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Friday, June 9, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 9, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The member for Montcalm has given notice of a question of privilege.

PRIVILEGE

RIGHTS OF NON-RECOGNIZED PARTIES

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we begin our last day of debate on Bill C-44, and all we have left is two hours and fifteen minutes.

We will not have an opportunity to speak at third reading because we are 34th in line at the eleventh hour of debate. I therefore submit to you that my parliamentary privilege has been violated. What had not yet happened three days ago is happening now. Time allocation is preventing a political party from speaking on a bill.

I would like to remind you that last month I raised a question of privilege about the government's plan to use more closure motions, thereby preventing members of non-recognized parties from participating in debate, stifling diversity of opinion, and basically bypassing the views and interests Bloc Québécois voters in what looks an awful lot like democracy denied.

In your ruling of June 6, 2017, you recognized that my concerns were legitimate:

The privilege of freedom of speech is undoubtedly the most important right accorded to members of this House.

However, you refused to fully endorse my arguments:

As the member's claims are more speculative in nature at this point, it would be premature and presumptive for the Chair to rule based on assumptions of what might transpire.

Well, now we are no longer speculating. Things that had not yet transpired three days ago are happening today. The Bloc Québécois will not be able to speak to Bill C-44, the budget implementation bill, the most important bill of the parliamentary session. However, the Bloc Québécois is the only party that caught one worrisome aspect of the bill.

By giving the infrastructure bank the status of agent of the crown, even on projects that are entirely private, Bill C-44 puts the financial

sector above Quebec's laws. With the infrastructure bank, after an order of the government, agricultural zoning, environmental protections, and municipal bylaws will no longer apply. This raises serious constitutional issues.

For a private construction project to be exempt from Quebec law, an old colonial-inspired power must be invoked, namely, declaratory power, but that needs to be done by Parliament on a project-by-project basis. Bill C-44 therefore invokes the government's power over public property to federalize the bank's projects. However, we are not talking about public property. We are talking about private investors. Bill C-44 may be unconstitutional. The Quebec National Assembly is unanimously opposed to this bill and the Government of Quebec is prepared to challenge it in court.

I know what you are thinking, Mr. Speaker. You are thinking that I am raising a point of debate. You are partly right. This issue definitely deserves to be debated, but that debate will never happen because the Bloc Québécois, the only party to raise this issue, would not be able to participate because of the discriminatory rules of the House.

In your June 6 ruling, you said that you cannot go against the will of the House. I find that unfortunate, but I understand. That being said, it is not time allocation motions alone that exclude the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party from debate. It is time allocation motions and the fact that we are relegated to 34th place in the speaking order.

Mr. Speaker, the hypothetical question that was asked three days ago has become a reality today. I am asking you to find that my parliamentary privileges have been violated. I am asking you to review the speaking order for debates in the House to ensure that all points of view can be heard, despite the repeated gag orders. That is the basis of our democracy. I am asking that all parties, recognized or not, be able to speak in the House in the first round of speeches.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Montcalm for his question of privilege. I note that he took the opportunity to include some aspects of the arguments concerning the bill being debated today. He cited a portion of my June 6 ruling, but I invite him to reread the ruling in its entirety. In it, I indicated the following:

The privilege of freedom of speech is undoubtedly the most important right accorded to members of this House. At the same time, there is an important distinction to be made between the right to freedom of speech and the right to participate in the proceedings of the House and its committees. Asked to rule on the right of members to make statements in the House pursuant to Standing Order 31, my predecessor stated on April 23, 2013, at page 15800 of *Debates*:

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“...there are inherent limits to the privilege of freedom of speech. Aside from the well-known prohibitions on unparliamentary language, the need to refer to other members by title, the rules on repetition and relevance, the sub judice constraints and other limitations designed to ensure that discourse is conducted in a civil and courteous manner, the biggest limitation of all is the availability of time.”

I thank hon. members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1010)

[*English*]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak today about the budget implementation act, also known as Bill C-44. Passage of the bill would implement the next chapter of the government's plan to strengthen the economy and grow the middle class. It would allow the government to continue making the necessary targeted investments that would create jobs, grow the economy, and provide more opportunities for Canadians.

A strong and growing middle class is the engine of our economy, and truly it is our highest priority.

[*Translation*]

When we were elected, we promised Canadians that we would make middle class families our priority and that is what we have done. We began by asking the wealthiest 1% to pay a bit more so that we could give a tax cut to the middle class. We then introduced the new Canada child benefit. This non-taxable benefit is much simpler, more generous, and better targeted to those who need it than the former system, the universal child care benefit.

[*English*]

We then reached a historic agreement with the provinces to help people retire with more dignity, by strengthening the Canada pension plan. We went even further to support Canadian families by investing \$6 billion over 10 years for home care and \$5 billion over 10 years for support for mental health initiatives. With the passage of Bill C-44, the government would provide funding for the first year for home care and mental health services to provinces and territories that have accepted the federal offer of \$11 billion over the next 10 years.

The steps we have taken to date are having a real, positive impact on our economy and on Canadians as a whole.

The steps we would be taking through Bill C-44 would have a positive impact on our parliamentary budget officer, also known as the PBO. Our government is committed to openness and transparency. That is why we have taken steps to strengthen the PBO in ways to make the office truly independent. Bill C-44 would recast the head of the PBO as an officer of Parliament, supported by

a team that was separate from the Library of Parliament, with the authority to report directly to Parliament. It would expand the PBO's right to access government information and would give the office a new mandate to provide costing platform proposals during elections so that voters could make informed decisions based on an independent financial analysis.

The government believes that the work of the PBO is fundamental to Parliament's ability to debate and to consider the economic and fiscal considerations of the day. That is why we listened and took action when we heard that more could be done to further strengthen the PBO's independence. The government took action by introducing 12 amendments to Bill C-44 at the House of Commons finance committee that would further strengthen the mandate of the PBO. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the committee, in both this place and on the Senate side, for the work they did and also for the collaboration in improving this legislation. It was through their efforts and those amendments that were brought forward that we found broad support. In fact, *The Globe and Mail* reported that “The government has placed Canada's PBO on strong legislative footing.”

I want to turn now to some major elements of Bill C-44, starting with a priority I know members of this House broadly support. One of the best ways we can bring confidence back to the middle class is by investing in public infrastructure to build stronger communities.

[*Translation*]

These days, governments around the world are facing a challenge. They have to figure out how to finance and build huge public works projects that are efficient, dynamic, affordable, and, most importantly, long-lasting.

• (1015)

[*English*]

This is why the government has laid out a historic plan to invest more than \$180 billion in infrastructure over the next 12 years. This investment will be unprecedented in Canadian history and will come at a time when we need it most. However, no level of government can accomplish this ambitious infrastructure goal alone. The Government of Canada will invest in a historic infrastructure plan, so we set our sights on a new kind of partnership, the kind that can leverage the strength of private sector investors and put their skills, talent, and capital to work for Canadians.

Bill C-44 would enact the Canada infrastructure bank act, which would establish the new Canada infrastructure bank as a crown corporation. The bank would amplify federal investments by bridging private sector and institutional investors at the table. Through this new bank, we would work with our partners to build world-class infrastructure that would transform communities, create good jobs, and build a stronger and greener economy. By establishing a new organization capable of working with the private sector where it makes sense, public dollars would go further and be used in a smarter, more targeted manner, transforming communities with projects that would not otherwise be built without the bank. To this end, the bank would only make investments in infrastructure projects that were in the public interest. I have to underline that. The bank would work with partners to determine whether projects were suitable candidates, including whether project sponsors were willing to consider robust revenue models and partnering with private investors in a new way. As a result, we would see more innovative approaches for large and transformational types of projects, and we would build more of them.

The bank would also have strong governance protocols for accountability and risk management. The bank would be structured as an arm's-length corporation.

[*Translation*]

Despite being at arm's length, the Canada infrastructure bank will be accountable to the government and Parliament through an appropriate minister. The bank will be required to seek government approval for its business plan every year and submit its annual report to Parliament. It will also be accountable to the Auditor General and a private sector auditor, which is the highest accountability standard applicable to crown corporations.

In addition, the minister responsible and Parliament will undertake a five-year review of the bank's enabling legislation and its implementation.

[*English*]

The government would be responsible for setting the overall policy direction and high-level investment priorities. In addition, the bank would work with all orders of government as well as investors to identify the pipeline of potential projects and potential investment opportunities.

With the Canada infrastructure bank, Canadians will enjoy the advantage of transformational infrastructures built to meet their needs and that help their communities thrive.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Senate for its thorough pre-study of Bill C-44, which the government followed with close interest, particularly as it pertained to the Canada infrastructure bank. I would like to thank Senator Harder and the government representatives in the Senate, as well as Senator Woo, the independent senator sponsoring this legislation. They have done tremendous work.

The scrutiny and the in-depth study that the Senate applied to Bill C-44 has been an important element in our parliamentary process. Their work has informed our deliberation by providing us with the benefits of independent legislative review during the course of the House proceedings. Senators, including independents and Senate

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Liberals and Conservatives, raised issues that the government has, as a result, given additional consideration and careful consideration.

In the case of infrastructure bank, the Minister of Finance was pleased to appear on May 31 to answer questions from the Senate Standing Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce. I would like to recognize the work of this committee, and its members as well, who went above and beyond to study this legislation. Once again, it was a job very well done.

Again, I would like to thank the Senate for the benefit of its pre-study, and note for the record that this scrutiny has informed the government's deliberation in advance of Bill C-44's passage.

Beyond all of the bricks and mortar, people really are at the heart of our plan. Last year, the government held broad-based consultations on how to improve the labour market transfer agreements, including the labour market development agreements.

● (1020)

[*Translation*]

One of the main messages we heard during the consultation is that these agreements have to be more flexible and do a better job of taking into account the diverse needs of employers and Canadians.

That is why we are planning to reform these agreements together with the provinces and territories.

[*English*]

This reform will ensure that more Canadians get the assistance they need to find and keep good jobs in the new economy, and build better lives for themselves and their families. We want to help Canadians get the training they need so that their first job is a great job, and their next job is an even better one. That is why we are taking steps to help working parents, who must balance the demands of raising a family while managing their own career needs in this time of transition.

Bill C-44 would allow parents to choose to receive EI parental benefits over an extended period of time, up to 18 months, at a lower benefit rate of 33% of the average weekly earnings. It also proposes to do more to provide greater flexibility to pregnant working women, giving them the option of claiming EI maternity benefits up to 12 weeks before their due date, expanded from the current standard of eight weeks, if they choose to do so.

Budget 2017 also takes action to support those who have put their lives on the line to make Canada a safe and secure place to live. Our women and men in uniform deserve a successful transition to civilian life.

First, we will create a new education and training benefit. This benefit will provide more money for veterans to go to college, university, or take a technical course at a technical school after they complete their service. Under the program, as of April 2018, veterans with six years of eligible service would be entitled to up to \$40,000 of benefits, while veterans with more than 12 years of eligible service would be entitled to up to \$80,000 of benefits. That is tremendous. This legislation will also facilitate the redesign of the career transition services program.

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This program will equip veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, survivors, and veterans' spouses and common-law partners with the tools they need to successfully navigate and transition to the civilian workforce. The services offered would be expanded to include coaching and job placement, starting in April 2018, all of which would be provided through a national contractor.

[Translation]

Finally, Bill C-44 will provide very generous assistance to family caregivers in recognition of the essential role they play in helping ill and injured veterans. This tax-free monthly benefit will replace the existing family caregiver relief benefit and will be paid directly to family caregivers.

[English]

I want to stress that we understand that the job is not yet done and more needs to be done.

Veterans and stakeholders have told us that the existing suite of programs is complex and difficult to navigate, and that is simply not good enough. We intend to take additional action to streamline and simplify the system of financial support programs currently offered to veterans over the coming months. This is certainly a priority for this government. That will include fulfilling our commitment to re-establishing lifelong pensions as an option for injured veterans, so that veterans and their families can decide for themselves which form of compensation works best for them.

Also, recognizing that all families, military or not, must sometimes become caregivers to their relatives, the government has announced a new Canada caregiver credit program. Bill C-44 proposes to simplify the existing tax support for caregivers by replacing three credits with a single new credit.

[Translation]

This new non-refundable tax credit will provide better support to those who need it. It will go to family caregivers regardless of whether they live with the family member they care for, and it will help families with caregiving duties.

[English]

The new Canada caregiver credit will provide tax relief of an amount of \$6,883 in 2017 in respect of care of dependent relatives with infirmities, including persons with disabilities, which includes parents, brothers, sisters, adult children, and any other specific relative. It will be \$2,150 in 2017 in respect of care of a dependent spouse or common-law partner or minor child with an infirmity, including those with a disability. Families will be able to take advantage of the new Canada caregiver credit as soon as the 2017 tax year.

• (1025)

To conclude, the bill before us has concrete measures to move Canada forward, grow our economy, and create good jobs.

[Translation]

However, we can do more, and we will do more to help the middle class and those working hard to join it. We will ensure that economic growth helps all Canadians, not just the wealthy, and we will help families build a brighter future for their children and grandchildren.

[English]

I urge all members to support this bill and to work with us on those portions of it that could benefit from our own views and ideas, so that at the end of the day we meet the high standards and expectations that Canadians have put on us.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on page 252 of the 2017 budget, the personal income tax is projected to grow by about 7% in 2018. However, if the government is taxing Canadians less, why is the projection of personal income tax growing by such a big margin, to 7%, in 2018? I would like to have clarification on this if possible.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, our government was elected on a promise to help middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it. The first thing that our government actioned when we formed government was lowering taxes for middle-class Canadians. We also increased taxes for the wealthiest 1%. We put in place a very generous Canada child benefit program to make sure we could help Canadian families in need, such as those families who need help to support their kids. This is exactly what we have done. We have also put some very important measures in place with respect to helping our senior population.

All of these measures put together have been put in place to ensure we can help Canadian families succeed, which is exactly what we have been doing and what we will continue to do.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the Liberals roundly criticized the Conservatives when they introduced omnibus bills that contained many bills in one. On top of that, the Liberals have imposed a second time allocation motion to cut the debate short. My Bloc Québécois colleague pointed out again this morning how appalling it is that so few members have an opportunity to speak. Only one NPD member will be allowed to speak today on the most important bill of the session, Bill C-44 on the budget. This is completely undemocratic. The Liberals used to scream till they were blue in the face about how undemocratic this is.

Here is my question. The member said that this bill will help the middle class. In addition to the 30 acts that it will amend, this bill also creates an infrastructure privatization bank. Municipalities like the ones in my riding of Salaberry—Suroît, municipalities like Rivière-Beaudette, Elgin, and Ormstown, will not be able to afford infrastructure projects worth \$100,000 or more and will therefore not have access to this privatization bank. Projects that are supposed to be for communities, for the middle class, but are funded by private companies that want to turn a profit will never be within their reach.

How can the hon. member say that this is for the middle class, that it is good for everyone, and that it is democratic?

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Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleague for the question and its sub-questions.

I want to address the question of the omnibus bill. First, in our campaign platform, in 2015, we were clear that we would not use omnibus bills excessively. All the measures included in Bill C-44 are tax measures, measures that are very important for Canadians. We in no way took advantage of the bill to hide other bills that we wanted to introduce. That is my answer to the first question.

Second, the infrastructure bank will help Canadians across the country. Many communities will be able to use it for transformative projects. As far as the smaller municipalities are concerned, they will have access to money that is invested, that is set aside for these projects.

Again, the previous government underinvested in infrastructure for a decade. We are making historic investments to secure these projects, an investment of over \$180 million over 12 years.

• (1030)

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed. The budget implementation act is a key piece of legislation. I was hoping to speak to it today. I noticed last night that we spent a lot of time talking about two bills that basically correct some issues that the Prime Minister himself created, instead of having an opportunity to debate this bill.

Having said that, I have both a large and a small concern that I would like to address. The larger concern is the dismissal of the election promise in terms of a balanced budget. Because of that, the Liberals are having to nickel-and-dime Canadians. It is a hot day today, and many Canadians will arrive home perhaps wanting to have a beer after a day of work. What the Liberals put in this bill is completely unprincipled, and I see it as a foreshadowing of the automatic tax increases that are to come. That is a small issue, but when people get home and have that beer on a Friday night, they will know that year after year the price will continue to increase, with no transparency. It is unheard of.

Can the minister share with the people across Canada why the government would do something that is so undemocratic?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, our government has put a plan in place to help middle-class Canadians and to grow the economy, and that is exactly what we have been doing. The good news is that more numbers have come out today, and we have seen the creation of a quarter of a million new full-time jobs over the past six months, the best six months we have seen in over 15 years. That is fantastic news. We are seeing more Canadians at work. We are seeing a Prime Minister working for Canadians. We are there to help middle-class Canadians and those who are working hard to join it.

Once again, we are making some strategic investments to make sure that these programs work. We will continue to move forward with our plan, because the evidence is clear that our plan is working and the economy is growing.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary talking about the Canadian

economy and how great it is. Maybe she should visit my riding and ask how it is working for the people there.

The government always claims that its most important relationship is with Canada's indigenous people. How is that working in my riding?

The Huu-ay-aht won a special claims travel decision for \$13.8 million. The government appealed it. It said it was not going to fight indigenous people in court, yet it keeps doing that.

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth won its court case 10 years ago for their right to catch and sell fish. The government appealed the decision in the Supreme Court. It was thrown out not once but twice. The Liberal government is still dragging it out, while people are living in poverty, overcrowded housing, and have serious mental health needs. Suicide is real in those communities in my riding. This is how the government treats its most important relationship?

How much money does the government have in its budget to fight Canada's indigenous people? They want to know why they are not a priority.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his passion and concern for aboriginal people. They are certainly a priority for our government. There is no more important relationship than the one we have with our indigenous people.

When I look at budgets 2016 and 2017, we have made historic investments to those communities, and we will continue to do even more. We have done much more than the previous government did in its 10 years in power.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her hard work on the budget.

There is so much goods in this budget for Manitoba compared to previous budgets. The new budget shows an overall increase of \$148 million from 2016. As we speak, \$58 million are being spent on new water treatment plants for first nations and indigenous communities, including \$20 million for Freedom Road, for which which we are grateful.

Could the hon. parliamentary secretary comment on the important relationship between our government and indigenous peoples in Manitoba and in Canada as a whole?

