contributing to global peace and security. This is work they perform on behalf of all Canadians. However, their most important role is what they do right here at home, defending our sovereignty, and this role takes many forms.

Whether this means monitoring our air space and maritime approaches, conducting surveillance and patrols in the Arctic, or saving Canadian lives through search and rescue missions, our soldiers work hard on our behalf every day. The funds requested in these estimates directly support these activities.

I would like to talk today about what this funding is used for. The most top-of-mind aspect of the Canadian Armed Forces' domestic mission is to support Canadians during emergencies and in the face of natural disasters. When our military is called to help, they are the force of last resort. They must respond when no one else can, with capabilities no one else can provide. They must do so quickly, and without fail.

This was the case recently with the military response to floods in Quebec. These floods, caused by water levels not seen in decades, affected close to 200 communities and displaced thousands of residents. Upon the request for assistance from the Government of Quebec, through public safety, the Canadian Armed Forces response was immediate. Within hours, planning and reconnaissance teams were assessing the situation in the air and on the ground.

Within 24 hours, 400 military members from Canadian Forces Base Valcartier were deployed to the four most affected regions, namely, Montréal, Outaouais, Mauricie, and Montréal. Seven helicopters soon followed, six Griffons and one Chinook.

As the need grew, so did the response from the military. Altogether, at the peak of operations, 2,600 soldiers, sailors, and airmen and airwomen contributed to the flood relief efforts. This was the largest domestic operation for our military in the last seven years. They helped Quebeckers with sandbagging, building and reinforcing dikes, installing emergency infrastructure, evacuating flood victims, patrolling the streets, and monitoring water levels.

I had the opportunity to see their commitment and dedication first-hand when I visited some of the flood sites with the Minister of National Defence and other officials.

All this was made possible through the training, equipment, and materiel supported by the type of funding we are discussing this evening.

The Canadian Armed Forces have been called upon to help many other times in recent months, for example, during the destructive ice storm in the Acadian peninsula in January, the evacuation of the Kashechewan First Nation, and the current crisis in Mud Lake.

Just last year, during the wildfires in Fort McMurray, the Royal Canadian Air Force transported evacuees to safety, airlifted firefighters in and out of affected areas, moved equipment, and conducted surveillance flights. We also remember the wildfires in Saskatchewan in the summer of 2015, to which 850 military

members were deployed in support of the province. In that case, in addition to transport and logistical support, military members were involved directly in fighting the fires. As the former mayor of Iberville, I can attest to the key role played by the Canadian Armed Forces during the 1998 ice storm.

These are just a few examples of how our military has responded to emergencies, time and again, with unique capabilities, and with great adaptability. With the increased risk of severe weather events as a result of climate change, it is all too likely their capabilities will be needed again.

Response to natural disasters is one of the most visible ways in which our military helps Canadians in distress. Another way is through Canada's search and rescue program.

● (2220)

While search and rescue is a shared responsibility among federal, provincial, and municipal organizations, the Canadian Armed Forces has the primary responsibility for aeronautical search and rescue, as well as for coordinating responses to aerial and maritime incidents.

In sparsely settled regions of the country, the 5,000 members of the Canadian Rangers are regularly called upon to conduct and assist with ground search and rescue, due to their unique set of skills and knowledge. Altogether, military personnel directly respond to roughly 1,000 search and rescue incidents every year, and the joint regional coordination centres, which are funded and staffed by our military, coordinate 10 times as many.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has an occupation dedicated to search and rescue. These 140 SAR technicians are trained to jump out of airplanes, climb mountains, and provide emergency medical help to Canadians in danger. Over the years, they have saved thousands of lives, embodying their motto, "That others may live." Tragically, saving lives is sometimes done at the cost of their own.

Just this March, we were reminded of the very real dangers that those technicians face with the loss of Master Corporal Alfred Barr, who died in a training accident. My thoughts are with his colleagues and family as they continue to heal from this tragedy.

While there are risks involved with search and rescue, and challenges in providing that service in a country as vast and geographically diverse as Canada, this is a vital mission. The funding in these main estimates will ensure that members of the Canadian Armed Forces will continue to save the lives of their fellow citizens for many years to come.

