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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 21, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the parliamentary budget officer entitled “Fall Economic Statement 2017: Issues for Parliamentarians”.

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[*English*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the fall 2017 reports of the Auditor General of Canada. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), these documents are deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

* * *

INDIAN ACT

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, an assessment of the population impacts of select hypothetical amendments to section 6 of the Indian Act.

* * *

OFFICE OF THE TAXPAYERS' OMBUDSMAN

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) to table the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman annual report, in both official languages, entitled “Fairness: A Right, Not a Privilege”.

PETITIONS

PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present petitions signed by over 8,000 Canadians from across our nation. These petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and the impacts of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impacts on public health.

Recognizing that we cannot say that we believe in preventing sexual violence toward women while allowing pornography companies to freely expose our children to violent, explicitly sexual material imagery day after day, these petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to implement meaningful age verification on all adult websites.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petition e-1162 concerning Tibetan human rights defenders.

This petition was originated by Namdol Tenzin from Scarborough, and it calls upon the Government of Canada to urge China to fulfill its international human rights obligations, to create a comprehensive report on the situation of Tibetan human rights defenders, and to make public intervention on behalf of Tibetan human rights defenders, particularly the 11th Panchen Lama.

* * *

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 ask that all questions be allowed to stand at this time.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANNABIS ACT

BILL C-45—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

Government Orders

That in relation to Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration of the report stage and two sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said bill; and

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

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period. I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their places so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition.

[*English*]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have before us a bill that would make Canada probably one of the countries in the world with the most relaxed laws around marijuana. Marijuana is a substance that evidence shows affects young people right up to the age of 25. It is a substance that impairs people's ability to drive and their ability to work. It is a substance that our U.S. neighbour to the south has big problems with when it comes to people crossing the border. Marijuana will be legal in Canada yet it has so many problems attached to it. The provinces are concerned about it. Police are concerned about it. Parents are concerned about it.

What is the government doing? It is shutting down debate and ramming this legislation through because it has an arbitrary timeline. We are not sure what the government's motivation is but it is clear that its motivation is not the safety and security, the health and well-being of our children, our communities, people on the road, people driving vehicles or operating machinery. The Liberals do not seem to care about that. They only seem to care about ramming this legislation through. This is worse than appalling. This is the worst example of the Liberals' disrespect of Parliament and disrespect for Canadians, municipalities, and provinces.

I cannot believe we are seeing this happen again on this legislation.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill C-45 is in terms of respecting the health and safety of Canadians. We have had substantive discussions around this particular legislation from pre-election, through two years that we have been in government, through a substantive task force focused on health and safety that engaged with Canadians right across the country. This legislation received 30,000 submissions in terms of what we have committed to doing, which is legalizing cannabis and strictly regulating access to cannabis in order to keep it out of the hands of children and the proceeds of its sale out of the hands of criminals.

The current status quo is simply not working. It is easier for a young person to get cannabis than it is, for example, for that young person to get a cigarette.

We are doing something substantive. We are addressing this matter in terms of health and safety. We are putting in place a comprehensive framework while working in partnership with the provinces, territories, and municipalities. This framework will protect children and will do as much as possible to keep marijuana out of the hands of organized crime.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the position of the New Democratic Party and has for decades been our position that we need dramatic reform to Canada's criminalized approach to cannabis. We are in favour of legalizing cannabis. We are in favour of this legislation but we also want to do it right. We cannot change 100 years of criminal, social, and cultural attitude toward a substance like cannabis without taking great care.

The McLellan report was very clear that the federal government had to work with all levels of government, provincial, municipal, and indigenous in order to have a successful rollout.

This legislation, while better than the status quo, has significant gaps. We heard this at committee. It has serious holes. It does not deal with pardons.

Indigenous representatives testified at committee. Chief Isadore Day told us there has not been any negotiation or discussion with indigenous people whatsoever prior to this and they are going to have to apply the bill on indigenous reserves and bands.

The hon. justice minister just said that the government is concerned about getting marijuana out of the hands of organized crime and protecting children, yet the bill would not legalize edibles. The bill would have kept it illegal, period, but for pushing by New Democrats. It will be legal within one year of the bill becoming law. The government is content to leave edibles and concentrates in the hands of organized crime marketing to children. This is their big gap.

Finally, the bill perpetuates the criminalized prohibitionist approach to cannabis.

In 2015, when the government promised Canadians it would legalize cannabis, why did it not tell them that after the bill became law there would be more cannabis offences in the Criminal Code after legalization than before?

Why will the government not work with provinces and municipalities that are asking for it to slow this process down instead of putting its own political interests ahead of providing good sound legislation in this country that really would protect children?

Government Orders

● (1010)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, we are committed to the passage of Bill C-45 in order to legalize cannabis in the country, to strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis in order to, as my friend articulated, keep it out of the hands of children and keep the proceeds out of the hands of criminal organizations. We are committed to doing it right, and we are working and will continue to work with all levels of government. We started that engagement and discussion and received substantive feedback through the efforts of the task force that was constituted by our government. We received 30,000 submissions, including from provinces and territories, municipalities, and law enforcement agencies. We are continuing to engage with them through my parliamentary secretary and the Minister of Health.

This is something we are committed to doing. We are injecting substantive monies into the provinces and territories, and into a substantive public education and communications campaign. We have engaged, and will continue to engage, in a substantive way with indigenous communities to recognize their specific interests and desires with respect to their communities. My colleagues and I are committed to engaging in that conversation on an ongoing basis in the lead-up to the legalization of cannabis and strict regulation.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to point out that the opposition has been remarkably co-operative with a whole number of bills, where we put up one or two speakers and we get our viewpoints on the record. Every now and then, a piece of legislation comes along that anyone who wants to speak to it deserves to have an opportunity to speak to it. I would suggest that such a profound change to our laws around the use of marijuana, which is getting rushed through, deserves that kind of scrutiny and debate. Therefore, I would like to ask the minister to stand up and tell Canadians why she is going to deny the opportunity to many members of Parliament who wish the opportunity to represent their constituents and to speak to this issue. I do not want to talk about the legislation. I want to talk about her denying the ability of parliamentarians to speak on such an important issue.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I consider it vitally important to hear from all members of the House in terms of discussions and debate with respect to proposed legislation. We have had substantive debate on various pieces of legislation throughout the course of the last two years. Particularly with respect to Bill C-45, we have had eight committee meetings. We have heard from nearly 100 witnesses at committee. We have received 115 briefs. In this honourable place, we have heard from 86 speakers. We have had 31 hours of debate. This is an incredibly important piece of legislation that we are wanting to move forward in order to legalize cannabis, to strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis in order to keep it out of the hands of kids and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

The status quo simply is not working. We have had two years of substantive discussion right across the country. I was very pleased to hear from the 86 members of Parliament in this place who have submitted their concerns, as well as the views from committee that made some amendments to the bill. Discussion will be ongoing in the other place.

● (1015)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is astounding to see how the Liberal Party's political talking points have tainted a person of good faith like this minister, who used to be the chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations. Those folks are saying that this is not working and that we are going too fast. All the provinces are saying that.

In Quebec, legislators are being forced to make hasty decisions on extremely important matters that require a legal framework. Police forces are not ready. It is shameful. I do not understand how the minister can stand up here and tell us that the Liberals are not playing politics simply to fulfill that promise and pat themselves on the back.

How can she defend such a disavowal of her own vision for first nations and all the provinces?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague across the way. I am not disavowing any vision with respect to indigenous peoples. Bill C-45 would, and is committed to, legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis to keep it out of the hands of children and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals. That has been the agenda of this government for two years. We have engaged in substantive discussions right across the country, including within this place. We value the feedback we have received from members of Parliament. We look forward to the discussion that will happen in the other place.

With respect to indigenous communities, we will continue, on an ongoing basis, to engage with indigenous communities. We have and will continue to engage with provinces and territories, as well as law enforcement, to ensure they have the tools necessary to meet legalization in July of 2018. We have invested a significant number of dollars to assist the provinces and territories and to assist in an education and public awareness campaign about the harms of cannabis. We will continue to proceed in this manner to ensure that in legalization, we have and bear the utmost priority of the health and safety of Canadians. That is our commitment to Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is absolutely outrageous that this debate is being shut down. From the beginning, the government has been rushing ahead to this arbitrary date, which is 223 days away. The Liberals always talk about how they are consulting, but unfortunately they are never listening.