• (1035)

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the hard work that he does in his riding.

Government Orders

Once again, there is no more important relationship than the one with aboriginal communities. We will continue to make the historic investments that are needed.

We recognize that every Canadian should have access to clean water. We will work hard to ensure that all the boiled water orders are lifted with the investments that will be made.

We recognize that more can be done, and more will be done, but we are very proud of the historic investments we have made over the past two years.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance for her speech. I am not sure that people in her riding of Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe are happy with the budget. Contrary to what she claims, this budget does not do anything for the ordinary Canadians who work hard every day and keep this country going. This budget helps the interest groups that make up the Liberal Party of Canada's electoral base.

I find it ironic that the parliamentary secretary thanked the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance for its hard work in analyzing the 2017 budget implementation bill, since it is quite likely that the other place will ask that the infrastructure bank provisions be removed from this omnibus bill. We have many questions and concerns about the infrastructure bank, questions that have gone unanswered during question period and in committee.

The infrastructure bank protects the investments of private investors to the detriment of Canadian taxpayers. That is ironic since private companies pride themselves on taking risks. Entrepreneurs are the ones who have the moxie to take risks. They have the expertise, the ideas, the innovate spirit, and the courage needed to do things that way. Canadians are already paying taxes to keep the country running. It is not their responsibility to protect private sector investments. That is one of the things that we find worrisome about this bill.

What is more, the government has taken \$15 billion away from community infrastructure projects to fund this new bank, a measure that my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent has decried before. He has said that the communities in Quebec's regions will not get any support from the infrastructure bank because it deals only with projects worth over \$100 million. Rimouski or Baie-Comeau cannot afford a \$100-million arena.

In reality, this bank will serve only the interests of big cities and those that have been especially selected on the basis of the votes for the Liberal Party in 2015. That was my opening statement.

The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance had the audacity to say that it was a budget for people, for Canadians, when it is the complete opposite. Bill C-44, like the 2016 budget, targets Liberal interest groups, "post-national" interest groups that have very specific goals and that resort to the Supreme Court to argue their political positions instead of going through the House. This time, they certainly have the government's ear, and their political demands are being heard loud and clear, because this budget does nothing but meet their needs.

There is something else that makes me extremely uncomfortable. The title of the budget is "Building a Strong Middle Class". What it should have been is "building a strong country for everyone".

Of course we want a strong middle class; I understand that, but I put myself in the shoes of millions of Canadians who are going to look at their pay and wonder whether they belong to the middle class. It is an open secret in Canadian politics that the Liberal government always talks about the middle class because most people want to be able to feel that the middle class includes them, even if they may not really be part of it, based on their income. It is a trick, a catch-all, but people subconsciously hear that the Liberals are working for the members of one class only, and not for all Canadians.

• (1040)

In my opinion, Bill C-44, which would implement budget 2017, does not really reflect Canada's structural needs, both current and future. It is a bill that amends certain measures and sprinkles money here and there. There is really no overarching vision when it comes to the direction the country is going in. It is really an ideological, vote-seeking budget plan. What it actually offers is deficits and highly targeted expenditures to please a few interest groups. I will name some of them. I note in passing that these interest groups have all the right in the world to exist, but they should be not be the priority in a budget. The priority should be all Canadians in general.

This budget focuses on NGOs, groups that generate media interest, various civil society groups, and academic elites—the number of research chairs has grown. All universities are receiving incredible amounts of money. That is fine for research, but here again, that is not what helps average Canadians.

Next are the urban and financial elites, the environmentalists, the "post-nationalists", who pretend that there is no culture or common ground in Canada, that French Canadians do not exist, and that they are just one group among many.

Then there are the civil liberties groups. The groups of litigants who have been going to the Supreme Court since 1982 to get preferential rights, to circumvent the House, to get faster decisions that change the course of Canadian politics in their favour. There are the anti-globalists, the social engineers who think that by changing social policy they will be able to make things better. They are doing it for purely ideological reasons without really stopping to think about the potential consequences of their actions, which are based on a world view rather than on rational facts and most importantly on a desire to help all Canadians.

What I am essentially saying is that Bill C-44 does not meet Canada's continental challenges, the North American challenges we face on the economic, military, and social fronts. The bill also fails to meet the international economic, military, social, and even environmental challenges we are facing.

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Since the end of the 1990s, we have been living in a highly competitive world. More than ever, the west, including Canada, is slowing down. We are seeing the emergence of new world powers, the BRICS we all know about, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. There is also Nigeria, with the largest population in Africa and an economy that is increasingly important in Africa and the world.

With their economic growth, their increasing military importance, and their now enormous populations—the countries I named easily represent half of the world's population—these emerging countries want energy resources. In spite of what they may say in their speeches at the United Nations, they want cars, they want to be consumers, they want oil, they want to be mobile, and they want a western lifestyle. For the last 20 years, and this is certainly a good thing, we have seen a growing transfer of wealth from north to south. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s. It is to be expected and it is a good thing.

However, we need a government like the previous Conservative government that understands international geopolitics and understands the major economic challenges that lie ahead. The economic crisis of 2007-08 was undeniably terrible and was perhaps the harbinger of other things to come.

There is a certain impoverishment happening in Canada, perhaps not so much for people, but in terms of infrastructure. For example, our icebreakers are completely obsolete, our highways in the Maritimes need repair, and our ports and airports should be updated, particularly Beauport 2020 in Quebec City, which really needs investments.

• (1045)

Sometimes I get the impression that Canada does not realize that it is losing ground in terms of its international role as an economic and diplomatic driver.

There is also the North American context. The United States is suffering from the emergence of the BRICS countries. That is one of the reasons why the current president was elected. Americans are extremely worried because 20 million people are unemployed in the U.S. Isolationism is taking hold again. The media talks about this as though it were a new phenomenon, but on the contrary, isolationism re-emerges in the U.S. roughly every 50 years.

In this isolationist context, there will be major tax cuts in the United States for businesses and individuals. This political context is reactionary on economic, social, military, and diplomatic levels. It is not up to us to decide whether this is good or bad. The Americans will develop their economic isolationism.

I see that in Bill C-44, which would implement budget 2017, the Liberal government does not seem to explain how we are going to deal with this new North American reality or how we are going to make sure that Canadian companies are competitive in the face of American isolationism and a less porous border that allows for less trade. Trade between Canada and the United States is worth \$2 billion a day, so that is pretty significant. These isolationist American reactions, which will last at least three years and a few months, are going to have very significant effects on Canada, but we are not hearing the Liberals talk about this.

We are also seeing a Canadian context taking shape before our eyes. The economic health of the federation has been going downhill for two years. For example, we are astonished to see that the Liberals never talk about the significant loss of economic growth in Alberta and the major job losses for Albertans. They also do not talk about the employment problems in the Atlantic provinces. They do not talk about the importance of Montreal and Quebec City. Simply put, we are not hearing them really talk about the role of each province in our country's economic unity.

For example, we have been telling them for several months now that it is incomprehensible that there is no free trade between the provinces in Canada, when it is right there in the Constitution. That is why we have asked them to make a reference to the Supreme Court to have the judges interpret the Constitution as it is written, and give us a definitive judgment that sets out, in black and white, that we should have free trade among the provinces. That would certainly help our businesses everywhere in Canada.

There is a real need to complete major projects for the next 100 years. Once again, this budget tell us about building a strong middle class, but it does not contain any major projects that will ensure there will be even more wealth creation in 50 years. All the interest groups that the Liberals favour in their platform and their budget are systematically opposed to any long-term major projects.

I always like to take the example of the premier of Quebec, Mr. Bourassa, who created gigantic hydro-electric projects in the 1970s, dams such as had never been seen in the history of humanity. Recently, the record was topped by a dam in China, but until very recently, we had the biggest dams in the world in Quebec. That means that today, we in Canada and Quebec are the ones who pay the lowest prices for electricity. That is one of the few things that we pay the lowest prices for, but because of that, we have a healthy welfare state in Quebec and services that are overall quite adequate.

What is there in Canada at present, however, that guarantees that in 50 years—I will still be here if I am lucky—our children and grandchildren will enjoy rising wealth? There is nothing in this bill that guarantees us that, because it focuses only on the present moment and aims simply to please vote-getting groups that make up the Liberal voting base, which is slowly but surely crumbling.

• (1050)

According to my own and my Conservative colleagues' analysis, Bill C-44 shows that the Liberals are working for the financial elite of the infrastructure bank of Canada and the social elites who want to make major policy changes, not to create jobs, but to suit their own world view. There is nothing there for working people, however. That is why the Conservative opposition has a moral and political obligation to be the voice of taxpayers in the House.

As I said in the House yesterday, we might be better off talking about the responsibilities of citizenship, the Canadian Armed Forces, and how we can serve our country. Instead, we have no choice but to talk about the importance of lowering taxes and creating jobs because those two things are in peril under this government.

Statements by Members

Taxes keep going up. This year alone, Canadians' tax burden is going up by nearly \$5 billion. That includes taxes on public transit, carpooling, beer and wine, also known as the Friday and Saturday night tax, medication, child care, small business owners, oil and gas companies, which represent millions of jobs in Canada, and tourism. That is a very long list of taxes, and the government is breaking one promise after another.

Worse still is the \$29-billion deficit, which has nothing to do with economic conditions. Unlike the deficit at the time of the 2007-08 economic crisis, this deficit has nothing to do with a need to stimulate the economy and create jobs. This deficit exists because the government wanted its budget to cater to the needs of the interest groups I mentioned at the beginning of my speech. Plus, these deficits have no end date.

This is the first time that we have a Canadian finance minister who is incapable of answering a simple question: when does he plan to eliminate Canada's fiscal deficit? Will it be in 2017, 2018, 2020, 2030, or 2040? He has no idea. He does not take the economy as seriously as he should.

It is important to remind Canadians that the deficit has exploded over the past two years. Through words and actions alike, the Liberal government is creating budgets to take money away from taxpayers and spread it around to certain special interest groups, rather than all Canadians. The government is trying to divide Canadians by saying that it is working for the middle class, and not for everyone else. It has no overall vision for Canada, particularly when it comes to continental and international challenges. In addition, it keeps introducing outdated bills in the House, like the one to raise the salary of ministers of state.

They should be focusing on more important matters. I am sure you are also concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, but you can rest assured. Until 2019, we will continue to stand up for Canadian taxpayers every day, until midnight if necessary, and we will make sure that this government does not win another term, so that 60 years from now, Canada will not reflect this terrible mismanagement.

•(1055)

[*English*]

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Beauport—Limoilou is the Conservative critic for Public Services and Procurement Canada. He was previously the Conservative critic for veterans affairs. The government has recently announced major new expenditures related to both of those areas that were not in the federal budget. In the past couple of weeks, we saw another \$140 million to try to fix the Phoenix pay system, which is fast becoming a billion-dollar boondoggle. We also saw billions of additional dollars for national defence, possibly in response to pressure from President Trump.

Could my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou comment on the fact that these expenditures were not in the budget, and what implications that has for the credibility of the legislation that we are debating today?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Mr. Speaker, that is interesting because it is very hard to understand what exactly the spending in the budget is. I am not the only one saying that. It is not just the opposition saying that. The media, analysts, and economists have been saying that. It is

a very complex omnibus bill with different avenues and spending going all over the place. One thing is for sure though. It is that the money goes to interest groups, not to Canadians. They take money from Canadians to give to interest groups.

Concerning veterans, there were some interesting measures put in place, but again, the new charter for veterans that was put in place by the government in 2006, just before the arrival of the new Conservative government, was the wrong paradigm. We should replace the charter with lifelong pensions. That is what the Liberals promised in the last election and that is what they should put in place, not these small measures. They should bring back the lifelong pension. That was one of their major promises and I hope they will not break it.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The member will have another eight minutes for questions and comments after oral question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the Liberals' big promises to be open and transparent, today the government is even less transparent than it was during the last year Stephen Harper's Conservatives were in office.

The Information Commissioner released a scathing report yesterday that indicated that this government is even more secretive than Stephen Harper's. The conclusion that the Information Commissioner came to is that this is the information era and it is time that Ottawa got on board.

This government is hiding more than a government that was openly suspicious of the media. Documents are redacted or hidden and requests are ignored. The only things the Liberals want to show are selfies of the Prime Minister and pictures of nice dinners. When it comes to providing easier access to information, they are anything but transparent.

Just because the Liberal members from Quebec are invisible does not mean that the government is transparent.

* * *

EVENTS IN OTTAWA—VANIER

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the Minister of Environment for the sunshine in tomorrow's forecast.

[*English*]

Tomorrow there are two important charitable walks in Ottawa—Vanier.

*Statements by Members***FRENCH IMMERSION**

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada's 150th anniversary is an important opportunity to celebrate Canada's linguistic duality as a key aspect of our collective identity and as a gift for future generations.

Despite long wait lists for French immersion programs in Vancouver, the Christy Clark Liberal government and its school board appointee are cutting French immersion enrolment for kindergarten students by one-quarter next year. This will result in 135 fewer spaces, and five schools will lose one class each.

[*Translation*]

Many parents who want to register their children in this very popular program will be upset about this, and even more children will be deprived of the opportunity to be bilingual.

I urge the federal government to defend bilingualism and our official languages across the country in order to ensure that all Canadian students have access to education in French and in English.

* * *

[*English*]

JACK LANG

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to honour the public service legacy of Jack Lang, who served the Pontiac region as mayor and councillor of Clarendon for 24 years. He set a high bar for politicians following in his footsteps.

Jack worked for many years in the forestry industry at the Smurfit-Stone pulp mill in Portage-du-Fort. He was a valued member of the congregation of Shawville's United Church, and was a volunteer with the local fire department, the Shawville Kinsmen Club, the Pontiac Agricultural Society, the Pontiac Community Hospital Foundation, the Shawville Minor Hockey Association, among so many others.

He was a true ambassador for the Pontiac. I will never forget how comfortable he made me feel at the Shawville Fair, encouraging me to join in all the activities.

Jack had such an open and welcoming manner, behaviour that bears the mark of a true leader.

For his family, I offer the condolences of an entire region. He represented that which is great about the Pontiac.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on January 17, 2015, RCMP Constable David Wynn was fatally shot while on duty by a criminal with a lengthy record.

Curvy Girls Scoliosis Support Group of Ottawa will celebrate its 6th annual walk of Scoliosis Awareness Month. This will support Curvy Girls Scoliosis Support Group, a peer-led support group for teens of all ages who have been diagnosed with scoliosis.

[*Translation*]

The Walk for ALS will also take place tomorrow in many Canadian cities. Walk for ALS is the largest fundraiser for ALS in Canada and is led by an impressive number of volunteers.

I look forward to joining my hon. colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell who will help me lead Team Mauril as we raise money and celebrate hope for a future without ALS.

• (1100)

[*English*]

I hope my colleagues will take the time to remember our dear friend, Mauril, and will join me or make a donation to Team Mauril.

* * *

MUDCAT FESTIVAL

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, a large catfish statue named “Muddy the Mudcat” will welcome visitors to Dunnville in my beautiful riding of Haldimand—Norfolk for the 43rd annual Mudcat Festival.

Named after Dunnville's popular catfish found in the waters of the Grand River, this festival draws in crowds from all over to experience its exciting parade, thrilling midways, and breathtaking fireworks. In fact, for a town of only 6,000 people, this festival attracts 10 times its population.

This year the Mudcat Festival will offer new events, such as the strong man and strong woman competitions, firefighters' street dance, the first-ever mudcat marathon, and a special tribute to our veterans.

Huge thanks go out to all of the volunteers and businesses involved in making this event possible, especially Margaret and Kimberly Clarke. Without them, this festival would not happen.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a large group of volunteers that donated its time and energy for a good cause in my riding of Nepean this past weekend.

On Saturday, seven churches across Nepean and Barrhaven took part in the “Big Give”, a city-wide garage sale where all items were free. Hundreds of volunteers came together to spread kindness and generosity in a unified day of giving.

I would like to thank Jon Griffiths, Anne McGregor, Mark Scarr, Ryan Dawson, Dan Guther, Daniel Tjoe-A-Long, and the congregations of The Metropolitan Bible Church, Woodvale Pentecostal Church, Good Shepherd Barrhaven, Longfields Community Church, Sequoia Community Church, Cedarview Alliance Church, and Bibleway Ministries for giving back to our communities and making the Big Give a success once again this year.

Statements by Members

Bill S-217 would require criminal history to be considered during a bail hearing. The bill would address a glaring oversight with two simple common-sense changes to the Criminal Code.

There was all-party support in the House for the bill. However, exactly one month ago today, members of the House of Commons Standing Committees on Justice and Human Rights adopted a report recommending that Parliament not proceed further with the bill.

Police associations across the country, including mine in the city of Saskatoon, are asking all parliamentarians to work across party lines to pass this important legislation.

The bill, to be debated next week, is aimed at protecting our communities, a goal all Canadians share.

* * *

● (1105)

MISSISSAUGA-LAKESHORE CONSTITUENCY YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Mississauga-Lakeshore Constituency Youth Council, which is an amazing group of young people. Last weekend, it ran a toiletries drive to help the Compass food bank, in Port Credit.

For weeks prior, the youth council profiled stories of Compass volunteers and clients on social media to shed light on the need for access to basic necessities, such as diapers, shampoo, razors, feminine hygiene products, and toothpaste.

The team reached out to businesses, faith-based organizations, schools, and libraries, and canvassed neighbourhoods to build support for its initiative. Through its hard work, the Compass received over 1,000 pounds of toiletries.

I would like to thank Sean, Pernia, Meghan, Nolan, Rida, Chris, Jonathan, Cassandra, Ethan, Steph, Hamza, Vlad, Caleigh, Jessie, and A.J. for their amazing efforts, and give a special shout-out to Hanan Harb in my constituency office. Her leadership inspired the youth council throughout this project.

This team made a real difference in our community. I ask all members in the House to join with me in recognizing these young people.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN VETERANS

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past week, my city honoured the 2,800 Canadian veterans of the war in Afghanistan, 159 of whom paid the supreme sacrifice. More than 400 soldiers came from Hamilton military units. Four of them lost their lives.