I want to draw the attention of the House to the military's ultimate, essential domestic role, and that is defending Canadian sovereignty. The Canadian Armed Forces defend maritime and air approaches to Canada, including in our Arctic. It does this by conducting sovereignty patrols and ensuring that air power can quickly reach every square foot of Canadian soil.

It also uses space capabilities for wide-area surveillance and maintains an active regional presence in remote and isolated regions through the Canadian Rangers, our eyes and ears in the north. They provide crucial awareness.

To augment its efforts, the army has also created arctic response company groups, which are reserve units that are specially trained to respond in Arctic environments.

The Royal Canadian Air Force maintains and sustains our permanent presence at Canadian Forces Station Alert, the most northerly permanently inhabited location in the world. While the Arctic remains a region free of conflict, it is not immune to the effects of climate change and its associated challenges. As Arctic passages become more accessible, interest in the region will grow and activities there will increase. We will need to continue to monitor activities in the north and its approaches to Canada, maintain a presence, and be prepared to respond to save lives or deal with disasters caused by increased human activity.

The \$3.36 billion in this budget will ensure that members are trained, equipped, and ready to fulfill their operational roles and that they have the equipment and infrastructure they need to do their jobs.

Now I would like to ask the minister a few questions. I am going to ask about an event that affected Quebec recently and Operation Lentus, which covers all domestic missions that the Canadian Armed Forces fulfill to help Canadians in need.

• (2225)

We have seen these operations in recent years in Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and, very recently, in Quebec. As always, Canadians are grateful for the contribution of our military personnel.

Can the Minister discuss the important role the Canadian Armed Forces played on their recent operation in Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, the Canadian Armed Forces always stand ready to help Canadians in distress by assisting our federal, provincial, and municipal partners in service of Canadians in need.

Recently, in response to a request from the Government of Quebec, through Public Safety Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces swiftly deployed. At its peak, we had approximately 2,600 Canadian Armed Forces' members providing assistance by conducting flood mitigation operations, protecting critical infrastructure, and providing humanitarian relief. This is just the latest example. The Canadian Armed Forces have recently deployed across Canada from Alberta, to Quebec and New Brunswick, in the last year, to assist civilian authorities responding to emergencies. During a disaster relief operation, the Canadian Armed Forces remain in communication with all government partners, including the provincial, territorial, and municipal levels, to comprehensively respond to their situations.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, the north is and will always be an important issue for Canadians, especially now with climate change and the increasing activities of many states and international actors

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in the region. We have also seen an increase in shipping traffic and tourism. We know that exercising our sovereignty in the Arctic remains a key mission of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Can the minister update the House on our military's activities in the Arctic?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, ensuring the vitality of Canada's Arctic remains a key priority for this government. National Defence plays an important role in exercising our sovereignty in the region. The Canadian Armed Forces maintain an active presence in Canada's north through extensive exercises and activities often involving whole-of-government partners, local governments, and international allies, as well.

One of the most important aspects of our activities in the north is our relationship with indigenous people. In fact, in Canada, our Canadian Rangers across the north provide valuable eyes and ears in the region and an important connection between the military and the local population. To enhance our military presence in the north, the government is building the Arctic and offshore patrol ship, investing in space-based capabilities, and researching new surveillance and control technologies in the north.

[Translation]

The Chair: I think that we probably have time for just one question. The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, one of the key missions of the Canadian Armed Forces is to defend North America in collaboration with the armed forces of the United States. This strong partnership has existed for many years, notably through the North American Aerospace Defence Command.

Can the minister inform the House about how we are working with our U.S. partners through the North American Aerospace Defence Command?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, Canada and the United States share the world's only binational military command, which is NORAD. It is a testament to the deep multi-faceted defence relationship between our two countries and enables us to work seamlessly to monitor our shared maritime approaches and defend North American airspace.

As we all understand, the threats to continental North America are ever evolving. New technologies, an increasingly accessible Arctic, and global power dynamics mean that NORAD must be able to adopt to any changing circumstances. In particular, Canada and the United States will work together to renew the north warning system, which is a vital NORAD capability that provides early warning against aerospace threats to our northern approaches.