Quebec has recognized that home grow does not keep cannabis out of the hands of children. New Brunswick thinks the same, so it has introduced measures to lock it up. Everyone at committee told us that we needed public awareness and education in place before legalization. The government has had two years and has done nothing. It has not even started to roll out the public education and awareness program. Speakers are lined up to speak to the bill, and the government is shutting down Parliament's ability to take a look at the legislation and point out the things that are wrong.

Government Orders

It is not just the indigenous peoples who have not been consulted. Municipalities are saying that they have not been consulted. The Real Estate Association still has concerns. There is no plan to address the three treaties we will break as a result of this.

Also, on a point of order, we have props in the House. While I love the United Church, and I am all about the poor, we cannot have props in the House today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, I did not see any props. However, if there are some props, they are not to be used.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I want to confirm that we are listening. We have been listening for two years, and we will continue to listen. We will continue to engage with the provinces and territories, six of which have introduced their own measures with respect to responding to Bill C-45. We will continue to support them in that regard, as well as the other jurisdictions that will likely move forward in some manner.

On public education and communications, we have implemented substantive measures in this regard, including investments. Very recently we announced \$36.4 million for public education and awareness, and that campaign has begun. For example, we have engaged in many initiatives via social media. We have issued 110,000 leaflets for a drug-free Canada. There are ongoing efforts by my colleagues, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Public Safety, to ensure we continue to communicate the risks related to cannabis, particularly with respect to young people.

We will continue to have this campaign. We will continue to work in collaboration on this campaign to ensure the provinces, territories, municipalities, and law enforcement are prepared for the legalization, strict regulation, and restriction of access to cannabis.

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Madam Speaker, what contempt for indigenous peoples, civil society, and the individual communities across Canada. What contempt for the provinces.

The government says it is listening, but it is as deaf as a post. It is incapable of listening. Maybe that is why I am raising my voice, so that it might reach their ears at some point.

While the Government of Quebec is asking for more time, the Liberals have the nerve to impose time allocation to speed up the passage of Bill C-45. It makes no sense. The government wanted to usher in a new era of collaboration with the provinces and establish new federal-provincial relationships. Well, that ended just as quickly as it began, thank you very much. The government could not care less about raising awareness or training police officers. It could not care less about health and social services or the cost to the provinces. There is just a need for speed.

What is the rush? My Conservative colleague was right. July 1, 2018 is an absolutely arbitrary date and it makes no sense. The only logical reason for rushing through this is to cater to cannabis

producers who have received authorizations and permits, many of whom are former Liberal ministers and organizers.

Are they not the reason why we are voting on this time allocation motion today?

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I completely reject that characterization. I appreciate the passion and the emotion in the way the member is expressing his views. Therefore, I will reiterate what I have stated in response to his comments to assure him we are listening.

We have been listening for two years. We engaged a task force that put together a report and recommendations and benefited from discussions across the country. We have been and will continue to listen to indigenous communities.

We are taking great care around awareness, while ensuring law enforcement officials have the tools they need to conduct their jobs. We are also ensuring that we are taking into account the costs. We are having these discussions and consulting with the provinces, territories, and the Canadian public to determine the cost and taxation. We will continue to work with the provinces, territories, and municipalities. We have had conversations with the province of Quebec, and we will continue to do that.

Once again, we are listening. This is important legislation. It seeks to address an issue of the status quo, which simply is not working. It is so incredibly easy for young people to get cannabis, easier than it is to get a cigarette.

We will legalize and have a comprehensive framework in place. Our government is committed to doing that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the minister. One thing that is being lost on the other side is that we, in opposition, made a commitment to Canadians that if we were to form the government, this is exactly what we would do.

It should be no surprise to members opposite that we have legislation dealing with this very serious social issue. The Harper government chose to do nothing. The legislation would take literally hundreds of millions of dollars out of the hands of criminals. It would work much better toward assisting our young people today. We have more young people engaged in smoking and consuming cannabis than any other country in the western world.

For the very first time, the legislation will take direct action. Could my colleague, the minister, comment on the importance of maintaining this election platform commitment?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that there is an opportunity to ask more questions. If they have questions and comments, they might wish to wait as opposed to yelling them across the way.

Government Orders

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague for his reiteration of our commitment in the campaign in the lead-up to the election, a campaign commitment we are moving forward with in a substantive and comprehensive way, while taking a health and safety approach, to ensure we address the dysfunction of the status quo and the ability for young people access to cannabis. Canada has the highest rate of usage of cannabis by young people as compared to other places in the world.

We made a commitment to the legalization, strict regulation of cannabis, and the restriction of access to cannabis to keep it out of the hands of children and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

We have undertaken to achieve this commitment with vigour. We have introduced Bill C-45. It has benefited from the substantive expertise of the task force on cannabis. Most of their recommendations were incorporated into the legislation. We have also benefited from recommendations and amendments that were made at committee.

I look forward to the continued debate and discussion over the course of today and to the passage of the legislation. I also look forward to the discussion that will happen in the other place.

• (1025)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, we keep hearing the justice minister say that this is all about keeping pot out of the hands of children. What kind of Orwellian doublespeak is that? Clearly, when they are 12 years old, they will be able to possess five grams of pot. How do mothers or fathers go to their children and tell them that pot is not good for them, when the government says that it is okay for 12 year olds to have five grams of pot? How is that keeping pot out of the hands of children?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite has asked this question in previous forums.

Nothing in Bill C-45 makes it legal for a young person to possess cannabis. In having the five grams in Bill C-45, we have sought to ensure that we find a balance between the over-criminalization of young people and to ensure we do everything we can to protect the health and safety of, and restriction of access for, young people.

In the legislation, the provinces and territories have the ability, much like they do with respect to tobacco and alcohol, to put in place measures to ensure that cannabis can be seized from a young person by law enforcement officers, much the same way they do with respect to alcohol and cigarettes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is the 25th time that time allocation has been invoked to limit debate on a bill, even though the Liberals have only passed 19 bills so far. This is senseless and demoralizing.

The Liberals talk a good game about transparency and listening. They claim they are still at the listening stage and are open to amendments. However, of the 38 amendments proposed by the NDP, how many were accepted? Zero. The Liberals rejected every single amendment in committee, even though the goal was to improve the bill so it would truly protect youth.

The minister says we are protecting youth. In reality, however, only a paltry \$36 million over five years has been set aside for education. Colorado invests \$40 million a year in education and prevention, but Canada is only prepared to put \$7 million a year towards its so-called historic marijuana legalization bill. That is totally inadequate. This is supposed to be an investment in protecting our youth.

The deadline is less than nine months away, but no front-line youth outreach organization has been contacted. There is no outreach going on with youth at home or in school or with street workers. There is a problem with communication and prevention.

What can the minister offer us in the way of assurances? Nothing is giving me much comfort this morning.

[*English*]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, my colleague across the way has always been an advocate for ensuring we have public education and awareness campaigns. I appreciate her raising this in the House, time and again. Our government is fundamentally committed to it, ensuring we do it in a substantive way.

I know my colleague, the Minister of Health, as well as my parliamentary secretary, are going to continue to engage, as am I, as is the Minister of Public Safety. We have made substantive investments with respect to public education and awareness. We have been engaging in social media to raise awareness about the harms and risks with respect to cannabis use. We have been talking about this and distributing leaflets on a drug-free Canada.

We will continue to do this. We will continue to engage with Canadians about how best we can move this forward to ensure that awareness is made in all areas and within all the places and populations that it is necessary to make substantive efforts.

• (1030)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister speaks of exhaustive consultations, but she does not acknowledge the appeals for delay from all levels of society.

Here we have time allocation, the legislative guillotine, cutting off debate on perhaps the most important piece of legislation, where debate should be exhausted, not cut off. The Liberals have rejected appeals from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, the provinces, the municipalities, and from all sorts of groups across society. We are now seeing checkerboard regulations being brought in, province to province, in some cases contradictory regulations, which will complicate both the application and enforcement of the law, as well as the public's right to know what happens on this side of the Gatineau River or on the other side.

It is particularly offensive, as this week we have the representatives from towns and cities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in Ottawa to talk to government, to talk to their parliamentary representatives. How can the Liberals and the minister look those representatives in the eye and tell them that they are not listening to their appeals for delay?

Government Orders

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, in fact I do recognize that these individuals are in Ottawa, and we have been listening. We have been talking to municipal officials. We have been looking them in the eye and having substantial conversations about Bill C-45 and the provisions contained therein. We are committed to ensuring that we change the status quo, a status quo that simply is not working. We want to move forward with the legalization of cannabis and strictly regulate and restrict access.