The tribute is a permanent monument, located at the Warplane Heritage Museum, in the form of a LAV III armoured vehicle, offered through a program by Canada Company. Keven Ellis and his North Wall Riders Motorcycle Association crowd-funded, without government help, the \$40,000 needed to buy the vehicle and arrange its display.

Thanks to the dedication of Mr. Ellis and his North Wall Riders, and the generosity of Hamiltonians, we dedicated our LAV III Afghanistan monument last Saturday, with regular, reserve, and veteran soldiers, and hundreds of civilians attending.

We are proud of our military in Hamilton. I encourage every community to follow the lead of a number of Canadian cities that have honoured their Afghan veterans.

* * *

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, July 1st is the 150th anniversary of the British North American Act, or BNA.

The BNA is Canada's DNA. It transformed 650 years of British parliamentary democracy designed for a small island in the old world into a vast new federation in the new one. It needed no high-minded ideals about rights and freedoms because it was understood that Canadians would inherit the great freedoms of the Magna Carta: freedom from arbitrary arrest and confiscation; freedom from taxation without representation; freedom of speech, belief, and enterprise; jury trials; an elected Parliament.

As Wilfrid Laurier, our first Franco-Canadian prime minister, said, "France gave us life; Britain gave us liberty."

Let us celebrate these ancient liberties and the prosperity and freedom they have allowed us to enjoy for over a century and a half.

* * *

AVIE BENNETT

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Spadina—Fort York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, famed intellectual Marshall McLuhan once penned the phrase, "Culture is Our Business"; business is our culture. The noted University of Toronto professor may have written that, but Avie Bennett personified it.

This past weekend Avie Bennett passed away at 89 years old.

Avie Bennett may be best known for rescuing the publishing house known as McClelland & Stewart back in 1985. It is the publishing house that first gave Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Michael Ondaatje to Canadians and then to the world. When it was on the verge of collapse, Mr. Bennett led the charge to save it.

Mr. Bennett made his fortune as a developer, but he made his mark in our country building some of this nation's great cultural institutions: Canada's National Ballet School, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Frank Gehry addition to that. York University was led by this great Canadian and Torontonian. They all benefited from his leadership.

Statements by Members

He was a quiet giant. When awarded a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2004, he was described as “one of the great altruists of our time.”

Our artists, Toronto, and this nation will miss Avie, but not as much as his family will. He travelled them far, and they will travel with him within their hearts forever more.

Farewell and I thank him.

* * *

• (1110)

VANCOUVER QUADRA CONSTITUENCY YOUTH COUNCIL

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this spring, the Vancouver Quadra Constituency Youth Council organized a public great debate. It was ably co-chaired by CBC's Chris Brown. Inside the packed Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, the high school students authored and debated four policy issues: one, when should the voting age be lowered; two, should it be illegal to hold cetaceans in captivity; three, should the safe third country agreement be rescinded; and, four, should university education be free?

They pitted themselves against some of the brightest minds in Vancouver in this debate: professors, lawyers, managers, and even a former Canadian ambassador. The students won a number of their debates with their poise, intellectual prowess, and a dynamism that would make everyone in the House proud.

I congratulate the members of the Vancouver Quadra Constituency Youth Council on a year of hard work. I look forward to sharing their input with our Prime Minister.

* * *

[*Translation*]

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Supreme Court decision of July 8, 2016, known as the Jordan decision, too many people charged with crimes have had their charges dropped because of stays of proceedings. Justice is not being served for many victims, who are left to deal with the aftermath.

For instance, Dannick Lessard, who was riddled with bullets, is furious that the man charged for the crime was released because of the Jordan decision. He wants justice. According to the director of criminal and penal prosecutions for Quebec, 193 defendants have escaped prosecution. One of the Government of Canada's primary responsibilities is to guarantee a justice system that works for all Canadians by ensuring that there are always enough judges to hear cases within a reasonable time frame. The safety of Canadians should be paramount, and their trust in the justice system is vital to our democracy.

I join with victims of crime in Quebec and call on the federal government to appoint 10 more judges to the Quebec Superior Court immediately.

[*English*]

“UNINTERRUPTED” ARTS INSTALLATION

Mr. Terry Beech (Burnaby North—Seymour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, wild salmon are the lifeblood of the west coast. I rise today to celebrate a high-tech art installation coming to Vancouver titled “Uninterrupted”, which reveals the story of wild Pacific salmon on an unprecedented scale.

Beginning June 28, after dusk, audiences will witness the extraordinary migration of these iconic fish projected across the entirety of the Cambie Street Bridge. At over one kilometre in length, this will be one of the largest projections of original cinematography ever attempted.

I would like to congratulate Rae Hull, a dear friend and local constituent who is a producer for the project. The team has been working for three years to bring the story of Pacific salmon to the heart of Vancouver during the celebration of Canada 150.

I look forward to joining the launch, and I invite everyone to visit this extraordinary installation.

* * *

LEADER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize a constituent who was recently elected to lead a national organization.

This young Regina—Lewvan resident has impressed many with his civic engagement and sunny disposition. I cannot name this constituent because he is also a member of the House. I am of course congratulating the new Conservative leader.

The member for Regina—Qu'Appelle is a student of the Westminster system, and must be almost as excited as I am about the newly elected British Parliament.

Let me be the first to congratulate Jeremy Corbyn in the Canadian Parliament. The British Labour Party made significant gains campaigning on a bold, progressive platform. Our sister party's success is an inspiration to the NDP as we choose a new leader to build Canada for the many, not the few.

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POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the average rate of suicide within the general public is 11.5 per 100,000 people. The rate of suicide within the first responder community is 56 per 100,000 people.

Today Peel Region paramedics are saying goodbye to one of their own. He was a husband, a father, a friend, and a brother. This past week families, friends, and colleagues said goodbye to first responders from North Battleford, Saskatchewan, from North Vancouver, and from northern British Columbia. Four lives were cut short because of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Oral Questions

My bill, Bill C-211, comes too late for these families. I hope next week, when Bill C-211 enters the House for third reading, that it passes unanimously, because collectively we will send a message that these deaths were not in vain, that we stand together in the fight against PTSD, and that those who are suffering are not alone.

To my colleagues, we must be better; we must do better. To the families, friends, and colleagues of the fallen, my heart goes out to them, and I am truly sorry for their loss.

* * *

• (1115)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Kim Rudd (Northumberland—Peterborough South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge three funding initiatives in my riding of Northumberland—Peterborough South that exemplify the rural renaissance in eastern Ontario.

Twenty-three start-up companies are now benefiting from a total investment of almost \$700,000. These start-ups represent the best in Canada's innovation agenda. These funds are targeting the acceleration of promising technology start-ups. Additionally, \$1 million is being allocated to create the Northumberland venture fund, with support from the eastern Ontario development program. Finally, the Venture 13 project will allow a dedicated hub for start-ups with an initial investment of \$400,000 through the federal collaborative economic development program.

This is a shining example of true collaboration. I want to thank Wendy Curtis and her team at the Northumberland Community Futures Development Corporation for having the vision, and our federal government and the communities that supported it. We are helping create a brighter future for eastern Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development said, “under the Investment Canada Act, all transactions are subject to a national security review. Therefore, we have followed the process.”

He was referring to Norsat, but that company put out a statement saying, “the Minister responsible for the Investment Canada Act... has served notice that there will be no order for review of the transaction under...the Act.”

Which is it?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, every single transaction is subject to a national security review. This is a multi-step review process, and the process was followed.

We take the advice and feedback from our national security agencies very seriously, and based on that advice, we proceeded with this transaction. I want to reassure the member and this House that we never, ever will compromise our national security.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is the opposite of what the company in question has said in publicly released documents. Furthermore, David Mulroney, Canada's former ambassador to China and a foreign and defence policy adviser to the Prime Minister, and Richard Fadden, the former CSIS director, have both raised the alarm bell about the approval of this transaction without appropriate national security review.

Why is it that this minister is ignoring Canada's national security experts and putting patented national security technology in the hands of those who cannot be trusted with it?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that this is a multi-step national security review process, which is very rigorous. Did Canada's national security agencies examine this deal? The answer is yes. Did the government follow the security agencies' recommendations? The answer is yes, so Canadians can be confident in the knowledge that Canada's security agencies have done their due diligence.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the due diligence necessary comes in section 25 of the act, which requires, in instances where national security matters are at stake, that there be a full and complete review, something the company in question says did not happen.

The former ambassador to China from Canada has said that this is “worrying”. The former CSIS director has said there should have been a review. Why did this minister and this government ignore all of these voices before approving this transaction?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the exact opposite. We did not ignore any voices. We actually followed the advice given to us by our national security agencies.

Again, the member opposite knows full well that we followed the process, did our due diligence, and did our homework, and I would like to remind the member opposite that all transactions are subject to a national security review. We never have and we never will compromise our national security.

• (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not so long ago, Canada was governed by responsible people. The Conservative government opposed the sale of ITF, a Montreal company, to Chinese interests for reasons of national security. Unfortunately, the irresponsible Liberal government reversed that decision and yesterday we found out in *The Globe and Mail* that the government is allowing the sale of another company, Norsat, skipping the crucial step that is a national security review.

Why is the government playing games with our security?

Oral Questions

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with my colleague.

[*English*]

We will never, ever compromise our national security, and let us be clear with respect to the specific case mentioned by the member opposite on O-NET. We did not overturn a cabinet order. The previous government managed the process so poorly that it ended up in court.

We have a rigorous process. We examined all the facts from our national security agencies, and the law was followed. Again, the law was followed, and we acted with the full advice given to us by our national security agencies.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's problem is that it is not just Conservatives who are concerned; the company itself says that it did not have to go through this very stringent review. Even the former ambassador has expressed some concern. It is not just the Conservatives saying this.

We need not be surprised that the government is being so lax. In 2013, the current Prime Minister said, and I quote, "There is a level of admiration I actually have for China. Their basic dictatorship is actually allowing them to turn their economy around on a dime."

Can the hon. member for Papineau finally act like a responsible head of state and take national security seriously?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take national security very seriously. That is why we work very closely with our security agencies. We take their advice and follow their advice.

With respect to China and our overall goal in terms of the economy, we have been very clear that we are open to trade, that we are open to investment, that we are open to people, and that is why last month there were 54,000 jobs created in our economy. Over the last eight months, there were over a quarter of a million jobs, good-quality, full-time, resilient jobs. That is the bottom line. We want to make sure we advance our economic agenda, grow the economy, and help the middle class.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development told Canadians that the government had conducted a national security review, full stop, of the takeover of a Vancouver high-tech company by a Chinese company. However, that is the opposite of the truth. The minister is trying to pretend that there is a difference between, wait for it, a national security review and the national security review process. The minister is playing cynical word games. This is deceptive, but worst of all, he is misleading Canadians.

Were the Liberals not supposed to be better than this?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, I want to remind the member opposite of what I said yesterday and what I said earlier today in question period. All transactions are subject to a national security review. This is a multi-level process. The process

was followed. We did our due diligence, we did our homework, and we took the advice. We followed the advice of our national security agencies. We will make sure that we never ever compromise our national security, our national interest, and at the same time, we are going to continue to focus on growing the economy, creating jobs, and making sure we bring more investments and more opportunities for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week the problem is that the Liberals took a shortcut instead of conducting a full national security review.

Instead of explaining why they did not do this comprehensive review, the minister rose several times yesterday to falsely claim that he had indeed conducted one.

Will the Liberal government take responsibility for refusing to conduct this review and will it stop misleading Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that this is a multi-step national security review process, which is very rigorous. Did Canada's national security agencies examine this deal? As I have said before, yes, they did. Did the government follow the security agency's recommendations? As I said before, yes, we did. Canadians can be confident in the knowledge that Canada's security agencies have done their due diligence. We never have and we never will compromise our national security.

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[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Prime Minister extended the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's and the Lobbying Commissioner's terms.

After the Madeleine Meilleur appointment fiasco, this is a clear indication that we not only need a new consultation process, we also need time to set that process up.

Will the Liberal government agree to develop an appointment process for high-level appointees to ensure that these vitally important positions are not tainted by partisanship?

● (1125)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that officers of Parliament play an important role in ensuring parliamentary accountability.

The two interim appointments for the offices of the Lobbying Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner ensure continuity in leadership and allow time to complete the selection process.

Oral Questions

As of today, the selection processes for these two key leadership positions are open. The government is committed to identifying the best candidates for these positions.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these commissioners work for all Canadians and report to Parliament, not to the government of the day. This is to ensure their independence so they can investigate any government, regardless of their political affiliation. The Liberals attempted to change that tradition for their own partisan benefit, but luckily for our democracy, they failed.

Will the Liberal government now accept responsibility for its actions, and with humility, agree to a new process that would prevent partisan appointments in the future?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in a new process that is open, transparent, and more accountable so that Canadians can apply for these positions. We believe in the importance of all positions and all agents of Parliament and agree that they respond to Parliament, to Canadians. The two interim appointments for the offices of the Commissioner of Lobbying and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner provide leadership, continuity, and allow time for the selection process to be completed. As of today, the selection process for these two key leadership positions are open, and we are committed to identifying the best candidates for these positions. If members have names to suggest, I encourage them to go online.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we found out this morning, after the Madeleine Meilleur debacle, that the Prime Minister is relaunching the application process for the ethics and lobbying commissioners. It should be a clear indication to everyone that the Prime Minister and his backroom operatives floated the Meilleur trial balloon hoping it would work and that they would simply fill these positions with Liberal Party donors and insiders.

Parliament is not a Liberal partisan playground. When will the Prime Minister start a meaningful search to fill these five positions that are open, and when will he consult with opposition parties like he is supposed to?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we have put in place a new process, an open, transparent, and merit-based process, so that Canadians can apply. We recognize the importance of these positions. Exactly what we committed to Canadians, we have delivered on. Under this new process, we have appointed over 150 great Canadians doing important work.

The good news is that this place is no longer a Conservative playground. We believe in non-partisan appointments. We believe in a merit-based appointment process, and that is what we have put in place.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can bet that if the Prime Minister was looking for a social media coordinator, the position would have been filled in a heartbeat.

What has been the Prime Minister's priority over the last 629 days if not filling these positions? It has been cash-for-access fundraisers, a taxpayer-funded jet-set lifestyle, sending billions of Canadian tax dollars overseas, Broadway shows, staged photo ops, daytime TV appearances, and severe ethical lapses.

When will the Prime Minister put down the selfie stick and get to work by appointing independent non-partisan officers of Parliament?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our priority has been and always will be Canadians, middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them. This is exactly why the first thing we did when we took office was to lower taxes for the middle class by increasing taxes on the 1% of wealthiest Canadians. What did the Conservatives do? They voted against it.

We have put in a new process, an open, transparent, merit-based process. All positions that are available are posted online. I encourage Canadians to apply.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what do the words cronyism, patronage, wheeling and dealing, and shady business have in common? They are all part of the Liberal government's new appointment process.

As the government prepares to appoint an ethics commissioner and another official languages commissioner, will the Prime Minister commit to consulting the opposition? Will he put an end to trading partisan appointments for donations to the Liberal Party of Canada once and for all?

• (1130)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, we recognize the important role that officers of Parliament play in keeping Parliament accountable.

The two interim appointments for the offices of the Commissioner of Lobbying and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner ensure continuity in leadership and allow time for the selection process to be completed. As of today, the selection processes for these two key leadership positions are open and the government is committed to identifying the best candidates for these positions.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be naive to think that Ms. Meilleur withdrew from the process on her own, without pressure from the Prime Minister's Office. Now we know why the government had been acting shady for the past three weeks.

The Liberals now have a second chance as they appoint the next ethics commissioner and official languages commissioner.

Oral Questions

Will the government assure this House that the next appointments will not be limited to candidates who happen to be Liberal Party donors, and that it will consult the party leaders before imposing its choices on us?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have implemented a new, open, transparent, and merit-based appointment process. Our aim is to identify high-quality candidates who will help to achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity.

We recognize the important role played by officers of Parliament in ensuring parliamentary accountability. The two interim appointments for the offices of the Commissioner of Lobbying and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner provide continuity in leadership and allow time for the selection process to be completed.

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, the Prime Minister actually said that someone's background should not determine if they are fit to become an officer of Parliament. That is simply wrong. Canadians expect that these positions will be filled with people who are competent and independent. No one believes that people giving tens of thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party are independent.

Will the Prime Minister learn a lesson here and ensure that the next Ethics Commissioner will not be another partisan Liberal and will actually enjoy all-party support?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have put in a new process, an open, transparent, merit-based process, where Canadians can apply for available positions that are posted online. I encourage Canadians to apply.

When it comes to political background, we encourage Canadians to be a part of the political process. We encourage Canadians to be a part of the decisions that we make in this place. We need to hear those perspectives. That is why the Prime Minister said the political background of an individual is not the only thing that should be looked at. We should look at a merit-based appointment process. We should look at the diversity of our country. We should look at bilingualism and so forth.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the lesson learned here hopefully is that the Prime Minister should not try again to appoint another partisan Liberal commissioner. No one believes that the government House leader or anyone else over there will actually consider Canadians who apply for these appointments online.

How can Canadians believe that the new appointment process that the government House leader brags about is not just the Liberals' newfangled attempt to ensure that they get to appoint the partisan Liberal stalwart that they have always wanted?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member might be projecting but when it comes to this government under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we have put in a new process, an open,

transparent, merit-based process. Available positions are posted online and Canadians can apply. That was part of our commitment and that is exactly what we delivered.

Our aim is to always identify high-quality—

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member for Mégantic—L'Érable and all members to listen to the answer and not interrupt.

[*English*]

The government House leader has a few more seconds.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, our aim has always been to identify high-quality candidates who will help to achieve gender parity and truly reflect Canada's diversity.

Under our new process we have made over 150 appointments, of which 60% are women, 13% visible minorities, 10% indigenous peoples—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a proposal before us to remove gender and other discrimination from the Indian Act. This is one of the many long injustices faced by indigenous peoples in Canada. If one was to guess that with a self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister it should be no problem, then one would be wrong. The Liberal government is arguing that it needs more time to consult before acting.

Are there any other people in this country we would need to consult before they could be entitled to their human rights? Because if not, that is racism

● (1135)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fighting discrimination is a priority for our government and ending sexual discrimination against indigenous women is a priority as well. We are tackling this on two fronts.