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• (2230)

[Translation]

The Chair: We have time for another question. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Chair, search and rescue is one of the most valuable activities that the Canadian Armed Forces provides to Canadians. They can be proud of the great work being done by our search and rescue operators.

Can the minister discuss this and how the Canadian Armed Forces works with other departments and agencies to save Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I first want to say that our search and rescue technicians, SAR techs as they are known, literally are the special forces of the search and rescue world. They provide tremendous support and assurance to Canadians. The sheer expanse of our geography makes Canada one of the most challenging countries in the world in which to conduct search and rescue operations, as they are primarily responsible for aeronautical search and rescue services. The Canadian Armed Forces devotes approximately 950 personnel to deliver search and rescue services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. In 2016, our Joint Rescue Coordination Centre responded to over 10,000 incidents, resulting in tasking our RCAF aircraft in 1,084 cases.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Chair, regarding the CSC, our procurement minister has said that only designs from ships already in service or mature existing designs will be accepted, because it means there will be less risk and vessels can be built faster. Why has the government then delayed the project to allow BAE to add to its bid for a ship that only exists on paper?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we wanted to make sure that when it comes to our ship procurement we move as quickly as possible but follow all the necessary steps. When it comes to the process, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement is going through the necessary steps. As the member knows, we in the Department of National Defence build the requirements. We are working very hard, and we will work closely together to make sure that the ships can be delivered on time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the minister who is violating the procurement minister's rules on only accepting bids for existing ships or mature ships on design to delay the process to allow BAE to submit a bid for a project that only exists on paper.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I can assure the member that all the necessary rules and regulations are being followed. The minister of procurement is taking the necessary steps in making sure that we move forward. We want to make sure that we do not slow down the process or speed up the process and that we have all the necessary steps in place so that all the requirements are met and the ships can be built on time.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I wish we could get an answer on that.

I will skip over to the next one.

The lobbying commissioner's website shows that BAE has lobbied the defence minister's office on at least four occasions. We did an access to information request, and the minister of defence's

office has stated that it has never met with BAE or anyone connected with BAE regarding the CSC. Can the Minister of National Defence tell us whether he, or anyone in his office, has met with lobbyists from BAE, or companies related to BAE, with respect to the CSC bid?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the process, the minister of procurement is taking the necessary steps. I have not officially met with representatives of BAE. All the companies that are in this process are independent from me. However, I want to make sure that all the necessary steps are followed. Any time there is any type of meeting with any company, it is recorded and put on the website.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, Irving Shipbuilding president Kevin McCoy has warned of significant layoffs at the Halifax Shipyard if the gap is too large between when construction ends on the six Arctic patrol ships and when work begins on the combat supply vessels in early 2022.

The government is currently still delaying these projects, despite massive costs to the defence budget and a significant possibility that hundreds of workers will lose their jobs because of the government's decision. How much will the delays in construction cost, and when will the surface combatant ship construction start?

• (2235)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as the Minister of National Defence, I can say that we are focused on our work with the minister of procurement to have all our ships delivered on time. I understand the challenges the companies have, and the minister of procurement will be working in that regard. I work very closely with the minister and with the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development in making sure that all the necessary steps are taken. We want to be able to speed up the process as much as possible. However, we have to follow all the necessary steps.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, we have seen the government interfere in the process with the combat ships by allowing unqualified BAE to bid on the project. The RFP has now undergone 52 amendments, and counting. Why have there been so many amendments so close to the original RFP closing date?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am the Minister of National Defence, and a lot of these questions are for the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. I can assure the member that when it comes to the requirements, they will be met. We are going to make sure that we follow all of the necessary steps in this case. In fact, as I stated, I work jointly with the minister when it comes to briefings to make sure that we can speed up the process. With regard to a lot of these questions, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement can answer them.