In order to have a comprehensive framework in place by July of 2018, we have to work with provinces, territories, law enforcement, and municipalities. We are committed to continuing to do that and look forward to the discussion that will happen today in ongoing debate, which has been substantive in this place.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, the fact is this has become a government that is engaged in serial closure. This is the 25th time in this Parliament that the government has sought to ram through legislation without having proper debate, and it is particularly egregious.

Yesterday, on Bill C-59, an immensely controversial piece of legislation, the government imposed a procedural trick to shut down debate after only a few hours. Today, we are dealing with deeply flawed legislation with holes in it that need to be fixed, and the government is saying that it is going to shut down debate in the House of Commons and ram things through. The number of witnesses the minister cites does not matter. The fact is that amendments have been rejected time and time again and now the Liberals are trying to shut down debate. Why do they not fix the bill? New Democrats are willing to work with them.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I have to reiterate the comprehensive nature of Bill C-45, the consultations, and the ongoing discussions we have had, and will continue to have, with provinces, territories, and municipalities to ensure that we can establish the comprehensive framework that will legalize cannabis, and strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis. This is an ongoing effort.

As we have seen, six jurisdictions have instituted their own measures with respect to the regulation of cannabis. We are going to continue to work with them and the other jurisdictions to ensure, come July 2018, that we have a comprehensive framework in place that obliterates the status quo and ensures that we keep cannabis out of the hands of kids and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have heard a lot of talk about delays from the other side, requests to delay this legislation further, and that we are rushing ahead so quickly. I would note that Colorado and Washington, in November 2012, passed resolutions at the ballot. The electorate called for legalization. In Colorado, 13 months later, businesses opened to sell cannabis. In Washington, 21 months later, businesses opened to sell cannabis. Given that it has already been more than 24 months since our election, does it seem like a rush here in Canada?

• (1035)

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's reiteration of the substantive investment of time that we have made. It has always been clear that this was a priority for our government. We engaged with a task force of experts, health experts

and law enforcement, which provided us with substantive recommendations that we listened to. We listened to Canadians right across the country. We had the benefit of vigorous debate and discussion at the committee hearings, and amendments have been made.

We will continue to listen to Canadians, provinces, and territories, as well as municipalities, indigenous communities, and governments. This is a commitment we have made. We are committed to ensuring that we roll out robust public education and awareness campaigns around the risks of cannabis. Again, I appreciate all of the substantive efforts and engagement by many people right across the country.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1115)

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

(*Division No. 396*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Bennett	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon

Government Orders

Di Iorio	Drouin	Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Duclos	Duguid	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz	Boucher	Boulerice
Easter	Ehsassi	Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
El-Khoury	Ellis	Brosseau	Brown
Erskine-Smith	Eyking	Calkins	Cannings
Eyolfson	Fergus	Caron	Carrie
Fillmore	Finnigan	Chong	Choquette
Fisher	Fonseca	Christopherson	Clarke
Fortier	Fragiskatos	Clement	Cooper
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)	Davies	Deltell
Freeland	Fry	Diotte	Doherty
Fuhr	Gameau	Donnelly	Dreeschen
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones	Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Goodale	Gould	Dusseault	Duval
Graham	Grewal	Egliniski	Falk
Hajdu	Hardie	Fast	Finley
Harvey	Hébert	Fortin	Gallant
Hehr	Holland	Garrison	Généreux
Housefather	Hutchings	Genius	Gladu
Iacono	Joly	Godin	Gourde
Jones	Jordan	Hardcastle	Harder
Jowhari	Khalid	Hughes	Jeneroux
Khera	Lambropoulos	Julian	Kelly
Lametti	Lamoureux	Kent	Kitchen
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Kmiec	Kusie
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Kwan	Lake
Lefebvre	Leslie	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Levitt	Lightbound	Leitch	Liepert
Lockhart	Long	Lobb	Lukiwski
Longfield	Ludwig	MacGregor	MacKenzie
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney	Maguire	Malcolmson
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)		Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
May (Cambridge)		Mathysen	May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon	McDonald	McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Mulcair	Nantel
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	Nater	Nicholson
Mendicino	Mihychuk	Nuttall	Obhrai
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)		O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Monsef		Pauzé	Plamondon
Morneau	Morrissey	Poillievre	Quach
Murray	Nassif	Rankin	Rayes
Nault	Ng	Reid	Rempel
O'Connell	Oliphant	Richards	Saroya
Oliver	O'Regan	Scheer	Schmale
Ouellette	Paradis	Shipty	Sorenson
Peschisolido	Peterson	Stanton	Ste-Marie
Petipas Taylor	Philpott	Stetski	Strahl
Picard	Poissant	Stubbs	Sweet
Qualtrough	Ratansi	Thériault	Trost
Rioux	Robillard	Trudel	Van Kesteren
Rodriguez	Romanado	Van Loan	Viersen
Rota	Ruimy	Wagantall	Warawa
Rusnak	Sahota	Warkentin	Waugh
Saini	Sajjan	Webber	Wong
Samson	Sangha	Yurdiga	Zimmer— 130
Sarai	Scarpaleggia		
Schiefke	Schulte		
Sgro	Shanahan		
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)		
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand		
Simms	Sohi		
Sorbara	Spengemann		
Tabbara	Tan		
Tassi	Trudeau		
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vaughan	Virani		
Whalen	Wilkinson		
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj		
Young	Zahid— 170		

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Aubin	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan

Nil

PAIRED**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

● (1120)

[English]

REPORT STAGE

The House resumed from November 9 consideration of Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Government Orders

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House of Commons today to speak about the motions moved by the member for Sarnia—Lambton.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Standing Committee on Health in its study of Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code, and other acts. The committee heard from nearly 100 witnesses in five days. The committee's deliberations resulted in the adoption of 20 amendments that contributed to improving various aspects of the bill. These were informed by the insight and advice of the many witnesses, both domestic and international. I want to thank the members of the committee for this thoughtful review of the bill and its efforts to improve the proposed legislation.

Bill C-45 follows through on our government's commitment to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis in a way that protects Canadians, including our youth, and removes profits from the hands of criminals and organized crime. In my remarks today, I would like to further explain some of the reasons our government's approach to cannabis is the right one.

The motion put forward by the member for Sarnia—Lambton would effectively prohibit adults from cultivating any cannabis plants on their own property. This stands in sharp contrast to the approach proposed by our government, which would allow adults to grow up to four cannabis plants on their property for personal use.

First, let me remind members of the House that our proposed legislation was informed by the sound and extensive advice of the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation, which was chaired by the Hon. Anne McLellan. The task force consulted extensively with Canadians across Canada on how best to approach the legalization and regulation of cannabis. The members heard from youth, cannabis consumers, industry, indigenous communities, provincial and territorial governments, law enforcement, municipalities, regulators in other jurisdictions, public health and safety experts, and researchers, and the list goes on. Overall, the carefully weighed and diverse range of perspectives expressed during these extensive consultations suggested that small amounts of cannabis for personal use can be safely and responsibly grown at home by adults.

The proposed new framework for cannabis, which permits a small number of plants to be cultivated by adults on their own property, is consistent with the approach recommended by the task force. There is no doubt that our government's proposed approach, allowing a small number of cannabis plants to be cultivated at home, is balanced and supports the objectives of Bill C-45.

One of those objectives is to avoid criminalizing Canadians for minor offences related to cannabis. The current approach to cannabis has resulted in thousands of Canadians being charged, convicted, and sent to jail for possessing small amounts of cannabis, which indeed is counterproductive. Should the motion moved by the member for Sarnia—Lambton be adopted, Canadians would continue to be exposed to criminal charges for minor, non-violent offences. This would create an unnecessary burden on the criminal justice system, which is one of the reasons these motions should not

be supported. We all know that criminal records can result in lifelong consequences by, for example, limiting employment opportunities.

Another key objective of the bill is to reduce illegal activities in relation to cannabis. Significant profits are generated by the illegal cannabis market every year, and some of this profit ends up in the hands of organized crime. Allowing adults to legally cultivate a small number of cannabis plants on their property would represent an alternative to the illegal market and should not be prohibited completely. Completely prohibiting personal cultivation, as proposed by the member for Sarnia—Lambton, may undermine the government's ability to displace the illegal market and reduce criminal activities.

Setting a limit on the number of plants an adult may grow is a reasonable way to distinguish between responsible adults who wish to grow a limited number of cannabis plants at home and cannabis cultivated to supply and drive the illegal market. This is why other jurisdictions have taken a similar path.

As the federal framework has also been informed by international experience and best practices, I would note that in jurisdictions where cannabis is legal and strictly regulated, only one, Washington state, has maintained a prohibition on personal cultivation. Other jurisdictions, including Colorado, Oregon, and California, set provisions that restrict the number of plants that can be grown, such as the ones included in Bill C-45.