The first stage is Bill S-3. That bill will take an approach to reform registration, membership, and citizenship in partnership with indigenous people. The second step that we have adopted will be to immediately engage in formal consultations with indigenous groups and those impacted by discriminatory—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about eliminating discrimination immediately.

Oral Questions

We have a Prime Minister who claims to be a feminist and who says that a nation to nation relationship is his priority. However, the Liberal government claims it needs more time to conduct consultations before taking action on issues as important as fundamental rights. It is unbelievable.

I will repeat my question. If any other group in Canada had to deal with such discrimination, would the Liberals still be in the process of holding consultations?

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague knows very well that we are committed to ending sexual discrimination against indigenous women. He also knows that it is necessary to pass Bill S-3 in the House of Commons in order to ensure that thousands of people who are currently being denied their rights in Canada gain rights.

When members opposite were in government, they fought indigenous women on sexual discrimination for years in the courts. Our government is acting on it. We have withdrawn the appeal submitted by the former government and we are going to do the right thing.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, an investigation by the Information Commissioner revealed an employee of Shared Services Canada deleted 398 pages of email documents after receiving an ATIP request for documents containing the words "Liberal Party". It is a serious offence to destroy documents subject to an ATIP request.

Will the Liberal Attorney General recuse herself from the decision to prosecute and avoid an obvious conflict of interest, yes or no?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government expects our employees to meet the highest level of ethical behaviour and decision-making, as set out by the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. Shared Services Canada took this situation very seriously, immediately launched an investigation, and notified the Information Commissioner. As is usual, this matter has now been referred to the Attorney General.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): This, Mr. Speaker, is from the former executive director of the Liberal Party.

We now know that the Shared Services Canada employee who deleted 398 pages of email documents following an ATIP is a Liberal EDA president. The Elections Act requires the Attorney General to recuse herself from all of these types of conflicts of interest. Therefore, for the second time, will the minister recuse herself from this similar conflict, and refer this matter directly to the director of public prosecutions, yes or no?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has acted according to procedure. It has informed the employee, and informs all employees of their rights and obligations as public servants. The matter is being dealt with as any other matter

would, and we will await the Attorney General's judgment in this matter.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing I know we can all agree on is that the protection of our children should be the highest priority for us, as members of Parliament and as members of society, yet the current government seems intent on scrapping a provision that allows law enforcement and parents the ability to protect our kids.

When it comes to our children, greater protection is always the best option. Why can the Liberal government not understand this very simple concept?

• (1140)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course public safety and particularly the protection of children is our highest priority. Along with the hon. gentleman, I am sure every member of the House agrees with that principle. In fact, the national sex offender registry, which was created in 2004, was fully funded and set up at the time by public safety minister, Anne McLellan. It is the key tool for ensuring that high-risk offenders are identified.

When a potentially dangerous offender is about to be released from prison, the correctional service alerts the police, and if there is a danger, police alert the public. Again, police and communities, working together—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three children. Many of my colleagues in the House have children and many Canadian families are asking the same question we are. Why is the Prime Minister refusing to create a public registry of convicted pedophiles?

I will give the Prime Minister another chance by asking him a very simple question.

Can he tell us whether he will create a public registry of sexual predators, yes or no?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national sex offender registry is already in place. It has been there since 2004, fully funded, fully operative, and working effectively across the country. In the dying days of the previous government, it introduced a piece of legislation that would add an additional database but it did not set it up and it did not give one penny to fund it.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

MARIJUANA

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with fanfare to spare, the Liberal government announced a major defence investment. Just like that, it found \$70 billion to buy new armaments, boats and planes.

In contrast, without consulting the provinces or offering them any resources, the Liberals announced that communities must be ready for legalized marijuana a year from now. In the meantime, thousands of young people are going to end up with criminal records that will haunt them for life.

What is the point of a youth minister who refuses to stand up for young people, who refuses to invest in education and prevention, and who allows young people to end up with criminal records for life?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians is one of our government's top priorities.

Current cannabis legislation is not working. It has put profits in the hands of criminals and organized crime, and it has not kept cannabis out of the hands of young Canadians.

That is why, following in-depth consultations with experts and the work of the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation, our government introduced a bill that works for all Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says the law is the law, but really it depends on who one knows. Since the Liberals were elected, more than 15,000 Canadians have received charges for possession of marijuana, even though the Liberals have promised to legalize the substance. These charges disproportionately affect young people in marginalized communities, people of colour, indigenous people, and the poor.

If one comes from privilege, as the Prime Minister said, one can make the charges “go away”. Why are the Liberals continuing the unfair criminalization of some of the most marginalized groups in our society?

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a top priority for our government. The current approach to cannabis does not work, as my hon. colleague and his party have admitted on numerous occasions. That is because it allows criminals and organized crime to profit and allows cannabis to remain in the hands of our children.

We want to make sure that does not happen. That is why, after long and hard work by an independent task force, as well as important debate in the House, we have introduced Bill C-45. We look forward to ongoing debates so we can keep cannabis out of the hands of our children and profits out of the hands of criminal organizations.

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in May 2016, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie launched an ambitious consultation process to revamp Canada's international aid policy. During this process, 270 consultations involving 15,000 people were held in 65 countries, including Canada.

Can the minister update the House on the new feminist international aid policy, which was unveiled this morning?

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

I was very proud this morning to unveil Canada's new feminist international aid policy. From now on, all of our partners will have to ensure that they contribute in a tangible way to gender parity and to the empowerment of women and girls.

I am confident that our new feminist approach will help reduce poverty and inequality, and create a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous world.

* * *

● (1145)

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, junior oil and gas companies are disappearing. Seventeen publicly traded juniors have been lost in the last two years. Meanwhile, multinationals reap the benefits, backing red tape and bad tax hikes, like the carbon tax, and getting handouts in return.

The Liberals claim they support small businesses, but these juniors are not expected to recover any time soon. Will the Liberals cut the red tape, support small businesses, and finally champion Canadian oil and gas?

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our support for the energy sector reflects a balanced approach that ensures the environment is protected and that good, well-paying jobs are created for Canadians.

After 10 years of inaction by the former Conservative government, we approved pipelines, while at the same time protecting our oceans, putting a price on carbon pollution, and working with indigenous peoples. Our approach will create tens of thousands of good jobs across the country and position Canada well to enjoy the economic benefit from an expanded energy sector.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer.

Oral Questions

The *Calgary Herald* says Canada's junior oil and gas sector has “shrunk to a shadow of its former self”. The Liberals' red tape, delays, and reviews are hitting juniors while they are already down. Investors are fleeing and project costs are skyrocketing because of tax hikes and uncertainty. Despite their talk, the Liberals attack small businesses and entrepreneurs. Will the Liberals stop favouring only billionaire CEOs and big multinationals and finally champion Canadian homegrown small businesses?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are supporting small businesses. We are supporting entrepreneurs as well. That is why we introduced the innovation and skills agenda. This was part of our latest budget. The focus is on investing in people and talent, particularly those that run our small businesses. We are also making sure they have the latest technologies to be able to compete not only in Canada but globally as well.

We are making sure these small businesses succeed, have the ability to grow, and have the ability to scale up and create good-quality jobs. That is why, over the past eight months, over a quarter of a million full-time good-quality jobs have been created in the Canadian economy.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I asked the Minister of National Defence what he was going to be doing to care for those who are suffering from mefloquine toxicity. He stated:

....we need to make sure that the surgeon general has the appropriate time to do the evidence-based work he is there for.

Days later that study was released, and mefloquine was relegated to a drug of last resort. Many of our veterans have testified about suffering life-altering reactions to this drug, yet the Liberals continue to do nothing.

What support is the government going to give to those who were forced to take mefloquine and are suffering the side effects?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government takes seriously the issues men and women face from their military service.

In fact, our doors are open for any member of the Canadian Armed Forces who is now a veteran and who needs services and can tie their injury to their service. We encourage any one of these members to come forward and work with the 4,000 mental health professionals we work with from coast to coast to coast.

We have expanded access to our military family resource centres and we are investing in a centre of excellence on PTSD and mental health issues. Our government is delivering for veterans.

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HEALTH

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal framework on Lyme disease offers no new solutions and no new ideas or hope for Canadians living with this horrible disease. In fact, Lyme disease advocates and experts were left out of the process for

developing the final framework. Instead, the Minister of Health developed nothing but an unfocused, scant document.

Will the Minister of Health finally agree that her framework fails the very people it is meant to support and commit to finally working with the community to address their needs?

• (1150)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the impact that Lyme disease has on Canadians and on their families.

I was pleased, the minister was pleased, to table the federal framework on Lyme disease in Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, we were pleased. It clearly sets out the federal government's role in addressing Lyme disease in Canada. We were also pleased to invest \$4 million to establish a Lyme disease research network.

I hear the members scream, but my own cousin has been affected by Lyme disease. It has taken years away from her youth. We know full well the impact that Lyme disease on families. We take this very seriously. That framework is what it is all about.

The Speaker: Order. It is not pleasing to have interruptions.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix fiasco has been dragging on for over a year and a half, with no end in sight. Now, just as the summer hiring season begins, we hear the Phoenix backlog has surged by 10%.

This is when 5,000 students are expected to get summer jobs with the federal government. What is the government's plan to ensure that all students get the pay they so desperately need? It seems obvious: how does it expect to retain the best talent for the future if it cannot even guarantee a paycheck?

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we are well aware of the many hardships that have been caused by the problems associated with the Phoenix pay system. That is why our government has invested \$142 million on top of our earlier initiatives in order to add capacity, in order to process these transactions, in order to adopt better technologies and have an employee-centric system that will get us to where we need to go.

Students are of particular concern, and we are obviously working very hard to ensure that all summer students and indeed all public servants have a positive experience.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRIFOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly three years since farmers lost their preferential status under the United States' Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act, and they have been losing significant amounts of money for even longer than that because of this Liberal government's inaction. This issue, which has now been transferred to the Minister of Innovation, is being bounced around like a hot potato.

Our fruit and vegetable producers are tired of the government playing ping-pong with their industry.

When will the government take its responsibilities seriously and implement a payment protection system for fruit and vegetable producers?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to the financial success of the fruit and vegetable industry. We are looking at how we can support this important Canadian industry by working together on a national food policy and a new strategic framework. We are continuing to look at all available options for a payment protection system for producers.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week, the Falkland Islands will be on the agenda at the General Assembly of the Organization of American States.

In 2013, the people of the Falkland Islands voted nearly unanimously to remain part of the United Kingdom. Representatives from the Falklands were in Ottawa this week seeking reassurance that the Liberals will follow the lead of the Harper government and stand up for their right of self-determination.

Will the government stand up for the self-determination of the people of the Falkland Islands at next week's General Assembly, yes or no?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am indeed very much looking forward to attending the OAS meeting the week after next, as this is a very important organization and Canada is proud of our membership. We are also very proud of our close connection with the United Kingdom, one of our closest friends in the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of the United Kingdom for having successfully completed their general election.

Oral Questions

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the last year and a half, I have been asking the minister what she will do to ensure financial transparency for first nations. In return, I have had platitudes. I have had talk about transparency being important, that she and the chiefs are talking, but nothing has been done. Somehow she says that empowering grassroots band members to have the same information that everyone else has is paternalistic. How much longer do they have to wait?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we fully believe in an open and transparent process of dealing with first nations. We believe in full accountability for all first nations.

There is a process in place at this time whereby members can obtain the information through their bands in their respective areas. However, the government is working with first nations toward a new model of transparency and accountability on disclosure of expenses and income. We will continue to do that in consultation with the indigenous councils.

• (1155)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, more platitudes and a lack of transparency for the people who are desperately asking for it. It is unacceptable.

The Liberal government chooses to enforce the laws that it wants and not the other ones. Liberals have no trouble saying 15,000 youth can go to jail for marijuana possession because that is the law.

There is a law on the books. The Liberals either need to have the guts to get rid of it, or enforce it.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the former government imposed legislation and policy around transparency and accountability on first nations. That is not the way we do business. We work in consultation with first nations.

We have been working hard with many indigenous organizations, including the AFN and the Aboriginal Financial Officers Association, on ways to enhance that mutual accountability. We are going to be implementing a process that is a consensus of all involved that will have full accountability and transparency measures.

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HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all individuals should be treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender expression, or gender identity. From appointing the member for Edmonton Centre as the Prime Minister's Special Advisor on LGBTQ2 Issues to introducing Bill C-16, which is currently before the Senate, our government has consistently demonstrated our commitment to the promotion and protection of LGBTQ rights.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs update the House on the two developments announced yesterday that would advance the rights of LGBTQ people globally?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government was truly delighted to announce that Canada will be the new co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition.

The coalition is made up of more than 30 countries and promotes and protects the human rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and intersex people globally. This is an important step forward for LGBTQ2 rights internationally, and I am so proud that Canada is contributing as co-chair, especially in this month when my city is celebrating—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George.

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CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in addition to cutting the critical search and rescue dive program in British Columbia just as we enter the busiest boating season and tourism season, the Minister of Fisheries, as we learned last week, was quietly planning to close Coast Guard stations throughout Manitoba and Ontario. Why? The Liberals feel this money could be better spent somewhere else.

The Liberal government is putting at risk the lives of thousands of Canadians who use our waterways. Will the minister stand in the House right now and reverse this decision?

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard prioritizes the safety of Canadians above all else. We can say with confidence that the Vancouver harbour is safer today than it was two years ago, thanks to the reopening of the Kitsilano Coast Guard and this government's investment in the oceans protection plan. This means an increase in search and rescue personnel over the next three years, and four new lifeboat stations on the west coast. Of course, we will continue to work closely with our search and rescue partners to ensure all required capabilities are provided to make sure that we keep British Columbians, and all Canadians, safe.

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HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, having lost my oldest brother Brian to a stroke a few years ago, and as a heart attack survivor myself, my family, like thousands of other Canadian families, has experienced first-hand the awful effects of heart disease and stroke. On Wednesday, the Heart & Stroke Foundation released its “2017 Stroke Report”, which indicates that the number of Canadians living with a stroke could almost double.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health inform the House of the government's actions and plans to support those recovering from a stroke, and their caregivers?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member

for Cumberland—Colchester for his question and for the work he does on this file.

[English]

We recognize the impact that a stroke can have on individuals and their families, and that in many cases it is a family member who takes time off work to help with the recovery. That is why our government is moving forward on our commitment to help Canadians who are supporting the needs of an ill family member by making benefits more inclusive and flexible.

[Translation]

These changes will have a real impact and will help caregivers to continue to receive an income and keep their jobs in difficult times.

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REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has been in power for two years. It has spent those two years making endless project and spending announcements all over the place and tooting its own horn about how it is working for all Canadian regions.

It has not done anything for Quebec City, though. It has not done anything for Beauport 2020, for the Quebec Bridge, for the cruise ship terminal, or for the Institut nordique du Québec. It does not even have a minister responsible for Quebec City.

Do the Liberals even realize that Quebec City exists? What is the problem?

• (1200)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I toured Quebec recently. We have 256 projects under way in Quebec, and our total investment there is \$2.8 billion. We are here for Quebec, and we are investing in Quebec.

I have been talking to mayors from the regions. I have spoken to about 20 of them. They are practically in tears because they are finally able to move forward with community projects they have been trying to get for at least a decade. They are practically in tears because they are so overjoyed and proud to be making these projects happen so they can make things better for their communities and the people who need these things. People can choose which community they want to call home, and they choose communities where governments are investing, and that is what we are doing.

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CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a week ago, Raif Badawi's children had a message for the Prime Minister. They said it was unfair that their father is in prison, that he did not kill anyone, and all he did was create a blog.

They asked the Prime Minister to pick up the phone and call the King of Saudi Arabia so that their father could come home.

Routine Proceedings

That was their heartfelt plea.

Did the Prime Minister call the Saudi Arabian king to have Raif Badawi released, as his children have asked?

[English]

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government, myself included, has raised the case of Mr. Badawi at the highest level with the Saudi government. We will continue to ask for clemency for Mr. Badawi. We appeal, for humanitarian reasons, to see Mr. Badawi reunited with his family. I want to take a moment to commend Mr. Badawi's wife, whom I have met several times, for her courage and her strength.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs talked about some lofty principles this week. She told us that Canada needs to show leadership and that Canada would do just that.

That is all well and good, but what about human rights? Why is this government in discussions with the Saudis for the sale of arms, but it refuses to talk to them about human rights?

If this government wants to be taken seriously and regarded as a serious leader, when will it speak up and demand Raif Badawi's release?

[English]

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been consistent. Human rights promotion is a pillar of our foreign policy. Everywhere we go, every time we meet with government officials, our ambassadors, our heads of missions around the world, are promoting human rights and calling for equal rights to all. Mr. Badawi's case has been important to our government. We will continue to appeal to the Saudi government, on a humanitarian basis, for clemency so he is reunited with his family.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister blows hot and cold when it comes to Quebec. After telling Philippe Couillard to take a hike, he now wants Quebecers to feel more at home in Canada. The last time a Trudeau risked his neck for change, he sent the Quebec nation into exile.

Will the Prime Minister finally respond to the Quebec National Assembly's unanimous resolution asking him to respect Quebec's laws and change Bill C-44?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Bill C-44, I am pleased to inform the member that infrastructure projects in Quebec and every other province will comply with all applicable laws, in this case, Quebec's laws. That is important to us, and the projects will comply with the law at all times.

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport.

In May, the Auditor General released a report highlighting Transport Canada's failure to show leadership when addressing the infrastructure needs of Nunavut airports. Our airports do not meet Canadian safety standards. They lack safe runways, adequate lighting, and vital weather and navigational aids. I have seen this first-hand, because I have been in every airport in Nunavut. It is the only way to access our communities and transport essential goods and services. This is simply unacceptable.

Will the minister commit to taking the lead and address these urgent infrastructure needs?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the importance of safe air services in the north, and we welcome the Auditor General's report. We will be collaborating with the territorial governments, as well as northern communities and indigenous groups, in order to identify the priorities with respect to northern transportation. I was in Iqaluit last year to talk specifically about this.

As members know, in the 2017 budget, we did identify a national trade corridors fund, and that will also specifically recognize transportation in the north of our country, as well as the \$2 billion rural and northern infrastructure—

* * *

● (1205)

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Ricardo Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism for the Province of Alberta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(a) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Code for members of the House of Commons for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2017.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(a), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2016-17 annual reports of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act.