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Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, if the minister is working so closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, why is he allowing the department to make so many last-minute amendments to the project?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I do not have the answers to these questions. I work closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement in terms of my responsibility in this role. These are questions that can be answered by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how many of these amendments are coming from DND and how many specifically from procurement?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, one thing I can assure the member is that I have talked with my officials, the chief of the defence staff, and the navy as well, to make sure that when we do our work, we do it in an efficient and rigorous manner so that we do not have to make many changes. A lot of work needs to be done, and we have to trust in our officials to take the necessary steps. At the end of the day, the national shipbuilding strategy is a very large project and we need to get it right.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the U.K. Royal Navy has refused to consider the BAE T26 design, the same design for which the government is delaying the process to allow it to bid, costing taxpayers money and potential jobs. Was it DND's decision to delay the project to allow the T26 to be added, or was it the procurement department?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the selection of the design, or even the selection of the process for replacing search and rescue aircraft, I am not privy to that. It is an independent process. When the design is selected, I will be notified. It is a process that is taken by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. We are required to build the requirements. I make sure that when I work with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, we work in a manner that is co-operative and speeds up the process between our two departments.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, it is the joint responsibility of the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Services and Procurement for this project. Can he please tell us if it was defence that delayed the project to allow the T26 design to be added, or did this come from procurement? Where did the delay come from to allow this unqualified design to be added? Why are we delaying the project to allow this ship, which clearly violates the procurement minister's own rules for the shipbuilding process?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I have stated, when it comes to the Department of National Defence's role in this, we build the requirements. We work very closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. We want to move as quickly as possible, but when it comes to the actual process and how the procurement takes place, those steps are taken by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

• (2240)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I am sorry to belabour the point. If the Minister of National Defence works so closely with the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as he says, why can he not answer the simple question of whose decision it was to delay the

process to allow BAE to add its unqualified design to the bidding process?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, there are many questions that have to be answered by various companies. When there are legitimate questions or things that need to be worked out, our officials give the recommended advice, and these decisions are made within procurement. We need to make sure that we have the necessary information. At the same time, we need to tell the companies and our officials to do the due diligence, so at the end of the day we can have the necessary capability for the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I think this is a capability gap, but I think it is the capability of the minister.

The single biggest source of accrual space removed in budget 2017, \$2 billion, was for the combat ships. How many more billions will be removed because of the ongoing delays with this procurement, please?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we are committed to making sure that we move as quickly as possible, to making sure we move money into the right areas.

Being minister I'm so passionate about this topic. We should have been working on also replacing our ships, as I stated, the capability gap of the joint supply ships. We have no supply ships now. They should have been working on this. They had 10 years to fix the problem, and they did not. Now we are making sure that we move as quickly as possible, following all the necessary steps, to deliver these capabilities.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I will ask the question again, and please answer the question and stop pointing fingers at the past. How many more billions would be moved because of ongoing delays with this procurement process?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we want to make sure that the money is in the right areas for procurement. When it comes to making a decision on procurement, money is moved into the necessary areas.

When we take custody of a capability, when it comes, for example, to the fixed-wing search and rescue, a decision is made on the aircraft. Then as we take ownership of those aircraft, money is moved into various areas. That is how procurement is done.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, how long is the gap going to be between the Arctic patrol vessels and the combat ships? Why is there a gap when the new procurement strategy that was announced was designed to prevent such a gap?

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Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, we want to make sure that when we come to a gap, within 18 months within our government we could be able to move and make the process as efficient as possible. When the national shipbuilding strategy was designed, obviously there was a plan put in place, but regrettably, all the steps were not there.

We as a government are now working very hard to make sure that the national shipbuilding strategy is allowed to be a success. It is about jobs. It is about making sure we have the right capabilities for our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I would like to ask again, what would the gap be? Why is there a gap? The minister has stated that they are making it more efficient and making the gap smaller, but the president of Irving himself, who is building these ships, says the gap is growing larger and we are at risk of added costs or a massive layoff of skilled staff at Irving's shipyard because of the government's delay in moving forward with the design and the project.

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to going through our process to select a design off the shelf, it actually has increased. The process allows us to shrink the time frame of the project so that we can reduce this gap as much as possible, so this is about creating jobs. This is also about making sure we have all the right capabilities. We are committed to making sure the national shipbuilding strategy works.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the minister talks about reducing the gap, but again, the evidence is that the president of Irving says the gap is growing. We are seeing the gap is growing because the government is violating the procurement minister's own rules, who was saying only designs from ships already in service or mature existing designs will be accepted. Now the government is accepting designs and delaying the process to accept designs that violate the procurement minister's own words.