Permitting personal cultivation in limited amounts is consistent with our government's approach to allowing Canadians access to a legal source of cannabis while setting a clear threshold to help law enforcement identify criminal organizations that are supporting an illegal market.

• (1125)

To be clear, permitting personal cultivation of a limited number of plants would not mean open season for cannabis. On the contrary, the selling of home cultivated cannabis would still be a criminal offence, and growing more than four plants would be prohibited and prosecutable.

Finally, it is important to clarify that under the proposed framework, the provinces, territories, and municipalities would have the flexibility to impose further restrictions related to personal cultivation, beyond what is found in Bill C-45. This is an important point, as our government believes that they would be in a better position to assess the necessity and feasibility of such additional restrictions and their enforcement.

Through our government's proposed approach, Canadians would no longer run the risk of having a criminal record for possessing, sharing, or growing small amounts of cannabis. Canada is more than ready for a new approach, one that includes the ability of Canadians to grow small amounts of cannabis plants at home for personal use.

Government Orders

Again, the motion moved by the member for Sarnia—Lambton goes against the key objectives of the bill. Therefore, we recommend that all members of this House vote it down. It would also undermine our government's efforts to displace the illegal market and reduce criminal activities around cannabis. I am confident that the new legal framework we are proposing, including the current provisions of the bill that would allow personal cultivation of a small number of plants at home, is the best path forward for all Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I sat through all the testimony at the health committee. I noted that in his speech, the member talked about Washington state. In fact, Washington state did not allow home grow, and we see that it had the best outcomes in terms of reducing organized crime, which is down to less than 20%, and in making it difficult for people under the age of 21 to actually get hold of cannabis, which is actually the goal of this legislation.

The government did not listen to the provinces and has removed the height requirement for the four plants. That means that if people watch the YouTube video, they could roll chicken wire across the whole inside of a house and grow four trees and a huge amount of marijuana.

Why did the member not listen to Washington state, Quebec, and New Brunswick, which clearly see that home grow is a problem?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, we did listen. Just to be clear, no fewer than 86 speakers in this House have contributed to this debate. At committee, eight meetings were held, nearly 100 witnesses heard, and more than 115 briefs submitted and considered by the committee. Through its deliberations, the committee proposed a number of amendments, which are going to continue to be debated both in this House and in the other place.

When it comes to other jurisdictions, as I pointed out in my remarks, Washington was the only state. However, there are a number of other jurisdictions in the United States that have indeed sanctioned personal cultivation, because they, like us, understand that striking the right balance between personal use, which should not be criminalized, and keeping cannabis out of the illicit markets and out of the hands of our youth, is the best path forward.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, I had the good fortune of sitting on the health committee as we studied this bill. Broadly speaking, the New Democrats are in favour of legalization and want to work productively with the government to provide the best possible legislation we can have in this country. However, without any doubt, there are serious gaps and flaws in this legislation that, for some reason, the government does not want to address in its rush to have this legislation passed by an arbitrary date of July 1, 2018. For instance, one of the holes in this bill is that it would allow provinces to opt out of the home grow provisions and opt out of the 30-gram possession limit. As we have already seen, Quebec has indicated that it will not allow any home growing whatsoever. We are going to have a patchwork of marijuana regulations across this country.

My hon. colleague talks about the need to rush this bill so that we can get cannabis out of the hands of criminals, yet the Liberal government says the exact opposite when it comes to edibles. It says that it cannot regulate edibles because it is not ready for that.

There is no provision to ensure that small craft growers in this country will be licensed. The excise tax the government has brought in and imposed on the provinces has created a huge uproar in the provinces, because they will have to bear the lion's share of the burden of enforcement and the health care effects of this legislation, but the government is saying that it only wants to give 50%.

Why the rush? Why not take an extra three or six months, or even make it July 1, 2019, so that the government could keep its promise to legalize cannabis this term, but we could actually take the time to make sure we have excellent cannabis legislation?

● (1130)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that there are only five minutes for questions and comments.

All members should be able to deliver their question or comment within one minute.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Madam Speaker, just to be clear, there has been no rush. This has been a stated objective of this government since the time of the election campaign. We have been speaking and debating about it thoughtfully, methodically, for over two years, and that debate has been informed by the work of the Hon. Anne McLellan who chaired an independent task force, stripping it from any politics.

Although my hon. colleagues want to heckle, they have to take a look at that work and view it with objective eyes. Those objective eyes will tell members that much work has gone into it on the issue of personal cultivation and decriminalization. We do not want to see our youth criminalized, not for possession of small amounts, when we know that will have a dramatic impact on their ability to get jobs and travel abroad. Therefore, the bill, which is informed by the independent task force and was amply supported by 30,000 submissions from across the country, attempts to strike that balance, and it will do so.

I encourage all members to vote this motion down.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, today we are discussing Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts.

The intention of Bill C-45 is to legalize marijuana. This bill has numerous objectives; however, unfortunately, many of those pertaining to public health and public safety will not be achieved. This bill fails to protect the health of young persons by restricting their access to cannabis, fails to deter illicit activities in relation to cannabis, and fails to reduce the burden on the criminal justice system.

Government Orders

With the Liberal government's rushed deadline, law enforcement will not have the time or resources to train or prepare for the legalization of marijuana. Doctors are extremely concerned about the well-being of youth if this legislation is passed, as marijuana can be an extremely harmful substance. Numerous municipal and provincial governments will also not have the time or resources to respond to the tremendous impact that Bill C-45 will have on all Canadian communities.

More than 68,000 police officers in Canada will need specific training in the wake of this monumental legislation, and a few months is not a realistic timeline. As a result, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has asked the government to extend this deadline. If police are not prepared to deal with the legalization through adequate training, this could lead to poor decisions resulting in bad case law for any new legislation.

We want our law enforcement to have the ability to properly uphold the law. Police will require final legislation from all the levels of government before being able to begin their preparations. The government needs to provide police with a clear direction regarding both funding and training.

The bill is also of grave concern for anyone on Canadian roads, as law enforcement agencies are also lacking the resources to deal with marijuana-impaired driving. There are no current reliable roadside testing methods to measure marijuana impairment as there are presently with alcohol. This is extremely challenging from a public safety perspective.

One of the purposes of this legislation is to ease the burden on law enforcement, but it is likely it will in fact do the opposite. Although there may be fewer charges of simple possession, those efforts will be replaced by those needed for ticketing. There are also severe concerns with home growing and allowing the possession of up to four plants. This will be extremely difficult to enforce. Jurisdictions such as Colorado in the United States that have already legalized marijuana have seen tremendous difficulties with this, especially with individuals selling their homegrown marijuana for a lower price than what is legally regulated. This is problematic as it will not incentivize the elimination of a black market.

Some elements of plain packaging could further hinder the enforcement of the black market as it will be very difficult for law enforcement to distinguish between legal and illegal marijuana products.

Youth access to marijuana is another grave concern. It has been medically confirmed that there are severe long-term effects from marijuana use by youth, such as cognitive delays and mental health issues. All of these are likely to affect their goals in school, as well as future careers.

Smoking marijuana doubles the risk of developing schizophrenia, which is especially worrying for those who are already at a greater risk. These risks do not just stop at the age of 18, when one becomes an adult, but rather can be experienced up to the age of 25. There needs to be increased awareness of these risks for those 25 and under, not just those under the legal age.

Research suggests that youth typically begin use in a social setting and do not recognize that as harmful. Youth also perceive the risks of

marijuana impairment when driving to be minimal. The government should not be dismissive of the evidence we have seen in Colorado after it legalized marijuana. The state experienced drastic increases in deaths caused by marijuana-impaired driving. It is crucial for youth to be informed of the facts of these dangerous realities, and not be relying on myths and word of mouth.

• (1135)

Having homegrown marijuana is also a substantial risk to youth, as it is easily accessible through the home. Despite provisions to restrict youth access, marijuana use by youth was frequent, and most of the marijuana obtained was originally bought from legal sources. This is particularly concerning in relation to the production of edibles. Although they have been excluded from this bill, they are likely to be produced privately by individuals or even sold on the black market. With marijuana more easily accessible through legalization, edibles will be more prevalent. When marijuana is put in food, children may mistake it for delicious treats, which can be extremely dangerous.