This document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, “Canada’s Report with Respect to International Labour Organization instruments”, adopted at the 103rd session and the 104th session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

* * *

SUPPORTING VESTED RIGHTS UNDER ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-52, An Act to amend Chapter 6 of the Statutes of Canada, 2012.

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

* * *

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 eighth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates regarding the study of supplementary estimates (A) for the years 2017-18.

HEALTH

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled “Report on the Public Health Effects of the Ease of Access and Viewing of Online Violent and Degrading Sexually Explicit material on Children, Women and Men”.

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

I want to thank the committee and the witnesses for their good work on this. Although it was a wide-ranging subject, with a lot of interest, we attempted to stay focused on the issue exactly as outlined in the reference to the committee. I think we succeeded in doing that. We look forward to the response from the government.

● (1210)

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Peace River—Westlock for putting forward Motion No. 47.

This report could have served as a very strong voice on behalf of a generation of women who have been objectified and had their equality undermined by violent and degrading sexually explicit material. Instead, however, this committee study was limited to the smallest number of meetings possible, witnesses were prevented from appearing, and the majority of witness testimony was in fact ignored.

For this reason, the Conservative members are tabling a dissenting report.

If we are serious about this topic and preventing rape culture from developing further in Canada, we must do more.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled “The Nuclear Sector at a Crossroads: Fostering Innovation and Energy Security for Canada and the World”; and the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources, entitled “De-risking the Adoption of Clean Technology in Canada’s Natural Resources Sector”.

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

I would like to thank our clerk and our analysts, and all the committee members and witnesses, for working so hard to prepare and deliver this unanimous report.

* * *

FAIR, DEMOCRATIC AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE ACT

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-358, An Act to provide for fair, democratic and sustainable trade treaties.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to present today the fair, democratic and sustainable trade act, which is a true progressive and environmental approach to international trade.

[Translation]

As the House knows, often, in the past, governments have introduced bills on international trade that were neither fair nor democratic.

[English]

This legislation would change that and would bring in a trade framework that meets the progressive Canadian values of transparency, democracy, and fairness.

[Translation]

It is now time for Canada to show leadership and innovation when it comes to democratic treaties and fair trade.

[English]

Now is the time for a fair, democratic, and sustainable approach to trade and fair, democratic, and sustainable trade treaties. I hope all members of Parliament will support this important legislation.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, on behalf of my constituents and people from all over western Canada, several petitions. The first couple of petitions deal with health and with palliative care.

The petitioners are calling on the government to do more for palliative care.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with people's disdain for the fact that once the gender of a baby in the womb is known, abortions are still allowed to be performed. The petitioners are calling on the government to end the practice of sex-selection abortions.

ABORTION

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third petition deals with the overall issue of abortion.

THALIDOMIDE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present electronic petition e-786, which has been signed by more than 900 Canadians from all across Canada. The petitioners are calling on the government to change the criteria to qualify for the thalidomide compensation package by including an assessment by a qualified medical professional who specializes in deformities caused by thalidomide, since many survivors cannot access medical records. This week the health committee submitted a letter to the minister calling on the government to do exactly that. In addition, the petitioners also ask the government to err on the side of compassion to help these victims, who have endured a life of pain and suffering and discrimination.

• (1215)

BEE POPULATION

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise again in the House on behalf of the amazing constituents of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford to present more petitions on behalf of bees. The petitioners recognize that the mortality rate for colonies of bees and other pollinators has been rising for the past three years; that insects, primarily bees, play a role in the pollination of 70% of flowering plants; and that honeybees contribute more than \$2.2 billion to Canada's agricultural economy each year. Therefore, the petitioners call upon the government to take concrete steps to solve this problem, to develop a strategy to address the multiple factors related to bee-colony deaths, and to force seed companies not to sell seed that has been treated with neonicotinoids and other pesticides.

[*Translation*]

LABELLING OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the petition I am tabling today comes from an organization in my riding, the

Centre de femmes Montcalm. These women are doing a tremendous job. The idea for this petition arose out of a public awareness and education workshop called *Pour ma santé et celle de la planète*. The participants were surprised to see how rare it is to find lists of ingredients on household products, and even more surprised that there is no labelling legislation in Canada.

This petition calls on the Minister of Health to make it mandatory to list ingredients on household products based on the listing regulations for cosmetics. It is a public health and environmental protection issue. Chemical contamination does not discriminate—it affects everyone.

[*English*]

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF CONFEDERATION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal war on history has prompted many historical societies to forward petitions to me, and today I am presenting another one on the subject of the petitioners asking the Government of Canada to respect and celebrate history during the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

The members of the West Elgin Genealogical and Historical Society have signed this petition. Their community draws its roots from Canada's southern railway. This is a railway that was part of the Confederation era focus on railways as a mechanism to connect Canada.

The petitioners call on the government to make Confederation a theme of the 150th anniversary of Confederation, reversing the Liberal government's decision to exclude it as a theme.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure today to table a petition from a number of residents in Winnipeg in regard to when the Communist Party launched an intensive nationwide persecution campaign to eradicate Falun Gong in July 1999. Literally hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been detained in forced labour camps, brainwashing centres, and prisons, where torture and abuse are routine and thousands have died as a result.

I have four petitions on that issue I would like to table today. The petitioners are calling on parliamentarians to do what we can to address this issue.

TAXATION

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House calling on the Minister of Finance to ensure that Canada's tax policy with respect to campgrounds recognizes them as active businesses similar to other tourism operators, such as hotels, in order that they may claim the small business tax deduction.

*Government Orders***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-44, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the government's implementation bill at third reading. I will try to explain what we think is deficient in the government's budget proposal. There are a number of things, but I will start with some of the topics that are near and dear to my heart. I would like to try to explain what is inadequate about the government's budget implementation legislation and also try to give a sense of how the government might have proceeded in a way that was appropriate.

If we consider housing, for instance—

• (1220)

The Speaker: Order, please. I am terribly sorry, but clearly there has been some kind of mix-up. I did not understand that there was time remaining in questions and comments following the speech by the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou. I ask the member for Elmwood—Transcona to forgive my mistake.

[Translation]

We are on questions and comments.

[English]

I see the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni is anxious to have a question.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech, and I particularly want to thank him for mentioning the importance of coastal waterways here in Canada and the regions in this country that feel left out, despite the government's promise that it would recognize and represent all areas of our country.

When the Liberals announced their ocean protection plan rollout, we eagerly anticipated seeing the details. Recently they announced \$75 million for a coastal restoration fund that would support habitat restoration and address threats to marine species. We welcomed these announcements, but when they identified 11 priority areas for coastal restoration, they forgot one area on the west coast of British Columbia, the west coast of Vancouver Island, despite a low return of sockeye that were expected in our region. It is a critical stage. DFO has announced that we will get about 170 million returning

sockeye instead of the average of 750 million. This is identified as critical. We also have a marine debris problem that is hitting our coastal beaches.

The Liberals said they would make every part of this country count. The people in my community do not know why they do not count in this government's agenda. What can the people of the west coast of Vancouver Island do to raise their voices so they can be heard?

This is a place where the Prime Minister goes on holiday and walks the beach but forgets to go into those communities to find out how it is impacting them when they are not able to fish because it is closed. We do not invest in restoration, we do not invest in protecting our habitat, and we do not invest in cleaning up marine debris. It is impacting our communities, and the government is forgetting us.

Maybe the member could talk about what it feels like in his community when the government forgets it.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am from Quebec City, and all our major projects are left out. The member that responded said that all over the province of Quebec, mayors are crying, because they are asking for projects. They will be crying for a long time, because the infrastructure bank will not be able to pay for small projects in municipalities.

Concerning the protection of the coasts, we cannot protect the coasts without ships. We in the Conservative government put contracts in place with Seaspan Shipyards in Vancouver to build 10 new ships for the Coast Guard and for research projects. Those ships have major delays. We have not heard from the government concerning that.

I would say that the most terrible thing about this budget is that it does not speak to all Canadians. It speaks to a particular group of interests. It speaks to one single class, the middle class. The Liberals call it a feminist budget. That is unbelievable. Why is it not a Canadian budget?

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou had to say. We Conservatives are very careful about managing public funds; we are always referring to the heads of families. Good heads of families live within their means. Without getting into personal details, the member for Beauport—Limoilou is a dad for the second time.

As a father, would he manage his personal budget the way the Prime Minister is managing the government's budget?

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, the answer to my colleague is "certainly not". To pick up where my colleague left off, tomorrow I will be moving into my first home. For the first time in my life, I took out a mortgage. My banker looked at how I conduct my finances and said, "my goodness, you really are a Conservative!"

Government Orders

After being a military student, I became a member of Parliament in 2015. I have not spent lavishly and I put money aside to buy a house. I was able to make a down payment. It is true that we are paid very well, and I have nothing to complain about, but I managed to do it because I was disciplined and reasonable. As well, I have arranged it so that two years from now, if ever I am not a member of Parliament, I will still be able to live reasonably. I made arrangements in order to make it through.

Any responsible government should secure its finances and not put itself at risk if the economy were to get worse.

I will conclude by saying that they have ended security—

• (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

[*English*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate you on your temporary role.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his speech.

At the end of his speech he said that his party is a good manager of taxpayer dollars.

I find this is not entirely accurate. During the 10 years that the Conservatives were in office, we had \$150-billion deficits. We also have deficits, this is true. We will get back to that a little later.

What did we get for all that?

Nothing. Under the Conservatives, economic growth ranged from 1% to 1.5%. With the Liberals, economic growth was stronger in 18 months than it was during the 10 years the Conservatives were in power.

If we look at the deficits from a historical standpoint, for over a century, the Conservatives have never been able to get out of deficit, although they inherited surpluses from the Liberals twice, namely in 1912 and in 2006.

The Conservatives have never been able to balance the budget without selling off government assets.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I do not agree.

First, there is the historical context. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, we ran controlled, reasonable, and responsible deficits in response to the biggest economic crisis since the depression of the 1930s.

Interestingly, we had fantastic results because in 2011, 2012, and 2013 we posted the best outcomes in the OECD: over 1.2 million jobs created, the best GDP, and the best economic growth of OECD countries.

As well, in November 2015, we left a \$3-billion surplus, which was confirmed by Department of Finance officials.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I understand that this debate is under time allocation. I would really

like to speak to it. I was wondering how much time is left in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Cathy McLeod): I do not believe that is a point of order. However, the debate will be adjourning on this at 1:15.

We have time for a very short question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the member across the way talks about deficit, I am sure he knows the reality of the situation. When Stephen Harper became prime minister, there was a multi-billion-dollar surplus, which he turned into a multi-billion-dollar deficit. He never really had a surplus.

Why should this government take any advice from a Conservative Party that has been an absolute total disaster? In fact, it added over \$160 billion of total debt to our nation.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I do not want him to take advice from the party, but from the Canadian people.

We are the voice of the taxpayers, and they are saying that enough is enough. If the Liberals are increasing the deficit, they should do it for a good reason and let Canadians know when it is going to end. That is not the case right now.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to highlight some of the NDP's objections to Bill C-44 at third reading.

As we analyzed the bill, it became clear that we do not oppose the actions of government because it is made up of Liberals, but we oppose the Liberals because of their actions. The legislation is rife with things that would not take the country in the right direction and it fails to live up to the very commitments made not by us in the last election campaign but by the Liberals themselves.

I want to highlight some of those problems and also suggest other ways that the government might have proceeded that would have helped to attain the goals it says it wants to attain.

Let me start with housing. No money was allocated in the budget proper for a national housing strategy this year, and that is unfortunate. There is some money promised for down the road, but this is unfortunate because for all the words that come from a government, statements on positions and everything else, it is really where a government spends its money that we learn its priorities and we see what it is serious about. It was not a promising sign to see no money right away.

We in the NDP support the idea of the development of a national housing strategy but it would have been nice to see in the budget implementation bill some legislation that would create ongoing statutory funding for housing. That is because reliable, stable funding, year over year, is the basis for a well-functioning and reliable national housing strategy that could put a meaningful dent in the dearth of affordable housing and social housing that we currently have in Canada.

Government Orders

Putting money in the budget would have been one way the government could have signalled its seriousness about a national housing plan. Instead it is left to the ad hoc decision-making of government year over year.

The NDP has proposed in the past, through private member's bills, legislation for a meaningful and permanent national housing strategy, including provisions for how to consult and develop that plan so that decisions would not just be made at the cabinet table. Everyday Canadians would have the opportunity on an ongoing basis to feed information from their own lived experiences and those of their friends, neighbours, and family, into that ongoing strategy that would have reliable, multi-year funding going forward.

I raise that as an example of how the government in the legislation could have signalled and solidified its commitment to a national housing strategy. It was disappointing not to see that. Instead, we have the word of the Liberals that the money will come.

We have their word on a lot of issues. It is hard to believe that the Liberals will be able to achieve all of their goals given the current state of the country's finances and the choices that they have made in terms of not seriously going after, for instance, large tax offenders and in terms of not raising the corporate tax rate. I will have more to say on that later.

The other thing in the bill that is an important priority for me and for the NDP is the health care funding. What was promised in the election campaign by the Liberals and by the Prime Minister was promised on the basis of a criticism of the previous government and Stephen Harper's plan for health care funding that would cut the regular increases by the federal government for health spending from 6% to 3%. That was roundly criticized by Liberals in the last campaign and there was a clear promise in their platform and by the Prime Minister that not only would he not adopt the Stephen Harper funding model but that he would change the way the funding model was decided. The Prime Minister said he would convene a meeting of premiers to talk about a new national health accord.

After the election the premiers took the Prime Minister at his word and asked to have that meeting. On a number of occasions they held joint press conferences calling on the Prime Minister to convene a national meeting of premiers to discuss a new national health accord, but they never had that meeting. The legislation is the outcome of that broken promise by the Prime Minister to convene that meeting and to meaningfully include premiers in deciding the structure and the framework of health funding in Canada going forward.

• (1230)

Instead, the Liberals adopted a divide-and-conquer strategy where they went to each province separately and made side deals, the gist of which in all cases was to get provinces to sign on to the very same Harper model of funding health care that they had opposed during the election. That is what is represented in the bill.

On the additional money the Liberals promised during the election for home care and mental health, instead of flowing to the provinces out of the commitment made by the Prime Minister and Liberals in the last campaign, it became a condition of their signing on to the Stephen Harper model. This money was used instead as a threat and

as a coercive tool to get provinces to sign on to a funding model that they had roundly criticized and that the federal Liberals had roundly criticized.

Therefore, it was a serious switch of priority and strategy by the federal government, and I think a serious broken promise on one of the most important issues of public policy in Canada. That is what the bill represents in its current form. I think that is shameful, and I cannot but draw attention to the fact that now, frankly, we do not really have a national health accord, because 10 side deals, and we are not even at 10 yet but nine out of 10, do not a health accord make.

This was the opportunity. After the Harper government reneged on the idea or passed up the opportunity to create a new national health accord after the health accord of 2004 expired in 2014, there was a moment to bring the provinces together to negotiate a new health accord in the way that former prime minister Paul Martin did in 2004. There was a moment to be able to do that again, and it certainly seemed like the federal Liberals were posturing to fill that role, which would have been good. They ought to have done that, but they passed it up and adopted the Harper ultimatum, although they gave themselves a bigger stick with the promises of home care and mental health money.

Now it is an open question as to when we are going to get that opportunity again. It is on the current Prime Minister's shoulders that we may lose the opportunity to have a meaningful national health accord for a generation. I think that is seriously shameful and something that I hope Liberals across the way who ran on the idea of having a new national health accord appreciate that they are complicit in, having Canadians miss out for a generation on a meaningful national health accord, because that is not what the funding arrangement in the legislation before us represents.

This includes not having a national pharmacare plan, for instance. It would be wonderful if in this budget implementation act we saw the legal provisions necessary to institute a national pharmacare plan. A national pharmacare plan would allow us to provide more equitable drug coverage to Canadians across the country so that it would not matter where one lived in Canada, one would get good access to the prescription medication one needed. It would allow Canadians to do this at a lower out-of-pocket price for the portion they would be responsible for. It would also allow governments to provide better service at a cheaper rate, and there have been all sorts of estimates. If we triangulate the lowball estimates and the higher estimates, it is quite reasonable to think that we could be saving Canadian taxpayers in the neighbourhood of \$7 billion annually if we had a national pharmacare plan.

This was something the Liberals promised in 1993, if members can believe it, and here we are today. However, as we did prior to 1993, consistently after 1993, and are doing today, the NDP will continue to advocate for a national pharmacare plan until we have one.

Government Orders

I think it is shameful to think that after all those years, 25 years after Jean Chrétien got elected with a compelling majority and a clear promise to have a national pharmacare plan, we still have to be here talking about it. We are not talking about the details of it, whether it is working well, or how it could save Canadians more money if we modified the plan this way or that. We are still talking about establishing one at all, which I think is a great shame.

We had promises from the Liberals as well to restore lifetime pensions for veterans, but that is not anywhere in the act. When we talk about commitments made and how those get followed through on where it really counts, which is where the money gets spent, we see another promise coming up empty.

•(1235)

We still hear repeated promises from the Minister of Veterans Affairs and that we should just wait, that it is coming. However, the government has continued with the court case it promised to stop against Equitas and Canadian veterans. It is saying that there is no sacred covenant between Canada and its veterans. It has money to spend on that, money that would be better spent on veterans who, through their service, have earned our respect and deserve to live with dignity. The government should be doing that with the money.

It is the same when it comes to first nations. The government is continuing to spend money it promised it would not, fighting first nations in court. It could be flowing the money, money that the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and many other bodies have said is owing to first nations people as an important piece of the reconciliation process. It would help get first nations people in Canada back on their feet and address the endemic problems in their communities, so they could become full participants in all the wealth, resources, and quality of life that Canada has to offer. They have been excluded from that for far too long. Nothing in the legislation addresses that.

On my point about veterans, they have said clearly that lifetime pensions have to be restored. The Liberals clearly said that as well. The New Democrats have been advocating for that. One would assume there would be wide support. There certainly would be support on the NDP benches for restoring lifetime pensions, yet it is nowhere in the legislation.

The Liberals talk big about spending priorities, but the recent release of the defence review is a very good indication of what it means to be a Liberal spending priority. It means money announced for 2026, 2027, 2028. By the time our grandkids are adults, they will start spending money on this serious priority.