Will the Minister of National Defence please tell us what the size of the gap is, how many months, please, and when will we start working on the combat ships?

• (2245)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I said, I can assure the member that we are working very diligently to move the process along as quickly as possible, to make sure that we have all the necessary ships. Whether it is combat ships or whether it is the Arctic patrol vessels, a lot of work needs to be done. There is a very complex process that the company also has in place. We understand that we do not want to have gaps and we are working very hard to make sure that we reduce the gap as much as possible, and at the same time, ensure the Canadian Armed Forces have all the right ships and the capabilities we need.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, the government has promised annual reports on the shipbuilding strategy. We have not seen one yet. Will the minister tell us when that would be tabled, please?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, I am sure the Minister of Public Services and Procurement can answer the question of when the reports will be out.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Good heavens, Mr. Chair.

Who in DND was the architect of a lifelong muzzling of over 200 public servants involved in the sole-sourced Super Hornet purchase?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, when it comes to non-disclosure agreements, these are necessary steps that the department takes to make sure it protects the information from various companies. These are steps that are necessary to make sure that the information provided by various companies is protected.

The Chair: We probably have time for one very short question.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Chair, I am glad we have time for one more question, because I have not received a single answer tonight in 15 minutes. I will try to get one answer.

Who in DND was the architect, the person who imposed a lifelong muzzling of public servants involved in the sole-source purchase of the Super Hornets? Please, who was it in DND?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan: Mr. Chair, as I stated, when it comes to the non-disclosure agreements, these are necessary steps to be able to protect Canadian information.

Since the member wants to keep making fun of the situation, I am the Minister of National Defence and am focused on the requirements. I am happy take questions that are focusing on or are directly related to my portfolio. If he wants to play games in terms of asking questions related to other departments, I will try to answer in the best way possible.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin has approximately four minutes remaining because the time allocated for this debate will end at 10:51 p.m.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will use the four minutes for my speech. I thought I had 10 minutes, so I will shorten my speech.

I am pleased to take part in today's discussion on the main estimates for the Department of National Defence. This evening's debate has allowed us to address a wide range of topics concerning the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

I would like to take a few moments to talk about one aspect of this discussion that I think deserves more attention, and that is the role of the primary reserve. As a member of the Standing Committee on National Defence, I try to highlight this role. The primary reserve is a force of full-fledged Canadian Armed Forces members. Located in communities across Canada, their role is to be ready to conduct Canadian Armed Forces operations and to contribute to international peace and security. Reservists are found across Canada. No less than 117 communities, including Laval, are home to reserve units. Members of this House were once reservists, including the Minister of National Defence. I had the privilege of being an officer cadet of the Royal Canadian Air Force for 12 years.

With its association to the militia units that existed in the earliest days of our nation, the primary reserve represents a powerful link to our rich heritage. Beyond maintaining a strong connection between the military and Canadian communities, it also plays a significant role in domestic operations here at home. This can include response to natural disasters, as we have recently seen.

Of the 2,600 Canadian Armed Forces members who were deployed at peak strength to deal with this month's flooding in Quebec and eastern Ontario, nearly 900 of them were reservists from more than 60 reserve units across those two provinces. Reservists put on a remarkable display of citizenship, leadership, and commitment to their country.

It is important to recognize how the role of the reservist has evolved. Many Canadians still think of the reserve as a militia composed entirely of part-time citizen-soldiers. That is true for many reservists. However, others have a different role, one that is no less

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significant. Approximately 4,000 reservists work full time to command and administer the reserve units, training centres, and headquarters across Canada. They support the reserve itself. They bring to the military the vast knowledge and experience they gain from civilian practice. More broadly, primary reserve members have participated in international military operations alongside their counterparts from the regular force.

I will close by saying that the funding that is required to support and sustain the reserves, their training, and their activities is a critical investment for our country. I am proud of our government's defence efforts. I want to end by thanking all members of our Canadian Armed Forces and all of the staff at the Department of National Defence for their service.

• (2250)

[*English*]

The Chair: That will bring to an end the time allowed for this evening's committee of the whole. I thank all hon. members for their participation this evening over the four hours, and I thank the minister and his staff.

It being 10:51 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), all votes are deemed reported. This committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:53 p.m.)

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