I would like to note that Quebec's legislation for marijuana will forbid homegrown cannabis for personal use, for likely just those reasons. The Province of New Brunswick is also addressing the dangers of homegrown marijuana by making individuals lock up their plants. Provinces and municipalities are creating legislation in anticipation of Bill C-45, but it is evident that they do not have the resources or infrastructure to deal with its implementation by July 1, 2018. This is why the Province of Quebec also recently asked the federal government to extend the deadline to 2019.

There are a number of indirect results of legalizing marijuana, and municipalities will need to be prepared to deal with additional medical costs due to more emergency room visits, as well as poison centre calls. Areas that previously legalized marijuana also saw significant increases in homelessness, as well as crime, as a direct result. We should not be rushing this bill through, but rather, taking our time so we can learn from those who have already legalized this substance, so we do not make the same mistakes. We need more time to fully implement this legislation and minimize the risks to public safety.

Government Orders

There are also significant international ramifications from implementing this bill. Canada will not be complying with three United Nations treaties and may cause disputes with our southern neighbour, the United States. Officials at United States border crossings have asked individuals whether they have consumed marijuana and, if yes, individuals have been denied entry. This can be very problematic when marijuana is considered legal and individuals are being denied entry into the U.S as a result of its use. This issue remains unresolved.

This bill is extremely worrisome as it contains some major oversights. The Standing Committee on Health heard numerous witnesses in relation to Bill C-45, and the government failed in many areas to implement their recommendations. There are concerns from reputable organizations, such as the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

If my colleagues across the floor were concerned about the well-being of Canadians, they would not be putting this bill forward. I ask my colleagues in the House to stand up for the public safety of all Canadians and vote against this bill.

• (1140)

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Madam Speaker, about 12% of Canadians self-report using cannabis every year, but around 80% of Canadians say they use alcohol; 4.4 million Canadians are at risk for chronic health effects as a result of alcohol use; 3.1 million Canadians are at risk of immediate injury and harm; and 3,000 Canadians are born every year with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Does my colleague think we should have rules to prevent people from brewing their own beer and wine at home, and does she think we should lock up our alcohol in the same way New Brunswick has passed laws in relation to locking up cannabis?

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, what we are seeing here is what we have seen in the entirety of legislation proposed by the Liberal government, and that is an attempt to blur the issues. It is an attempt to confuse things and create problematic, complicated, unclear systems and processes. I have seen this a lot in my home province of Alberta regarding the natural resources sector, and this question is just another example of that: trying to blur the issues and have one thing one way and another thing not the same. This question, to me, absolutely tries to complicate the issues and have unclear systems, processes, and legislation, something we have seen from the Liberal government for the entirety of its term.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. She has highlighted the concerns of people who know this issue and work with youth, drivers, and workplaces. She is quite right to raise all these concerns.

It is very obvious that the government is obsessed with its bogus election promise. There are other priorities in life, and the Liberals are downloading this matter onto the provinces without giving them financial resources and, even worse, they have told them that the federal government and the provinces will be splitting the profits. They have some gall.

I would like to hear what she has to say about that.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, that is exactly what I mean. We need more time to prepare. Every province needs more time to prepare. They are not ready to respond to this legislation. That really bothers me. My colleague's comments have a lot of merit. That is another reason why I am opposing this bill.

[*English*]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a very short question. I wonder if my colleague across the aisle really believes that the current situation is better, where criminal gangs regulate, control, push, promote, and sell cannabis products, or if the federal government regulates, controls, educates, and prevents. That is the government's plan.

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie: Madam Speaker, I do not believe that in opposing this legislation we are saying that these options are better. What we are saying is that we need more time to effectively and properly evaluate this legislation, more time to allow our provincial and municipal counterparts to prepare, and more time to prepare with respect to the international treaties, which I have made reference to.

Going back to the first question posed to me, I will also point out that it is very unfair that the current Liberal government picks and chooses what is best for it. For example, with respect to the international treaty for the marketing of firearms, the Liberals want to comply with the United Nations treaty because it goes along with their ideological agenda, whereas complying with the three treaties regarding the marijuana legislation is not convenient for them because these do not conform to their ideology.

I absolutely do not want to see the black market gangs running an illegal market for cannabis. What I would like to see is more time to effectively create a proper plan for all levels of government to respond in the best manner possible for the health and safety of all Canadians.

• (1145)

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak strongly in support of Bill C-45 through which our government is ending the failed approach of criminalizing cannabis. This is an opportunity to protect our youth, to take profits out of the hands of criminals, and to treat drug use as the public health issue it actually is.

I have actively worked to advance this policy since hosting the Liberal caucus in discussions back in the fall of 2011 about the potential legalization of cannabis, so I am proud to stand in the House and see this policy come to fruition.

Government Orders

I would like to start my comments today by giving some thanks to organizations that have been advocating for this very practical and positive new policy. I would first like to thank Dr. Evan Wood, an emergency room physician, who led a coalition called Stop the Violence BC, when he saw the gang and gun violence on the streets of Metro Vancouver, including in an award-winning restaurant in Vancouver Quadra, where two people were injured by a gang shootout around the drug trade.

I would like to thank Brett Harvey and Adam Scorgie, who created a documentary called *The Union: The Business Behind Getting High*, which documented the role of organized crime in controlling the cannabis trade. Years ago, I had the privilege of hosting them and their film in Ottawa, where I opened up an event to all members of Parliament and senators of all parties to learn about why we needed to move beyond our failed policy, which we are actually moving beyond today.

I want to thank all of the sound drug policy advocates, like Donald MacPherson of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, who brought forward evidence as to why this shift was needed, and the many other health care professionals, criminal justice professionals, and policing professionals who have pushed for this change in our country.

Lastly, I would like to thank our Prime Minister for including this in our platform, and the health minister and the justice minister for delivering on this mandate, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health for his leadership, and all members of the Standing Committee on Health for doing good work toward this change that we have positioned our country for over two years.

This week we were reminded once again of the importance of this discussion by the RCMP's seizure of 64 pounds of cannabis and 94 mature cannabis plants from the Hells Angels in Kelowna. This is the reality of our current system: organized crime produces, distributes, and sells the cannabis, and uses it to fund its other criminal ventures. It is Hells Angels and other criminals who regulate and control the product and what is actually in it, and how to sell more of it to our youth. It is criminal gangs who recruit young people to be part of this terrible criminal enterprise, so it is far better that the government regulate and control cannabis. That is what Bill C-45 is all about.

[Translation]

The bill before the House of Commons today was developed on the basis of the excellent work of the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation, which conducted an in-depth study of the various implications of the legislation and the strict regulation of cannabis.

[English]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: The provinces need more time.

Ms. Joyce Murray: The member opposite says they need more time, but there has actually been a lengthy thoughtful process on this already and it is time to move. The members opposite who are yelling at me right now are just trying to stop this—

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. If the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Char-

levoix has something to say, she must wait until the time for questions and comments. She can rise at that time to ask her question. I am sure she would like to be shown the same respect if she were the one giving a speech.

• (1150)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, adults who are found in possession of a small amount of cannabis, up to a maximum of 30 grams, will no longer be treated like criminals. Instead, Bill C-45 will give responsible adult consumers a way to legally obtain this substance, which will be strictly regulated in order to meet the high national safety and quality standards.

[English]

This new approach will help reduce the disproportionate burden imposed on the 18,000 individuals who were charged with possession of cannabis in 2016. We know a simple possession charge can have life-long impacts on a person's life prospects. Bill C-45 will reduce this travesty. It will also reduce the burden on the criminal justice system.

Our government believes that law enforcement and the courts should devote their resources to criminal activities that are truly detrimental to society, as well as to education and prevention in the case of public health issues like cannabis use.

The expert witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Health agreed with our government's proposed approach. For example, Karey Shuhendler, from the Canadian Nurses Association, stated:

Bill C-45 promotes the removal of harms associated with the prohibition model, while recognizing the need to protect vulnerable populations, including youth.

Under our current regime, Canadian youth have one of the highest rates of cannabis use in the world. In 2015, 21% of youth aged 15-19 reported using cannabis in the past year. Some Vancouver Quadra citizens have expressed concerns that legalization of cannabis will increase its use by young people. I think the evidence will show that use will decrease over time with the prevention and education programs put in place by the government.

Let us be clear that many youth are using cannabis now under a system controlled by criminal gangs. That is why the bill includes strict controls and penalties to protect young people, and measures to deter and punish adults who provide cannabis to under-aged Canadians. Deterring the illegal market is necessary to protect Canadian youth.

Experts such as Dr. Christina Grant, from the Canadian Paediatric Society, have cautioned that too high an age limit will preserve an illegal market that provides a supply of illegal, unregulated, and unsafe cannabis to Canadians between the ages of 20 and 24. These are the young people who currently have the highest rates of consumption among Canadians and among their peers from other developed countries.