It is frustrating to see large numbers being thrown about, including on infrastructure, knowing that many years and a number of elections will have to occur before the time arrives to spend that money.

This means we are not having a serious debate in Parliament about our priorities. Instead, we are playing a game of make-believe with Monopoly money. The Liberals can announce all sorts of money for 2035, but they will never have to deliver it. The circumstances will have changed so many times and in so many ways, in ways we cannot predict. When the time comes to spend that money, it will have been re-budgeted, reallocated, and changed many times over. It

is convenient for the government to talk now about what it wants to do in 2027, 2030, 2040, or 2050. I think 2055 is when the government says it might balance the books.

This is not a real debate. It does a disservice to this place and Canadians for a government to pretend that by announcing money 10 years into the future, it is doing a real thing. This is really indicative of its priorities. People in this place deserve better and the people we represent deserve better. Therefore, I make no apologies for focusing on the next few years and what the government announced in spending, because the rest has yet to come.

On my point about housing, if the Liberals were serious about long-term funding, they would have included it in the legislation. It is the case sometimes that five-year or 10-year plans are required to address something, which is certainly true when addressing the shortage of affordable and social housing. However, the bill does not include a national housing strategy and funds for that strategy. Statutory funds for that strategy is the way to do it.

At the very least, it appears to be a sign of insincerity when governments talk about the need for a long-term plan, but do not want any accompanying legislation that would mandate the money and lay out the consultation process for that kind of long-term spending. Long-term spending like that ought not be done willy-nilly. If a 10-year plan is required, there should also be a corresponding structure, which is appropriate to lay out in legislation, and provide a legislative guarantee of those funds. We do not see that in the bill.

However, what we see is a guarantee for a structure going forward, not just for 10 years but indefinitely. Canadian taxpayer money is going to be used to pad the pockets of corporate Canada. That is shameful. When we talk about legislating priorities in the budget implementation bill and putting one's money where one's mouth is, the Liberals are doing that.

•(1240)

The Liberals are talking about a \$35 billion fund that will be used to privatize infrastructure and make it easy for large corporations, not even large Canadian corporations, but large international corporations, to own Canadian infrastructure and dictate to Canadians what they will pay to use a highway or cross a bridge, so they can make money on that. Then, when it is not making money anymore, if the plan is ill-conceived and it does not generate the 7% to 9% return they thought it would make, they will walk away from the project, and Canadian taxpayers will pay the bill.

We see what the Liberal priorities are in this bill. Unfortunately, they are not the priorities the Liberals espoused during the election campaign.

The government talks about openness and transparency. We have very good reason to doubt the sincerity of that. Yesterday we heard that the Liberals' record on access to information requests, which is a very reasonable measure of openness and transparency, was worse than the Harper government's was in its last year.

Government Orders

The embarrassing appointment process, now the non-appointment process, for Madeleine Meilleur to the position of Commissioner of Official Languages was far from open and transparent. The Prime Minister still will not admit that it was a mistake to think that such an overtly partisan person could be seen as independent enough to occupy the position of an independent officer of Parliament. There is nothing open or transparent about that.

Canadians have every right to worry, with a proposal like the infrastructure bank, that they cannot expect the kind of openness and transparency one would need in order to evaluate whether it was getting value for money.

It may well be true that more things get built as a result of the infrastructure bank, but they are not getting built for free. No one is building it out of charity for Canadians. The Saudi investment authority is not going to come to Canada because of the infrastructure bank and say that it got a letter from the bank, it heard we needed a major bridge, it would build it for us, do it cheaply and it would be a nice quality bridge, and not ask for payment. Canadians are going to pay. If we are building more infrastructure, we are paying more. There is no such thing as a free lunch.

To hear the Liberals on one hand espouse and call on some of their members' experience in business and finance and say they are smart managers, then on the other hand pretend that somehow Canadians ultimately will not pay for every bit of infrastructure that is paid under the bank, and in fact pay more, is farcical. Those investors will demand a higher return than the banks the government could borrow from, which was its promise in the election. It has been an ongoing insult, frankly.

When we talk about getting money to build more infrastructure by borrowing at 2%, the Liberals like to say the NDP was going to balance the budget, so we would not have built any of that stuff.

First, the stuff on the infrastructure bank is stuff for which they are borrowing money and they are borrowing it at a higher rate from other investors. The idea that this is not a deficit that Canadians are incurring is factually wrong. The Liberals can play with the books, put it on the books of the infrastructure bank, or private investors, or whatever, but at the end of the day it is the Canadian taxpayer who will pay for that. The Liberals are not fooling anyone on this side of the House.

The other thing is this. The Liberals are not pursuing revenue streams, or ways of saving money. When I talk about a national pharmacare program, that is a way to save substantial amounts of money. If they were borrowing at 2% to build infrastructure instead of 7% or 9%, they could build a lot of bridges and roads for \$7 billion a year.

The Liberals voted for an NDP motion telling the government to take meaningful action on closing tax havens and loopholes. A black and white commitment of the Liberals was that they would close the CEO stock option loophole. They passed that up. That is almost \$1 billion a year, and substantially more when we start addressing the issue of tax havens and tax cheats. Some have estimated that to be as high as in the order of \$50 billion to \$60 billion annually. That is a lot of money. Therefore, the idea that somehow there is no money to

be found to advance these important priorities is false. It is a question of political will and a government willing to follow through on its commitments.

When we take all of that into consideration, it is clear that, not only when we talk about the infrastructure bank, for instance, this is not the way to go for Canada. This is not the way to build infrastructure. It is not value for money for Canadians. There are better ways of doing it. I have tried to highlight some of those. Not only is this not the right direction, but it does not even get us in the direction the Liberals promised they would go in the last election. On all counts, Canadians should stand opposed to the bill. I know we will.

• (1245)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member gave a very interesting speech and touched on a lot of key points.

The member called this an omnibus bill and then he went on to talk about all the extra things we should add to our budget. I appreciate the fact that the member underlined all the good things we were doing, for example, infrastructure investment, which is extremely important. He talked about national health care, the national housing strategy, and other interesting things. The member did not mention the CPP, which would have been interesting.

Sitting in opposition and talking about all the good things those members would do is one thing. However, I would like to know where he and his party would have made cuts that would have been required to accomplish maybe half of what we will accomplish in this budget.

Throughout the election campaign the leader of the opposition said there would be no deficits. With all the good things we are doing, without a deficit, it would only be half of the good things. Could the member expand on that?

• (1250)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I did try to explicitly answer that question in my speech, because it was an obvious one to anticipate.

My answer, essentially, is that Liberal cowardice in the face of corporate Canada and their international corporate friends means that for the Liberals, for some reason, despite election promises, pursuing revenue from the corporate sector, either by raising the corporate tax rate or closing tax loopholes, is not an option.

That is an option for us. We are willing to stand up to corporate Canada and the international corporate elite and let them know they need to pay their fair share. We do not have the same dilemma that the Liberals have, because we are not ideologically blocked from pursuing reasonable revenue options.

On the point about the CPP, I am glad the member mentioned it. It turns out 20 minutes is not very long, and there were some other points I wanted to address.

The Liberal CPP reforms are not in the budget implementation bill, which is why it was not a priority for me to mention it today.

Government Orders

However, in the bill are changes to the EI rules that would allow parents more choice with respect to their parental leave. The problem with the changes, and the reason why it relates to the CPP, is that it just illustrates that when Liberals try to do the right thing, either because they want to look progressive or maybe because they really mean it, they cannot quite get it right. With respect to CPP, they did not carry on with the dropout provisions for women and people living with disabilities. On parental leave, people will make less money over the 18 months than they would if they took the leave over 12 months.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous government had record spending on health care, 6% a year. The health accord was one agreement.

The Liberal government is all about separate and divide. It could not get a health accord agreement, so it divided each and every area, starting first with Nova Scotia and a single agreement. Then it was New Brunswick, Newfoundland, finally getting through the provinces and territories.

However, I do not think the member's province of Manitoba signed on to the health accord. Could he comment on that? That is the only jurisdiction, I believe, that has not been divided or separated by the Liberal government.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, that is true. Manitoba has not signed on yet. Initially I supported the Manitoba government's efforts to try to bring other provinces together in order to get a better agreement, frankly, just a real agreement. Part of the problem with the divide and conquer strategy is that it causes us to lose the opportunity for a meaningful national health accord over the course of a generation.

Recent events in Manitoba have shown that perhaps the premier of Manitoba's intentions were not so pure, and that he was looking for a scapegoat to be able to blame cuts that he was intending to make to our health system anyway, like the closure of the Concordia ER in my riding, and deny going ahead with a personal care home expansion that had been on the books, was shovel ready, and the permit had been issued last July. That is in spite of a promise by the Manitoba Conservatives to build more personal care home beds.

There is more to the story. The Manitoba government is ruthlessly attacking our health care system, and I think it is holding out on this agreement to try to spread the blame. There is a lot of blame to go around. Canadians and Manitobans deserve a national health accord, and the Liberal government should have done that. However, it does not explain all the cuts that are happening in Manitoba right now either.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, irrespective of the member's perspective, this is an excellent budget for the province of Manitoba, which we both represent. Total transfers are at \$3.7 billion, an increase of \$150 million over 2016, which is the largest total transfer since 2006.

Because budget 2017 is a continuation of 2016, as we speak, there is \$58 million currently being spent in Manitoba on 24 water projects for 24 first nations, including \$20 million for freedom road. That is an increase of \$10 million over our initial commitment. My question for the hon. member is a yes or no. Do you think that this

\$58 million for freedom road is a good thing for the province of Manitoba?

• (1255)

The Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. member for Saint Boniface—Saint Vital to direct his questions to the Chair. When we say “you” around here, it refers to the Speaker. I do not think he wants me to answer because I would not be able to anyway.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would say in response to the member that the NDP, both federally and provincially, committed at the outset to have freedom road built, and that is a good thing.

The member mentioned water, for which I would note there is nothing in this budget.

Also, there have been recent announcements that the Coast Guard facilities in Gimli and Kenora are on the closure list. If we still have time for a question and answer, I wonder if any of the Liberals from Manitoba would like to get up and let us know when they were first consulted about that, for how long they knew, and what steps they took to make sure those Coast Guard facilities do not close.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona for speaking to Bill C-44. Unfortunately he is the only NDP member who will have the opportunity to speak to the Liberals' budget implementation bill.

They had promised not to misuse omnibus bills, but then they gave us a 300-page bill that amends 30 pieces of legislation and limited debate on it twice. This makes it an antidemocratic bill in its form and in the way it is debated. It is despicable.

The member showed us in his speech that the health negotiations, pension plans, and improvements to the employment insurance program are broken Liberal promises.

The Liberals also focussed on young people to get elected, but what are they doing for them? By 2030, just over 10 years from now, 40% of jobs are going to be automated. What do the Liberals have to say about precarious employment? They are telling young people to get used to it.

They promised to give a tax credit to small businesses that were going to hire young people, but is that in the budget? Not at all. Are jobs with benefits being created for young people? No. There is no old age pension for young people either. It is all just hot air.

Government Orders

This budget does not provide any compensation to farmers. On top of featuring none of many things that were promised and dangled in front of us, the budget only contains measures for the rich and does nothing for the middle class.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about Bill C-44, which reminds us of all the things we will not get and shows that the Liberals break their promises.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and raising the fact that this is an omnibus bill. It does include a lot. There is a lot that we would like to see in the budget, but that does not mean that we want all of it to be in one bill. By way of example, we would prefer it if the national housing strategy legislation were not introduced as part of an omnibus bill.

I thank my colleague for allowing me the opportunity to address this point.

[English]

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I will be sharing my time with the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

As the member of Parliament for Markham—Thornhill, I am honoured to stand in this House today to speak in support of the budget bill, Bill C-44, which, if passed, would see important measures for helping the government meet the commitments it has made to Canadians.

First I would like to talk about some of those commitments we have already delivered on, commitments that are making a real difference in the lives of families across the country, like lowering taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1%.

• (1300)

[Translation]

We also introduced the Canada child benefit, which is essential for helping families with the high cost of raising children.

[English]

I am enormously proud that our government is represented by a gender-balanced cabinet.

Budget 2017 is the next step in our long-term plan. Over the last couple of months, I have talked to and met with thousands of families in Markham—Thornhill, and I have heard their concerns and aspirations for our community. They talked to me about how hard it is to commute for hours a day and how they want to see a transit plan that meets the needs of families. They told me about the balance and the expense of caring for their young children while at the same time caring for their elderly parents, and making sure that our seniors have what they need to lead a good quality of life.

I also heard about my constituents' ambitions, the ones that have propelled Markham ahead to making it one of the most diverse, dynamic, and fastest-growing communities in Canada. The riding of Markham—Thornhill is a leader in innovation, with GM's new autonomous and connected car centre, or IBM's Innovation Space – Markham Convergence Centre that is helping businesses take their new technologies to global markets. There are also Canadian

companies, like ICON Digital Production's state-of-the-art visual production facility, and Pond Technologies' commercialization of its research to fight climate change. These multinational Canadian headquarters and SMEs stand to serve as an example of the potential and ambition in Markham—Thornhill.

Now, at a time when changes in the economy, both here at home and around the world, present incredible opportunities for the middle class and those working hard to join it, with its strong focus on innovation, skills, and partnerships, budget 2017 takes the next steps to supporting Canadians as they acquire the knowledge and skills to build a more prosperous future for Canada. One of those steps is making big bets on sectors of the economy in which Canada can be a world leader. This includes areas where Canada already has world-leading expertise, like artificial intelligence.

[Translation]

Artificial intelligence is an emerging and promising sector with huge potential to transform technologies.

[English]

The Government of Canada's advisory council on economic growth identified artificial intelligence as a platform technology that will impact almost all sectors of the economy. Thanks to the investments by the federal government and to the pioneering work done by outstanding Canadian researchers, Canada is a global leader in AI research and development. However, we are not alone. Other countries also recognize the strategic importance of AI technology and are investing in research and innovation in this area. As a result, Canadian talent and ideas are in demand around the world. In order to fully harness the benefits of AI, we need to ensure that activity remains here in Canada. That is why, through budget 2017, we have dedicated \$125 million to launch a pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy.

In addition to AI, our government is showing strong support for business-led innovation, with an investment of \$950 million over five years in superclusters. In key sectors such as digital and clean tech, superclusters have enormous potential to accelerate economic growth. Our new strategic innovation fund would attract, support, and grow Canadian businesses in dynamic and emerging sectors through an investment of \$1.26 billion over five years. In the face of national opportunity and growing global competition, this is a strategic, focused, and bold investment in the future of our economy.

Our government is also working hard to make significant unprecedented investments in infrastructure. We have more than doubled our infrastructure commitments to meet Canada's most urgent needs.

Government Orders

Our infrastructure plan provides for investments in projects that will transform communities for the 21st century. We are aware of the risks and costs associated with underfunding of infrastructure. Those risks and costs are significant. That is why our budget is the next step in our plan to make wise investments that will promote the growth of our economy and strengthen the middle class.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

We believe that decisions made at the local level are very important and we want to support municipalities so they can meet their infrastructure priorities.

[*English*]

Beyond investments in infrastructure, one of the issues raised most frequently by residents in my riding is public transit. We know that public transit is the lifeblood of a thriving city. Whether it is widening the GO train from Milliken to Union Station, or taking the Viva, or connecting to the TTC from Markham transit, fast, efficient, and reliable public transit is essential. That is why budget 2017 would provide an investment of \$20.1 billion for public transit projects over the next 11 years. This is real change that would make a difference in the lives of the people in Markham—Thornhill and across our country.

I am also very proud to be a part of a government that believes in the necessity of effective and high-quality care for Canadian seniors. We recognize the need to address the issues of seniors, and have taken action to improve the quality of life for our seniors. Budget 2017 includes important investments in supports for an aging population to help our seniors and to give them the respect they deserve. I know how important this is for my riding and for the people in Markham—Thornhill. That is why we are improving access to home care by investing \$6 billion over 10 years so that Canadians can stay in their homes well into their retirement.

We are also investing \$2.3 billion over two years to provide more affordable housing options. This investment will improve housing conditions for seniors, especially senior women living alone. This builds on the work already done by our government to increase the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit to boost support for our most vulnerable seniors.

In addition, this budget would also help improve the lives of new Canadians. Many of our new immigrants are highly skilled and highly educated. They want to put their talents to use and to contribute to building our great country. However, many times highly skilled and educated immigrants face barriers that limit their employment opportunities once they arrive in Canada. Our government recognizes these barriers as a problem. With this budget, we are doing something about it.

This budget proposes to allocate \$27.5 million over five years starting this year, and \$5.5 million per year thereafter, to support our targeted employment strategy for newcomers. Our plan would improve pre-arrival supports for newcomers so that the process to recognize their foreign credentials can begin before they arrive in Canada. This ambitious program would break down the barriers that bright new immigrants face in fully contributing to our economy.

Finally, our government has shown that it recognizes the importance of young Canadians. With this in mind, I look forward to forming a youth council to bring together the diverse and talented youth in Markham—Thornhill. Our government understands that the path to a brighter future begins by giving all Canadians the tools they need to learn, retrain, discover, and embrace the future.

Budget 2017 supports the facets of our country that make us unique and strong. The investments in innovation, infrastructure, transit, and seniors provide the tools for our country to be successful in the future. This is a forward-looking budget, one that I think we could all get behind. I am proud to support it.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested to listen to my hon. colleague's speech. I thought, given her past experience as the director of appointments for the Liberal Party of Canada, she would have spoken to some of the aspects facing the current Liberal government, the ethics appointment process and the funding related to that process. She did not do so.

Canadians, I think are rightly concerned that five of the eight oversight bodies for Parliament right now, including the Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying, the Information Commissioner, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Commissioner of Official Languages are all sitting vacant right now. Over 50% of those positions are now vacant. There does not appear to be a process, and furthermore there does not appear to be anybody even interested in applying for these jobs, given the botched way that the electoral reform was handled, the botched way that the appointment of Madeleine Meilleur was handled.

My question for my hon. colleague is, how much is in the budget for the Liberal patronage appointment class and those Liberals working hard to join it?

• (1310)

Ms. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the government has an open, new, transparent, merit-based appointment process, but what we are here to talk about today, what I am here to talk about today, is the budget.

I am in support of the budget and I am thrilled that the budget is going to make the kinds of investments that I have heard about from many of my constituents in Markham—Thornhill. I have heard from thousands of families about what they need for transit, what they need for infrastructure, what they need for support for seniors. In this budget we are going to deliver for Canadians. We are going to deliver jobs for Canadians, those living in Markham—Thornhill and those across the country. I am incredibly proud to support budget 2017.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talks about growing the economy and being innovative, and I appreciate those comments.

In their budget last year, the Liberals removed a 25% tariff to build ferries in Canada that even the Harper government would not remove. They removed it because they knew how important it was, as a marine nation, to build ferries here in Canada. The government decided to remove that barrier because the Canadian Ferry Association promised that it would lower rates for ferry users here in Canada.

Government Orders

That was \$118 million in tariffs that went into government coffers that could have been invested in communities like Port Alberni and communities in coastal British Columbia where there is high unemployment. It could have been invested to build capacity to build boats in Canada.

The government claimed that shipyards were at capacity, supporting the Canadian Ferry Association concern, but the truth of the matter is that Canadian shipyards are not at capacity. In fact, there are tons of capacity in coastal communities looking for work.

The Liberals removed the 25% tariff in last year's budget and \$118 million was taken from Canadian taxpayers, but ferry rates did not go down. In fact, in British Columbia, that did not get passed on to consumers. It went into the pockets of the contractors who had the contracts to build our boats in Poland and in Turkey. That is where those jobs are too. When we have the highest unemployment in southwestern British Columbia, the government failed British Columbians, failed coastal people, and failed the shipbuilding industry here in Canada.

Ms. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, we are here today to talk about the budget, and I am really proud to support this budget. If passed, it will begin to work for Canadians. We are committed to historic investments in infrastructure that will create great jobs for middle-class Canadians and those who are seeking to join it.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about jobs. Just today, another 77,000 jobs were announced, and that tells me that what we are doing is working. The economy has grown by over a quarter of a million jobs in the last eight months. I wonder if the member opposite could expand on what we are doing that is helping to promote that job growth.

Ms. Mary Ng: Mr. Speaker, budget 2017 is our government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for the middle class and those working hard to join it. We are going to put Canada's skilled, talented, and creative people right at the heart of a more innovative future economy, and that is going to create jobs for today and for the future. I am proud of this budget.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Resuming debate. Unfortunately, the hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook has but one minute left before I have to put the motion.

The hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-44, our budget's implementation act.

[*English*]

The best way to draw a nice picture is that this is a continuation of last year's budget 2016, where we are seeing a focus again on the middle class and those working hard to join it. It is impressive to see the new jobs as the economy continues to grow. It was announced just this morning that there were another 50,000-plus new good-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians. That is extremely impressive.

I would also like to say that many Canadians will benefit from budget 2017. I know that across Nova Scotia and my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, the youth, seniors, veterans, tradesmen, and new Canadians will benefit. Canadians all across this country will benefit.

I want to talk about budget 2016 and the two things that were essential and will continue to benefit Canadians. The first one is the child care benefit—

• (1315)

The Speaker: As I indicated to the hon. member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook before he began, he only had one minute for his remarks.

It being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made Monday, June 5, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made Tuesday, May 30, the division stands deferred until Monday, June 12, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

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

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

JOURNALISTIC SOURCES PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion that Bill S-231, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code (protection of journalistic sources), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the motion for second reading of S-231, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code (protection of journalistic sources), be amended by deleting the words "Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights" and by substituting the words "Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security".

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: Resuming debate. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to speak about and defend freedom of the press. I thank the sponsor of the bill, which I will support.

Canada has dropped 14 points in the World Press Freedom Index in two years, since the Liberals took office. This is alarming, and it is time to act.

Protecting the freedom of the press, particularly a journalist's confidential sources, is vitally important, which is why I am standing in support of the intentions of this bill. However, I do have a few regrets about certain aspects of it.

Today we live in a connected world, in an era with a variety of platforms and social networks. The concept of media must evolve with the new information distribution channels and new journalistic practices. We should go with a broad definition of what a journalist is. We need to leave it up to judges to decide whether an individual was acting as a journalist or not when a disclosure request is received.

I am concerned to see that the Senate committee narrowly limited the definition, since it is unacceptable that protection of journalistic sources be given only to the traditional media. I am certain that many journalists are doing a tremendous job outside of conventional media. The NDP will therefore be submitting an amendment in committee to restore the definition of "journalist" that was in the original version of the bill.

The NDP has always been on the side of the media against attacks on their independence and has always defended press freedom. The NDP was there, on November 16, at a press conference with major

Private Members' Business

Canadian media organizations to condemn the wiretapping of journalists and to defend press freedom in this country. I would like to thank my colleague from the riding of Beloeil—Chambly, who is standing up for press freedom and the protection of journalistic sources.

Where are the Liberals? The situation is troubling. The Liberal government is always shirking its responsibilities. Internationally, we see that nothing is being done to bring home Raif Badawi, who has been confined and mistreated since 2012 in Saudi prisons. Nothing is happening here at home either. Once again, Canadian citizens cannot count on their government to take the appropriate action.

Considering how often the Prime Minister makes grand pronouncements about freedom of the press, I would like to know why this bill came from the Senate, not from the government. Protecting people takes more than just good intentions. Our journalists and their sources risk their jobs and sometimes their lives to supply us with reliable information on matters of public interest. This is a serious issue that calls for serious action now.

Media in my riding are doing outstanding work. Our newspapers, *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, *Le Clairon*, *Journal Mobiles*, and *La Pensée de Bagot*, and our radio stations, Boom Montérégie and Radio Acton, as well as our television stations, CogecoTV Saint-Hyacinthe, Maskatel, and Cooptel, are doing great work. I know them all well, I have worked with them, and I know they do top-notch work on the ground that our entire region is proud of. Every day, women and men across Canada work to keep us informed about what is going on in Quebec, Canada, and the world. That includes journalists, but it also includes sources, who often reveal vital information on matters of public interest.

Unfortunately, this reporting could be threatened if nothing is done to maintain the bonds of trust between journalists and their sources and to protect the confidentiality of these sources. *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe*, in print since 1853, is the oldest French newspaper in America. Many residents of Saint-Hyacinthe read it, and they recognize the quality and reliability of the information in that newspaper and other local media. How can media consumers feel confident that they are well informed, knowing that print journalists are possibly being spied on by their own government? It is time we legislate to protect journalists' confidential sources and to change the way surveillance warrants are issued.

Under this bill, a justice of the peace will no longer have the authority to issue search warrants to investigate a journalist. Only a Superior Court judge would be authorized to do so, under certain conditions. This represents major progress that will provide journalists with assurances that a search warrant really is the last resort.

• (1320)

I would also like the Minister of Public Safety to call a public inquiry as soon as possible to get to the bottom of the issue of journalists under surveillance by the RCMP and other federal security agencies. There have been repeated incidents for many years now.

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In 2007, *La Presse* journalist Joël-Denis Bellavance was under surveillance by the RCMP, which is completely unacceptable, and his is not the only one. In October 2016, *La Presse* revealed that journalist Patrick Lagacé had also been under surveillance, this time by the Montreal police. That came as no surprise given that 98% of applications for a warrant to investigate a journalist submitted by the police to a justice of the peace were granted. I think these repeated scandals raise some very serious questions about the state of freedom of the press and democracy in this country.

On November 4, 2016, after the attacks on the freedom of the press in Quebec had come to light, I asked the Minister of Public Safety in the House to tell us exactly how many journalists are being spied on. At that time, the minister said that this was not happening at the federal level.

Why then did the government not immediately launch a public inquiry in order to shed some light on the RCMP's practices regarding journalists? After all of the attacks on the freedom of the press that have occurred in recent years, Canadians have the right to call the government to account.

We need to determine the extent of the problem and establish new safeguards to prevent this sort of thing from happening again. I would also like to talk about Ben Makuch, a journalist for VICE, who could go to prison because he is refusing to reveal his sources to the RCMP. In the bill that we are examining today, there is a provision that allows journalists to refuse to disclose information if they believe that the confidentiality of their source would be threatened. This represents some progress toward stronger protections for our journalists and their sources.

We can no longer keep count of the scandals that have been uncovered here in Canada and around the world because of anonymous yet highly credible sources. For journalists to be able to investigate freely, they have to be allowed to gain the trust of their sources. Establishing this trust becomes impossible for journalists if they are forced to disclose information that might jeopardize the confidentiality of their sources.

Freedom of the press is everyone's business. It is a non-partisan issue because it is a pillar of our democracy. To ensure this freedom, journalists working coast to coast to provide quality information to the public need assurances that they will not be under surveillance. This means that their confidential sources have to be protected.

Every journalist needs to be able to investigate without fear of being watched or wiretapped. Bill S-231 is an improvement, but does not quite go as far as I had initially hoped, including in providing a broader definition of media.

This bill has the support of journalists associations across the country, of Canada's major media outlets, and lawyers who specialize in media law, as well as the Barreau du Québec. The government cannot vote against this bill. For far too long, it has been avoiding the issue and trying to shirk its responsibilities. Soon we will see whether the Liberals are the valiant defenders of freedom of the press that they claim to be or whether this was just more rhetoric.

As I said, my region is home to the oldest French-language newspaper in America, and we are very proud of it. I have been in office for several years now, first as a municipal councillor and now

as an MP. I appreciate the fact that our local media can be critical of our work. I appreciate how they act as watchdogs and keep abreast of the issues.

Much of their work is in the public interest. They make sure that we spend public money appropriately and that the people's interests are properly represented. Their questions might make us squirm sometimes, but they are important for our democracy. As I often said to my fellow municipal councillors, those looking for subservient media should move to a dictatorship.

• (1325)

Protecting our journalists is important.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-231, which was introduced by my colleague, Senator Carignan, who did an exceptional job as opposition leader in the upper house for our party. Mr. Carignan is from the Montreal region, so he is very familiar with what is going on in the media sector in our greater metropolitan area.

I am also glad that the government decided to support this bill, which is so important for our democracy.

Last year, like many Quebecers, I was shocked to learn that police forces, whose job is to protect us, had a number of journalists under surveillance. Naturally, I have a lot of admiration for this country's police forces and law enforcement agencies, whose members, for the most part, choose to work in policing because they want to keep us safe and protect our families and our rights. For them, it is a matter of principle, honour, and ensuring a healthy democracy.

We need to ensure that our law enforcement officers continue to serve all Canadians, rather than just one branch of a political office, whether it be that of a mayor or MP. We need to avoid the embarrassments we have seen over the past few years, and still recently, in certain regions of Canada.

We are not a Communist country like China or Cuba, despite our Prime Minister's willingness to sing the praises of some of their leaders. One thing is certain; Canada is a democratic country. In a country like ours, everyone should ensure maximum freedom of expression so that the rights of all Canadians are protected.

The resources available to the state, especially when it comes to surveillance and wiretapping, are supposed to be used only in situations where they are deemed essential, specifically in order to thwart an attack that is imminent or in the works. The fact that an employee working for a municipal, provincial, or federal government wants to blow the whistle on an embarrassing situation is clearly not a matter of national security that would require police forces to set aside important investigations to sound the alarm. That is what we believe on this side of the House, and of course all parties agree on this.

The most blatant example in Canadian history is that of the Gomery commission. Journalist Daniel Leblanc from *The Globe and Mail* uncovered a story that caused quite an uproar and ended with the investigation that we are all familiar with today. The whole thing started with an informer known as “Ma Chouette”. We never found out the person's real name because Mr. Leblanc went so far as to go to court to protect his journalistic sources. This helped Canadian society to make significant advances.

It is therefore essential that we be able to protect those people. Senator Carignan, who sponsored this bill, was aware of the importance of striking a balance so as not to create a free-for-all where government secrets would be leaked in violation of the law.

It is important to point out that this bill still allows the courts to authorize the disclosure of information, even if they do so only in rare cases where the public interest in the administration of justice outweighs the public interest in protecting confidentiality. Under clause 39 of the bill, the court must take into account the following three factors: the essential role of the information in the proceeding, freedom of the press, and the impact of disclosure on the journalistic source.

Judges are required to think carefully before issuing wiretap warrants, and obtaining such warrants will not be a mere formality that is automatically rubber-stamped. Judges cannot issue such warrants unless they are absolutely necessary.

The Chamberland commission on the wiretapping of journalists is currently under way in Quebec, and it is causing quite the stir.

• (1330)

This is further proof that the bill must be passed, so that all of these things can change and that journalists are able to conduct the necessary investigations to advance democracy.

That said, as he acknowledged himself before the Chamberland commission this week, the officer responsible for wiretaps in the case of Mr. Lagacé, of *La Presse*, acknowledged that despite the lack of urgency, he had no trouble obtaining a wiretapping warrant. Had Bill S-231 already been in place at the time, things would have played out entirely differently, and for the better.

I would like to reiterate that freedom of the press is fundamental in a free and democratic society such as ours. The press' role is to question, to investigate and to ensure that governments at all levels respect their commitment to openness and transparency. Incidentally, I would like to digress for a moment by touching on the events, starting last week, that led to the withdrawal of Ms. Meilleur's candidacy this week for the position of Commissioner of Official Languages.

MPs and journalists alike worked on this file. Journalists uncovered the facts and presented them to us. Certain individuals, some under the cover of anonymity, spoke to journalists and expressed reservations about Ms. Meilleur's appointment. Not only did this spark controversy, but it also prompted us elected representatives to action. Though people would not necessarily have contacted us directly, they were comfortable enough talking to journalists, who then publish the news in a neutral way. Neutrality is very important. We all have our contacts and our networks, that is the nature of politics, but I think that people will still regularly

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supply information that may move certain matters forward or even allow all the facts to come to light, as the Gomery commission did. Sources often prefer to supply information anonymously to a journalist, as journalists are neutral and not tied to any particular political party. That makes it possible for them to speak freely, which is not always the case.

The government has boasted for a year and a half about being open and transparent. Transparency is not creating a website where people can enter their name. Over time it was revealed that Ms. Meilleur made contributions to the Liberal Party. There were still some dots to connect, however. As more time passed, we became aware of mounting evidence pointing towards the fact that this was indeed a partisan appointment. There was still more digging to do.

The press' role is to question, investigate and ensure that governments at all levels respect their commitment to openness and transparency. Without the press, Canadians may not have become aware of scandals such as the sponsorship scandal, the Prime Minister's wheeling and dealing, cash-for-access fundraisers, or partisan appointments such as that of Ms. Meilleur.

Despite Liberal promises to be open and transparent, Ms. Suzanne Legault, the Information Commissioner, concluded in her report yesterday that government is more secretive than ever.

I am pleased to support this bill, which recognizes the importance of journalists and sets clear safeguards to prevent the government from pushing too far with the powers that Canadians have given it.

I would also like to note, as my colleague from the NDP has just done, that there are also local media venues in our ridings. The local community media can also receive information in a neutral manner. I would like to list them: on radio, there is CIEL FM in Rivière-du-Loup, CHOX FM in La Pocatière, and CIQI FM in Montmagny. For newspapers, there is *Le Placoteux*, *Info Dimanche* and *Journal L'Oie Blanche*. On television there is CIMT and CMATV. I am firmly convinced that all these communications networks allow for better democracy. I support them and I would ask them to continue their good work. We need them, as they are essential to Canadian democracy.

• (1335)

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to advise my colleagues of the government's position regarding this important debate on Bill S-231, the journalistic sources protection act.

It is an issue that affects all Canadians. Since this discussion is taking place at a time when the media is under attack in certain parts of the world, it is important to highlight their essential role in protecting our freedoms and our democracy.

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[English]

Last October, it was made known to the public through the media that several media outlets and journalists were the targets of police surveillance in Quebec. Although a journalist, just like any other Canadian, can be the subject of a criminal investigation, what the public and parliamentarians were most concerned about was the possibility of the media being surveilled to identify their sources in a context where it was not evident that the criminality of the journalists was in question.

It is clear that such conduct is profoundly troubling, as it has a potential chilling effect on the willingness of whistle-blowers to come forward with their stories. Whistle-blowers are often the only source for uncovering systemic corruption and other issues that undermine our democracy.

● (1340)

[Translation]

As a result of that incident, the Government of Quebec acted quickly and amended its guidelines and protections for obtaining warrants against journalists.

To that end, it put them in the same group as lawyers, judges, and members of the National Assembly, for whom additional guarantees and special protocols for obtaining warrants apply.

The Government of Quebec also established a commission of inquiry to look into the issue. The commission should conclude its hearings by the end of the month.

In light of these events, two bills were introduced in Parliament on the issue of privilege concerning journalistic sources. Today we are debating the merits of the bill from the Hon. Senator Claude Carignan, sponsored in the House by my colleague, the member for Louis Saint Laurent.

[English]

Our government believes that the overall objective of the bill, to ensure that the protection of journalistic sources is given due consideration whenever they are at issue in Canadian courts, is laudable. This initiative transcends political lines. On that note, we would like to thank Senator Carignan, as well as all the other senators who worked so tirelessly and passionately on this important bipartisan initiative. That is why we are proud to support Bill S-231, all the while proposing certain amendments that will not only address certain legal and policy concerns that have been voiced but will help it better meet its objective.

[Translation]

This issue is clearly very important, but it must be noted that the jurisprudence on confidential sources is very complex.

The current laws have been referred to the Supreme Court of Canada for consideration of the very issues addressed by the bill we are debating.

At this time, the protections afforded to journalists and their sources have been upheld over the evolution of common law, in other words, in this context, the jurisprudence that interpreted the freedoms granted by the charter and the legislative framework consisting of the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code.

[English]

This is important to note, because when Parliament enacts laws, it is codifying strict practices that will frame an issue, and as a result, supplant the common law. This is why it is important that whatever legislative change we enact in the name of journalistic protection, it must further protect journalists and their sources and not weaken them.

In relation to the Canada Evidence Act amendments, the bill seeks to create a unique regime, applicable any time the media wish to protect a journalistic source. However, there are some problems relating to this new regime. In clause 2 of the bill, one of the factors listed, in proposed subparagraph 39.1(8)(b)(i), is the “essential role of the information or document to the proceeding”.