Government Orders

[Translation]

It is also important to keep in mind that the bill gives the provinces and territories the flexibility to establish additional restrictions that can go even further than those set out in the federal framework, depending on their own specific needs and circumstances.

[English]

This includes raising the national minimum age if a province or territory so chooses.

Beyond the proposed minimum age restriction and severe penalties for selling cannabis to youth, Bill C-45 proposes a number of additional controls to protect young Canadians. For example, the bill includes provisions that would prohibit the sale of cannabis and cannabis products that are considered appealing to youth. It would ban the advertising and promotion of cannabis, except in limited and very restricted circumstances. It would also set out requirements for packaging and labelling to ensure they are not appealing to youth.

Also, as various expert witnesses who testified before the Standing Committee on Health reminded us, these measures need to be supported by significant and effective public education to explain the risks and harms associated with cannabis consumption, especially for youth. Our government fully agrees with these experts and we have already started a national public awareness and education campaign, in collaboration with the provinces and territories. This campaign will be augmented by the additional \$36.4 million announced recently.

Finally, in light of the tragedy of the current opioid crisis, I would like to note how an evidence-based public health approach to drug use can save lives. We know that cannabis use for medical purposes like pain relief is safer and less addictive than opioids. In the United States, the legalization of medical cannabis in many states has resulted in a 25% drop in opioid-related deaths compared to states where medical cannabis remained illegal. In Canada the opioid crisis took at least 2,458 Canadian lives in 2016 and it is only growing worse. British Columbia and Vancouver have a disproportionate share. However, I am optimistic that those tragedies will be reduced by the legalization of cannabis.

To sum up, this is a thoughtful and comprehensive piece of legislation that has been designed to protect the health and safety of Canadians while saving lives.

• (1155)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, one of the issues and concerns that has been raised about legalization of marijuana is drug-impaired driving. Since legalization in states such as Colorado and Washington, deaths, injuries, and carnage on the roads have increased. Law enforcement officials have made it clear that they will not be ready by July 1, 2018. One of the reasons for this is that there is not even an approved screening device to test for THC, let alone questions about how scientific per se limits are, in that there is no clear correlation between drug impairment and THC in the body.

Could the parliamentary secretary explain how the government can honestly say that Canada will be ready on July 1, 2018, when we still do not even have an approved screening device for drug-impaired driving?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, first, I share the concern for any impaired driving and the potential for the harm that does. Second, cannabis is widely used already, only illegally. It is not being regulated with respect to its impact on driving satisfactorily. The bill and the framework are focused on health and safety as well as on bringing forward the technologies for and the research on how to protect and reduce the problem of impaired driving.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a quick comment on the language the parliamentary secretary used in her speech about the involvement of gangs in the cannabis industry. I would caution her on using some of that inflammatory and fearmongering language. I would also encourage her to read a report by Professor Michael DeVillaer. He has done extensive research on this topic. He found that by far most people involved in the illicit cannabis market would never ever have contact with a violent criminal or any of the violence associated with the industry. Many people grow it to supplement their incomes. Therefore, it resembles much more of a stratified industry.

My colleague from Vancouver Kingsway has said that this is not really a legalization bill, that it makes it less illegal. The bill sets up a whole new framework with a lot more prohibitions than currently exist. If, under clause 7, the Liberal government has the purpose of reducing the burden on the criminal justice system in relation to cannabis, yet is setting up all these new prohibitions, does the member honestly think that in light of the Jordan decision and after the bill is passed that our criminal justice system will be used less than it is currently?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, this is the kind of question that leads to good debate in the House, so I thank my hon. colleague.

Being from metro Vancouver, a privilege which my colleague across the aisle does not share, I am very aware of how much violence on the streets has been tied to drug crime and organized crime. That is why we had a coalition of literally dozens of professionals, including medical, police, criminology, and justice, called “Stop the Violence BC”. May it be a stratified criminal activity now, as he has mentions, but there was a strong element of organized crime that created fear on the streets and deaths of innocent bystanders. That has to stop.

The prohibitions are very important to protect younger Canadians, those below the minimum threshold, from being exposed to the sale of cannabis illegally. That is an important part of this whole framework. It is about health, safety, and especially the protection of our youth.

Government Orders

• (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-45 on the legalization of marijuana.

Does the Prime Minister really think that legalizing marijuana will protect Canadian youth and my 12- and 14-year-old children? When I hear him say that sort of thing, I cannot help but think that he lacks judgment or that he is being insincere. What I find even more troubling is that the member for Scarborough Southwest, a former long-serving police officer, also believes that organized crime is simply going to disappear as soon as Parliament passes Bill C-45. These men are living in a world of make-believe, where botched, simplistic bills can be used to magically solve extremely complex problems and where heroes can simply sprinkle some fairy dust and make organized crime disappear. Problem solved.

Here in the House, we have to forget that world of make-believe and deal with the real world like grown-ups. We have to make sure that our actions produce real results, keep Canadians safer, and protect young people from a life of drugs. Bill C-45 only complicates the drug-use problem in Canada. No, legalizing marijuana will not make it harder for our children to get their hands on drugs. Yes, organized crime will find ways around laws it has no intention of obeying. No, police officers cannot use fairy dust to fight drug-related crime, violence, and death.

The Liberals say that Bill C-45 will regulate the industry. What a joke. Once Bill C-45 comes into force, the government will have to come up with a retail pricing strategy. How is organized crime likely to respond? Are criminals going to step back and do nothing? I have a feeling criminals already have a plan to deal with this new reality. When the government raises tobacco taxes, organized crime adjusts its prices accordingly. The market is constantly adjusting. History has shown that to be the case every time, and marijuana will be no exception.

Also, young people are more easily drawn to the black market's low prices because they do not have the same means as adults. They cannot afford to pay higher prices. If he wants, the Prime Minister will be able to buy marijuana at any price, but our young people cannot. They will have to choose between the government's price and the criminals' price.

During the last election, the Prime Minister said that he wanted to legalize marijuana to keep it out of the hands of young people, but Bill C-45 shows us that youth 18 and over will be able to buy cannabis. I have some figures I would like to share, and I hope to make things clear.

Bill C-45 says that those 18 and over will be allowed to buy cannabis. However, in Colorado, you have to be at least 21. That should be the minimum. Another problem is that young people will still be allowed to carry marijuana. This means that people will have to be 18 to buy it, but they can have it on them at age 12. That does not make any sense.

In addition, minors aged 16 and 17 are often friends with people who are 18. They are less likely to be friends with people aged 21 and older. Thus, an 18 year old, who has reached the age of majority

and can legally purchase cannabis, can give it to his or her 16- and 17-year-old friends. I am not the one saying so. All the witnesses, especially those from the medical community, are saying that the minimum age should be at least 21 years.

I am thinking of my kids, who are 12 and 14. Under this bill, they will be allowed to possess up to five grams of marijuana. To be sure that everyone understands clearly, that is the equivalent of 10 to 15 joints. If my 14-year-old son is caught with 10 joints in his pocket, that will be completely legal. He would not be able to purchase it, but he would be allowed to have it in his possession. That is one of the gross inconsistencies of Bill C-45.

In addition, under this bill, youth aged 12 to 17 will be allowed to distribute it among themselves. I would like to see Bill C-45 prohibit young people from possessing marijuana altogether.

• (1205)

Young people should not have any opportunity to get their hands on drugs.

There are also questions about the various cannabis-based products and the as yet undefined licensing strategies. Rental property owners are having problems as well, because the legislation currently allows up to four plants per home, and the height is not regulated at present.

Four healthy, well-fertilized plants up to eight feet tall can yield up to 600 grams of home-grown marijuana. Incidentally, most of the witnesses were against the idea of allowing plants to be grown at home. Medical groups, law enforcement, and everyone else said home growing should not be permitted.

I am very proud of the Province of Quebec right now. The Quebec government has drafted its own law based on what the federal government had proposed, and it has decided to ban home growing. To the Quebec government, I say well done.

Another problem is that police forces are not getting any answers to their questions. They want to know how they are supposed to properly enforce traffic laws starting July 1, 2018.

Furthermore, how will those provinces that do allow plants to be grown in houses and apartments monitor what people are doing? How will they check every apartment in Canada to make sure there are only four plants, not five, six, seven, or eight?

A lot of questions remain unanswered. This government is quick to ram Bill C-45 down our throats by claiming that it is a national priority. In Canada, there is nothing more important than legalizing marijuana. That is just great.

Police officers are also telling us about other problems that will arise with plants in homes: odour, the number of plants, the height of plants and the nuisance that could be created. Once again, there are many unanswered questions about this bill.

Government Orders

What will happen with plants at home? Young people will be able to make joints with these plants, and then they are going to take these joints and visit their buddies. The joints will be sold, and then resold, creating a criminal network from plants legally grown at home. Young people will be able to sell pot to their friends. The black market will not shut down. It will be legal at home, but illegal in the streets. It is just a lot of nonsense, and I have not even touched on insurance problems resulting from having plants in homes.

There will also be problems at the border. We saw that recently with the serious problem of illegal immigrants at our borders. The RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency are devoting much of their resources to the borders. Now the government wants to legalize marijuana and border services officers are wondering what they are supposed to do.

Are the officers supposed to arrest Americans who come to the border with marijuana? Do we tell the American authorities? It is illegal on the other side of the border. If Americans show up here with their pot thinking they can come to Canada to smoke their joints, are we to report them to the American authorities and leave them on the other side of the border? Those types of questions still remain unanswered. If people go on vacation thinking they can bring their own pot with them across the border, they are mistaken. All of these questions are left unanswered.

The Liberals want us to vote in favour of this bill. This is amateur hour. If the Parliament of Canada, the House of Commons, votes in legislation like this, we will truly be a bunch of rank amateurs. Those of superior rank are often referred to as pros, but here, we are dealing with rank amateurs who will never make it to the big leagues.

An hon. members: They are called Liberals.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: As I see it, the Liberals are turning our country into a frat house, a kind of campus club where anything goes. They would have us believe that these are just innocent games, not serious at all.

Still, for the sake of my children, I will vote against this bill.

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned that he is from Quebec. My riding is in Quebec too.

His kids are 12 and 14. I have four children. They are 25, 23, 21, and 18. High-schoolers can easily get marijuana. Kids know where to find it. The current system is not working.

Consultations were held in my riding. Unlike in the rest of Canada, where 21% of kids under 18 have used marijuana, in Quebec that number is 50%. We cannot do nothing. We need to provide a legal framework for marijuana, and that is the purpose of this bill.

I would suggest to my colleagues that they ask their children if they have ever had access to marijuana. They will find that they have.

• (1210)

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, we know that marijuana is accessible. However, if the government legalizes it, it will not only be accessible, but it will also be available for purchase in liquor stores.

We know that pot is a problem. However, legalizing it is like turning a blind eye to that problem and trivializing it. It is like saying that we were unable to do anything about the problem and we cannot allocate any resources to dealing with it. Essentially it is like saying that it is okay to buy cannabis, that there is no problem, and that it is no longer dangerous. The real problem is that the government is turning a blind eye and legalizing cannabis. That is what I think, and I have been very clear about it. The members on the other side of the House can delude themselves all they want, but our position is clear.

There has been talk of enforcing prohibitions. The government has said that enforcing prohibitions does not work and so it is going to legalize cannabis. The Liberals decided to invest \$270 million to give police the equipment they need to enforce the law. The provinces are asking for millions and millions of dollars to acquire the enforcement tools they need to control this soon-to-be legal substance.

Why not give the police these tools while cannabis is illegal? Let us do that. Let us arrest people and put them in prison for using drugs. The government's approach is illogical. At some point, people start deluding themselves. The reality is that marijuana is a drug.

We believe that marijuana should not be legalized and made accessible to everyone.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the duties of the democratic system is that Canadians send representatives to the House of Commons to debate the issues of the day. We have differences of opinions on a number of important issues and they are all worthy of respect. I do not think it is a surprise to point out to my colleague that the New Democrats do not share the Conservatives' view on the criminalization of drugs.

Does my hon. colleague think that the continued criminalization of cannabis is a policy that should be pursued, even if it results in young Canadians, marginalized Canadians, poor Canadians getting criminal records for simply possessing small amounts of cannabis for personal use? Is it his position that we should continue that policy so Canadians get criminal records for imbibing that substance?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: I thank my colleague for the question. Indeed, the Conservatives and the NDP see things differently.

However, I can say to my colleague that at the Conservative Party convention in Vancouver two years ago, the Conservatives voted in favour of decriminalizing marijuana possession. That way no one would get a criminal record for simple possession. It is now part of our platform. We agreed with that and we are open to the idea.

However, there is a big difference between fully legalizing marijuana by creating a marketing system and decriminalizing marijuana by removing the criminal aspect for young people or people who get caught. It is totally different. I think that Canadians have not seen the difference between legalization and decriminalization.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I come from Quebec as well. In the coming days, I will have a chance to present a petition from Cercles de fermières with 9,600 signatures on it.

Government Orders

Cercles de fermières is a group of women from across Quebec who work hard and are deeply involved in their community. These women are truly scared and concerned that legalizing marijuana will become a scourge in Quebec.

I am sure that Cercles de fermières has a group in my colleague's riding. They are not the only group to criticize this bill, but the Liberals do not want to listen to anyone.

I would like my colleague to tell us who else in his riding, other than Cercles de fermières, has criticized this bill.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my esteemed colleague for his question.

We have women in agriculture associations, and in addition we have groups of athletes, such as hockey teams, and all the people who work with youth. None of those groups understand the government's position on this issue.

Seniors are not the only ones who are worried. Everyone in the world of sport is worried, and in the Quebec City region, even police officers and chiefs of police have no idea what the Prime Minister is trying to accomplish.

• (1215)

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague.

It is my honour today to speak to Bill C-45, our government's bill to legalize and strictly regulate cannabis consumption in Canada.

The future cannabis act represents a new approach to cannabis, one that puts public health and public safety at the forefront and will better protect young Canadians.

[English]

The current approach to cannabis does not work. It has allowed criminals and organized crime to profit while also failing to keep cannabis out of the hands of Canadian youth. In many cases, it is easier for our kids to buy cannabis than cigarettes. Canadians continue to use cannabis at some of the highest rates in the world. It is the most commonly used illicit drug among young Canadians.

In 2015, 21% of youth aged 15 to 19 reported using cannabis in the past year. That is one out of five young people in this country. In the Laurentian region, it is almost 50%.

[Translation]

Too many young people see cannabis as a benign substance. They are often ill-informed about the harm it can do, and they do not realize that early use of cannabis increases susceptibility to long-term effects. Youth are especially vulnerable to the effects of cannabis on brain development and function. This is because the THC in cannabis affects the same biological system in the brain that directs brain development.

[English]

At the same time, too many young people today are entering the criminal justice system for possessing small amounts of cannabis, potentially impacting their long-term opportunities. Clearly, there has to be a better way of educating and protecting our young people.

Given these facts, I would like to focus my comments today on the benefits of this legislation for youth. This is one of our government's primary objectives for Bill C-45, to protect youth by restricting their access to cannabis.

[Translation]

I would first like to note that this legislation is just one piece of the overall approach to addressing cannabis use by youth. Our government's commitment to keeping cannabis out of the hands of children comprises several complementary measures to protect their health, keep them safe, and ensure their well-being.

[English]

Our government is trying to reduce cannabis use by youth, to restrict their ability to obtain the product, to provide them with better information on its harms to health and its risks, and to keep them out of the criminal justice system for possessing even small amounts of cannabis.

This approach requires legislative and regulatory measures, and support for public education and awareness. To that end, our government has begun a public education campaign with a focus on youth and their parents to better inform them about cannabis, its harm and risks to health.

[Translation]

Considering all of these measures combined, I am confident that our government's overall approach will be effective in better protecting our youth from the potential harm of this mind-altering substance.

[English]

I would like to explain the specific measures in the cannabis bill that would help safeguard our youth. As a society we have learned from the health and safety controls that have been put in place for other potentially harmful substances, such as cigarettes, alcohol, and prescription medication.

Bill C-45 uses these best practices as the starting point, and contains a number of measures that are designed to protect youth.

[Translation]

At the outset, Bill C-45 prohibits the sale of cannabis to anyone under the age of 18 and prohibits adults from giving cannabis to anyone under 18. It also creates an offence and penalty for anyone caught using a young person to commit a cannabis-related offence. Any adult found guilty of engaging in these activities could face a jail term of up to 14 years.

[English]

To avoid the kind of enticements to use cannabis that we have seen in the past with cigarettes, Bill C-45 would prohibit any form of cannabis designed to appeal to youth. This means that things like cannabis-infused gummi bears or lollipops would be illegal.