Our government is concerned that the reference to “essential” could impede the administration of justice in some cases, as it may be unknown at the outset of a proceeding whether a piece of information or a document is essential. Requiring consideration of the “importance” of the information or document would still be within the spirit of the bill but would provide the court with greater latitude to make its determination.

Next, the new condition added by the Senate at committee, proposed paragraph 39.1(8)(c), “due consideration was given to all means of disclosure that would preserve the identity of the journalistic source”, is a valuable addition, even if a document is admissible. This condition will always be met, which will weaken the privilege. As such, our government believes that this new condition should be moved to a separate section such that it is not a condition of admissibility but rather a step the decision-maker must undertake once information is admissible. This is expected to strengthen the protection of journalistic sources.

Finally, the bill proposes an override provision that would give the provisions of the bill supremacy over any other provision of the act or any other act of Parliament. This provision is not only unnecessary for the proper operation of this new scheme but raises significant legal and policy issues. It is wholly unclear how this override would affect other laws, including those that relate to privacy and national security. As Parliament believes that every law it passes is important, override clauses should be used sparingly.

● (1345)

[Translation]

With regard to clauses affecting the Criminal Code, we need to look at how investigative tools such as search warrants and production orders can be issued and executed when they relate to journalists. Although the purpose of these proposals is to protect journalistic sources, the procedure in the bill would apply the moment a journalist becomes the subject of an investigative tool even if the journalist is the subject of a criminal investigation.

The bill also proposes a triage procedure that requires the gathered evidence to be sealed and reviewed by a court before the information can be disclosed to police. It is important to note that the bill says only a superior court judge shall authorize the use of an investigative tool on a journalist.

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[English]

Like the proposed amendments to the Canada Evidence Act, our government is of the view that these proposed Criminal Code amendments raise some discreet legal and policy issues.

The fact that the new regime would apply even in cases where a journalist is suspected of criminal activity was a major concern of Senator Vernon White at the Senate committee, and our government remains concerned that it was not adequately addressed by the Senate.

Our government does not suggest that a confidential journalistic source should lose his or her protection in this context. As such, we propose that the additional conditions for the attainment of a warrant would not apply in cases where the journalists themselves are suspected of criminal activity, but the sealing order provisions would still apply to protect the source.

The other policy question arises because the new regime seems to apply each and every time a journalist is implicated, even when the police are not aware that the target is a journalist. Our government does not believe this was the intention of the bill, but the fact remains that it could lead to court challenges where police subsequently discover they are investigating a journalist but were not aware at the time of the application. Making it clear that the regime would only apply when the police know or reasonably ought to have known that the target is a journalist, and creating a process whereby the police could inform the court when they become aware that the target is a journalist, would make the scheme much more workable.

Lastly, the bill also provides for an override clause with respect to the Criminal Code provisions. This is not a situation that needs an override clause, yet there is the real potential for conflicts with other acts. Most notably, it would prevent the police from acting in exigent circumstances, which may include ongoing terrorist activities or attacks where the perpetrators use the media to increase their exposure.

I ask all members in the chamber and in the other House to support the bill for all of the reasons that I have identified, as well as the amendments the government is proposing to improve upon it.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on Bill S-231, an act to amend the Canada Evidence Act and the Criminal Code. I would first like to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for bringing forward this bill. He was an esteemed journalist in his past life and knows this very well.

As I was preparing my thoughts on this bill today, I was hoping to talk about a friend of mine, a local reporter on Vancouver Island, Keven Drews. Keven has been a pillar of journalism on Vancouver Island and the west coast for over 20 years. He has shown me what strong, unflinching journalism looks like. Unfortunately, Keven is fighting a brutal 10-year battle with cancer. He is in the hospital today and watching us talk about this very important bill. I am certain he would be happy to know that we are here fighting for freedom of speech and journalists.

The first time I met Keven, and it is hard to believe, I met him surfing. I was in Tofino and he was a cadet, a real, true Canadian

committed to Canada and to becoming a journalist who could tell very important stories for coastal people.

As a journalist, he started the local paper, telling our stories, and moved up to become the *Alberni Valley Times* reporter and editor. Then he went down to *Peninsula Daily News*, and then over to Port Angeles, Washington, before he got sick. Then he started his own paper, the *westcoaster.ca*, and started telling a very important story, the west coast story, to make sure that people across our country heard our story. When Keven got sick, he was on the way up in his career, and he went to work for *The Canadian Press* so he could be close to the hospitals in Vancouver.

Wherever Keven was, he would stop to hear what was happening in our communities. His late father or his mother, Louise, would be with him, who are very proud of Keven, or his wife Yvette and kids Tristan and Elleree. Keven always made time to hear our important stories. His priorities were to ensure that in the stories of coastal people, stories about economic justice and social justice and environmental justice and indigenous people's rights were included. Some of the stories were difficult and painful.

Keven interviewed me many times, and I always respected his sources. I respected that he had to protect his sources so that he could get the story right. He covered really bad accidents, suicides, corruption, and scandals, really difficult stories to cover. It was the confidentiality that earned Keven the respect that he deserved, and he could cover all of these difficult issues. I acknowledge journalists across our country for the passion and caring that they have to make sure they get it right and build trust within communities.

Before I dive into the rest of my speech, I want to thank Keven. I know a lot of people have gone back to their ridings and I appreciate that, but I would ask members to join me in acknowledging this great man, who fought for journalism, people in our communities, and our country.

One of the biggest challenges for journalists and the journalism profession in general is trust, as I touched on. In a changing media landscape where clicks and views have become its currency, the public's trust in journalism has eroded. In this environment, probing investigative journalism has become all that much more important. This is the kind of journalism that we not only need to celebrate but also rigorously protect.

Along with developing trust with the public through their hard work, it is also vital for journalists to develop trust with their sources. Many of these sources need to speak with anonymity. If sources feel their communication with the journalist could compromise them, those sources will dry up. Bill S-231 aims to protect these journalists and the sources they rely upon to create the powerful, well-founded journalism we deserve here in Canada. If we want to sustain our free and independent press, the protections that this bill provides are necessary.

This bill was introduced in the House on May 3, which was fitting, as it was World Press Freedom Day. On that day, the Prime Minister released a statement, which stated:

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Today, we recognize the many journalists who seek out the truth, challenge assumptions and expose injustices, often at great personal risk. They are the cornerstones of any strong and healthy democracy, informing and challenging us all to think more critically about the world around us.

I cannot agree more with the sentiment of the Prime Minister's statement last month. The government needs to move past well-meaning platitudes, though, and pass legislation that grants journalists and their sources the protections they need to pursue difficult stories.

● (1350)

The government needs to clear the way on these reforms. I cannot understand why it remains silent while reporters are prosecuted. If the Prime Minister wants to continue to label himself a champion of the free press, now is the time to prove that claim. The Liberals have yet to act upon Bill C-51 and the threat to free speech it poses for journalists, but support for this bill would be a great step in the right direction. To this point, it is worth noting that in 2015, Canada ranked 10th in the World Press Freedom Index, and this year we have slid to 22nd in the world. We can and need to do better.

The World Press Freedom Index cited four items that caused our rank to drop. One was the revelation that Montreal police tailed a *La Presse* journalist in an attempt to uncover a leak from their own source. Second, the RCMP is prosecuting a Vice media journalist who has been charged with refusing to give up his direct documents to RCMP officers and could be sentenced to up to 10 years for withholding these documents. Third, a journalist for *TheIndependent.ca* is being charged by the RCMP for his reporting on a protest at the Muskrat Falls hydroelectric project in Labrador. He followed protestors to bear witness to the protest, and he was prosecuted for this action. Finally, there is our lack of a shield law for journalists and their sources.

The first three examples are offensive, overreaching actions, and these cases need to be resolved. The importance of a shield law for Canada falls to us to accomplish and would help to stop injustices such as these from occurring in the future. We need to follow the examples of countries such as Australia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom in developing a shield law.

I would like to take a moment to speak to some of these cases. In the cases of the Vice reporter and *TheIndependent.ca's* journalist, both filed stories that will be vital evidence for police in other cases, so it baffles me that journalists acting in the public interest and assisting the public in an invaluable way are then being prosecuted for doing that work. This is a short-sighted approach by police, as it will make journalists consider what stories they pursue in the future. It pushes directly against the rights of these individuals and their protection from self-incrimination. Journalists and the media are not accountable to the government. Strong-arm tactics such as these are the sorts of measures that break down free speech.

I am glad to stand with my colleagues from other parties to advocate for this legislation. This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue of freedom of speech and our democracy, and I think we can all see that. I hope that the government comes to see this as well and supports this bill.

Bill S-231 is a well-meaning piece of legislation. However, I still have reservations about its scope in the bill's current form. I am

particularly concerned that small news outlets and freelance writers may still be forced to self-censor or risk entering into an extended legal battle, which remains something few can afford. In 2009-10, *The Globe and Mail* spent almost a million dollars in legal fees to protect one of its sources, and this kind of expense cannot be expected of local media outlets.

Another concern I have is the limited definition of journalist in the bill's current form. I hope that as this bill reaches the House committee, this language is scrutinized. There is a serious problem if size rather than substance limits the inclusion of publications in the scope of this bill. Bill S-231 is a strong first step, but it is clear that more can be done to reflect the enormity of the media landscape in this day and age.

One of the strongest parts of this legislation is the paradigm shift the bill would provide at the beginning of a police investigation. From the beginning of an investigation, it sets out checks and balances in the judicial process to weigh journalistic integrity against public safety. Journalist advocates provided during warrant requests could lend their expert knowledge and mediate between police forces and judges. This would make sure the onus was on the agencies to prove the need to investigate these journalists.

The bill would also amend the Criminal Code to no longer give a justice of the peace the authority to issue a search warrant relating to a journalist. Only a judge in a superior court would be able to issue a search warrant, under certain conditions that would provide maximum protection to journalists' right to the confidentiality of their sources. This is a wise change. The journalists I have mentioned have been charged with serious crimes, with the potential for significant jail time if they are convicted. Going forward, we need the experience and knowledge of our most seasoned judges in these cases from the very beginning.

This bill needs to be a true shield and not a hurdle to be navigated around. We have a duty to support journalists and freedom of speech in this country. Democracy is at its best when journalists are free to do their job without fear of reverberation. My New Democrat colleagues and I will stand by those who make our country strong with an independent free press.

● (1355)

The Speaker: I am sure the hearts and prayers of all members are with the hon. member's friend, Keven.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to also rise today to speak to Bill S-231. I would like to begin by thanking my colleague, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, for recognizing the importance of this issue and supporting the bill from the other place.

Today, we are speaking about a bill that cuts to the very heart of democracy: freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Those are two concepts that every good and flourishing democracy must uphold. This is imperative and I see the importance of the need to bring this forward today.

Private Members' Business

One of the reasons these two principles, freedom of the press and freedom of speech, are important is that we are in the pursuit of truth. Our society, western democracy, is always predicated on the pursuit of truth. Truth, typically, needs no defence, but it does need to be brought into the light in that we need to see what the truth is.

As parliamentarians, we have a duty to protect the public and to reduce public health and safety risks by ensuring that everyone knows what the truth is. That can only be found out in certain ways because there are forces in the world that want to limit the truth. They want to hide the truth. Exposing truth can only be done when private citizens engage in a public discourse to bring the truth to light. Sometimes the truth is ugly. Sometimes it is not something everyone wants known. However, in a lot of cases, when the truth is brought out into the light, we can then make appropriate decisions that will make our communities and society better.

That is why, in the defence of truth, we need to ensure that sources are able to bring forward the truth, and to do that with some anonymity, to ensure that our democracy continues to flourish, because if we can stifle truth, we will make decisions based on false information. We will make decisions that are based on misinformation that will then have significant ramifications down the road. The truth must be brought forward. It must be unbiased, and our decisions should not be driven by hidden agendas, whether for profit, prestige, or influence. All these kinds of things can have the effect of people trying to limit the truth.

I am very much in support of the bill. It will improve the likelihood of someone bringing the truth forward and approaching a journalist to say, "You should probably know about this. However, if I do go public with this my life might be at risk, so I need you to bring it forward."

Journalists take on some of that risk when they come forward as well. We must commend the journalists that do the hard work of bringing truth to light. That is very important. As a society, we must always focus on what the truth is. It is not always what we would like it to be, but it is the truth at the end of the day. Again, I go to the fact that it does not need a defence, but it does need to be brought into the light.

Often, sources find themselves in positions of conflict, where the release of information could harm the organization they work for or harm the security of their job. If they go forward with information that could harm their organization or threaten the security of their job, that is to some degree an understandable situation, but we all know situations where accusations have been made and significant things have happened in terms of people's lives being ruined. Therefore, if we could to some degree share the impact of that with the rest of society, that would be great.

● (1400)

In the past, whistle-blowers have been shunned, demoted, threatened, sued, fired, and their lives have been significantly affected. However, we must commend these people for their pursuit of truth, for identifying the moral good for society in the pursuit of truth. If there is a moral ill that is happening in society and decisions are being made without a key piece of information being brought to the forefront, it is significant and we must have the ability to bring that significant piece of information to the forefront and minimize

the backlash or impact that could happen to the person who is bringing it forward.

I would like to bring forward the case of a whistle-blower. Dr. Chopra, a Health Canada scientist, was pressured in the 1990s to approve bovine growth hormone as a veterinarian drug. He had concerns about this drug. Despite his concerns, the pressure to allow this drug to go forward continued, and the pressure was immense. He could not make headway within the organization, so he went public with it and was immediately fired. However, under the bill before us, Dr. Chopra would have been allowed to go to a journalist, go public, and be more anonymous about it.

It is people like Dr. Chopra, who put their livelihoods on the line for the moral good in the pursuit of truth, that the bill would help protect. It would also ensure that we have a society that has all the information it needs to make important decisions.

Specifically in this place, we make a lot of decisions that, in some cases, could be a life and death situation. Therefore, we need to have all the information when we are making decisions, and the pursuit of truth is an immensely important aspect of that.

Freedom of the press and freedom of speech are the two principles that we are dealing with today, and behind those two principles is the idea that we pursue truth. Democratic nations in the world typically recognize that the truth does not need defence. If the truth is brought to light, we have to deal with it. Yes, there might be situations where it may be uncomfortable for particular people, but at the end of the day, if we have that truth, we will be able to flourish and make proper decisions.

Democratic countries also recognize that there is risk in the world. We have all heard of situations where somebody noted in their particular workplace that there was a danger, but when they talked to their supervisor or manager, nothing happened. They felt they wanted a particular thing to change, but if they went public with it, they would immediately be fired. This would not do any good for the rest of the employees in that business, because that risk or danger would still be there. However, with a source safety net, such that we are discussing today, they could go to a journalist, tell their story, and the person would not necessarily be identified. This is a very important component.

This is particularly important when it comes to government. If a government can bury the truth, bury the reality, then it can dictate reality to some degree. If we are not pursuing truth, if we can bury the truth, we can rewrite history or rewrite the reality, which is incredibly dangerous when people are making decisions about what type of government they want. We know that propaganda is often a non-truth or half-truth being put forward as a truth. Therefore, we need to ensure that truth is something that we pursue. We need to ensure that we have freedom of speech and freedom of the press in this country in order to be a viable democracy.

I am supporting the bill, and I would like to thank the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for bringing it forward.

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• (1405)

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a friend of mine used to say, "What a great day to be alive." That is exactly the case today. This is a great day for democracy. This is a great day for the press. This is a great day for freedom of the press.

[*Translation*]

We are at second reading of Bill S-231. In my final remarks, I would like to begin by pointing out that we are indeed here debating this important bill thanks to the efforts of Senator Claude Carignan who worked very hard, quickly, and effectively to find a solution to the problem of protecting journalistic sources, in light of the scandal that broke a few months ago. The case of Patrick Lagacé comes to mind, a veteran Quebec journalist who, unfortunately, was put under surveillance by certain police forces, which was absolutely shameful.

Senator Carignan worked very efficiently to introduce a bill in the upper chamber. He managed to win the support and backing of every press association and to have his bill pass unanimously in the Senate. He did so in a positive and constructive manner by accepting the recommendations made by other senators, including Senator André Pratte, who, as everyone knows, is a veteran journalist who now serves in the upper chamber. Senator Pratte contributed several new, positive, and constructive elements to Bill S-231.

I acknowledge and thank Senator Carignan. I will quickly remind the House of the key elements of this bill.

First, it serves to protect whistle-blowers, journalists' sources. The bill does not protect journalists so much as it protects their sources. This bill also defines exactly what constitutes a journalist. Not everyone can define themselves as a journalist. We need to clearly define exactly what constitutes a journalist.

Also, if the police want to conduct a particular investigation, this must be the last resort and the burden of proof must be reversed. A Superior Court judge will now have to authorize them to investigate, whereas, in the past, they could obtain such authorization from a justice of the peace.

We and Senator Carignan do not believe that was enough. We needed to give this approach some teeth, and that is exactly what this bill does.

• (1410)

[*English*]

I have listened carefully to all members who have participated in the debate in the last hour. I was very impressed by the quality of the

speeches. The quality of the arguments the members have tabled was sometimes better than what we had tabled as the godfathers of this bill in the House of Commons, so I want to pay my respects, especially to the NDP members, who always recognize that freedom of the press is important.

We recognize also that in every riding and every locality, there is a local press to protect. Certainly here in Ottawa we sometimes have *la crème de la crème* as journalists, those who cover us, and for sure we will be polite with them. However, we also recognize that in every community we have strong journalists, good journalists who work hard, and we think of them when we table this bill.

I appreciate the openness of the Liberal Party, of the government, which tabled some suggestions and some positive amendments, and we welcome the fact that we all worked together on this issue.

Let me be crystal clear: this is not a partisan issue. This is a real, true Canadian issue. We are here to protect the liberty of the press. We are here to protect the liberty of democracy. That is why we tabled this bill and some amendments, and we welcome them.

At the end of my speech, I want to say that many of the 338 members in this House have been journalists. I have had that privilege, and just in the Conservative Party, I count at least 10 members who have been journalists. That is why Canadians have recognized for so many years that the Conservative Party is so media-friendly.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Greg Fergus): I thank the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent for his closing remarks.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Greg Fergus): I declare the motion carried. Consequently, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Greg Fergus): It being 2:13 p.m., this House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:13 p.m.)

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