Government Orders

To further discourage youth from using cannabis, cannabis producers or retailers would be prohibited from using any kind of packaging or labelling that might be appealing to youth, or to use any kind of endorsement, lifestyle promotion, or cartoon animal to promote their product. The promotion or advertising of cannabis products will not be permitted in any place or in any media that could be accessed by youth, such as grocery stores, movie theatres, or on public transportation, just to name a few examples.

To further reduce the chance that youth might be able to access the product illegally, cannabis will not be sold in any kind of vending machine. Bill C-45 also includes authority to make regulations that could require cannabis to be sold in child-resistant packaging, to protect our youngest ones from accidentally consuming this product.

Taken together, these measures constitute a comprehensive approach to protecting the health and safety of our youth.

● (1220)

[*Translation*]

In addition to protecting public health and safety, one of our government's goals is to avoid criminalizing Canadians for relatively minor offences.

Having a criminal record for simple possession of small amounts of cannabis can have significant consequences. Having a record can seriously impact opportunities for employment, housing, volunteerism, and travel. The question we have to ask ourselves is do we want to continue to saddle Canadians with these burdens for the possession of small amounts of cannabis? Our government's response is an emphatic no.

[*English*]

The proposed legislation sets out a 30-gram possession limit for dried cannabis in public for adults aged 18 and over. As I stated earlier, it would also establish offences and strict penalties for adults who give or try to sell cannabis to a youth, or who use a young person to commit a cannabis-related offence.

Under Bill C-45, youth would not face criminal prosecution for possessing or sharing very small amounts of cannabis. Any activities by youth involving more than small amounts of cannabis, defined as over five grams, would be addressed under the provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

[*Translation*]

Our government will be working with the provinces and territories to support the development of legislation in each jurisdiction that would allow law enforcement to confiscate any amount of cannabis found in the possession of a young person. This would allow authorities to take away any amount of cannabis they may have in their possession.

[*English*]

Let me be clear, the proposed approach addressing youth possession of cannabis does not mean that such behaviour is encouraged or acceptable. It is not. Rather, it recognizes that a more balanced approach that uses a range of tools, and does not rely on the criminal justice system, would provide a better way to reduce cannabis consumption among youth.

This approach is consistent with the findings of the Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation. The task force's final report noted that cannabis use among youth could be better addressed through non-criminal approaches that discourage youth from possessing or consuming cannabis. I believe this strikes the right balance between avoiding the criminalization of youth for the possession of small amounts and ensuring that cannabis remains tightly regulated and controlled.

In conclusion, our government has put the health, safety, and well-being of youth at the core of this proposed legislation.

[*Translation*]

I am convinced that, through this balanced approach, our government will be able to help Canadians access recreational marijuana in a way that is safe and regulated and that will take this substance out of the hands of our children.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague across the way. The first point I want to bring to her attention is that she said her government does not want youth to have a criminal record if they have possession. I think we will find unanimous support for that position, but the question is how do we get there?

The Conservative Party believes marijuana possession should be decriminalized so it can be taken out of the hands of children without making them have a criminal record. Right now, it can be confiscated if found in the hands of children. Decriminalizing it would continue that, where it could be removed out of the hands of children.

We are having difficulty with this so-called balanced approach. Approximately 20% of children now have it in their possession, and maybe even more actually use it, but right now it can be confiscated. The member's solution is that 100% of children aged 12 to 18 could have up to 15 marijuana cigarettes in their possession and it could not be confiscated. By moving from 20% to 100% being able to have possession does not seem logical.

Could the member try to explain how what is illogical is now supposed to be balanced?

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I am going to repeat some of the points that I made earlier. In the past year, 21% of Canadian youth under the age of 18 had access to marijuana. In the Laurentian region, which is north of Montreal and home to my riding, that number was 50%. Right now, cannabis is illegal. Children should not have access to it.

Under the legalization framework, we are proposing that cannabis be made inaccessible to children under the age of 18 and that any adult aged 18 and over who gives or sells this drug to children under the age of 18 would face a penalty of up to 14 years in prison.

Government Orders

The existing approach is not working. Young people under 18 already have access to cannabis. That is what we have to stop.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for her speech.

If I am not mistaken, to date, she has proven herself to be a very practical person who is in touch with the people around her in her riding. The fact that she comes from the retail industry confirms that impression.

However, I cannot resist asking her whether she simply cannot hear the provinces from her seat. They are saying that this is moving too quickly, and they want to know why it is so urgent that this measure be put in place by July 2018. The first nations have also said that this is moving too quickly.

I cannot believe that she would support an approach that is so paternalistic toward the provinces and the first nations.

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question.

I do indeed come from the retail sector. Retail stores are forbidden from selling cigarettes to children under the age of 18. Selling cigarettes through legal channels means it is harder for youth to buy cigarettes than any other drug. That is a fact. That is why it is important to make sure cannabis is sold through legal channels and is unavailable to children under the age of 18.

You mentioned the speed at which we are moving. We held a consultation in my riding in September, and Dr. Goyer, director of public health in the Laurentian region, was there. He said it is important to regulate and legalize cannabis as soon as possible because youth already have access to it.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I last rose in this House to speak to Bill C-45 back in May. I began my remarks then by speaking favourably of the government for taking an important first step in the move toward rectifying the failed crime-and-punishment approach that we have held in this country since the 1920s. It is quite obvious from all of the literature and evidence in the history of our country and indeed around the world that the war on drugs has been a complete and utter failure. The billions of dollars that have been spent and the countless lives that have been lost in that approach speak volumes about this failed approach. I believe that our resources as a country can be spent on a different approach, especially when the results have absolutely nothing to do with the objectives that were set out. We have a country where our youth are among the highest users of cannabis, despite decades of an approach where the use of cannabis and the trading of cannabis were criminalized.

Since that time in May, much has transpired with this bill through the committee stage in the Standing Committee on Health, and there was an enormous amount of witness testimony packed into a very short amount of time. We were optimistic that there were opportunities that could have been used to improve the bill that the government had introduced, but sadly that did not happen.

While the government introduced this legislation in a clumsy attempt to keep an election promise, it is now shutting down debate at report stage and limiting our debate at third reading on this very important and revolutionary change to Canada's drug laws. The Liberals are in a sense disenfranchising us as parliamentarians from doing our due diligence on this bill, from speaking for our constituents in this the people's House, and all for the reason of meeting some arbitrary deadline of July of next year. The government members know the government has a four-year mandate. The Liberals are going to be in power until October 2019, and yet they have set the date of July 2018 to get the bill passed into law. It just feels like a very slapdash approach to the whole thing, where we are not taking the time to get it right, because there is obvious room for improvement. While we do support the bill in principle and we have a lot of witness testimony to go on, it is clear that much could have been done to improve the legislation.

I would like to continue by focusing my remarks on a few key areas where I see the serious shortcomings in the bill at this stage.

I have to recognize the outstanding work of my colleague the member for Vancouver Kingsway, on the Standing Committee for Health. As our health critic, he did yeoman's work on that committee and was responsible on behalf of the NDP for bringing forward 38 amendments to the bill, which would have gone a long way toward improving it. Unfortunately, every single one of those proposed amendments was rejected by the Liberal majority on the committee. Amendments that were brought forward included a proposal to remove the 30-gram possession limit for adults. In his speech, the member for Vancouver Kingsway noted that any adults in the room could go to a liquor store and purchase enough alcohol to kill themselves. That is a legal thing, yet we are proposing an arbitrary 30-gram limit on cannabis, and if people step outside of that limit they would meet with the criminal justice system.

The member proposed decriminalizing the penalty section to bring it more in line with the Tobacco Act. Regarding the removal of the 100-centimetre plant height restriction, the member proposed that first but the Liberals decided they were going to vote against it so their own amendment to get rid of the 100-centimetre plant height restriction would pass and they could get all the credit for it. The member was also looking to allow the provinces to have the capacity to create their own licensing framework so that small producers and craft growers could exist within the government's legalization scheme. I certainly hope that, when the government members draft the regulations under the bill, they pay attention to the existing reality, especially in my home province of British Columbia. We have a number of dispensaries that are opening everywhere. This is just the reality on the ground. If the bill and the government fail to take notice of that reality, not much would be done to counter it.

● (1230)

It is very much a legal grey area that exists on Vancouver Island and, indeed, most of British Columbia. I certainly hope that there is room made so that this industry is not solely dominated by big weed producers that have an undue amount of influence on the government through their lobbying activities.

Government Orders

The other thing my colleague moved is to allow for the legalization of the sale of edibles. Government members have been very fond of quoting the Hon. Anne McLellan as the head of the task force. I would like to read into the record some of her testimony at the Standing Committee on Health. She stated:

Obviously, if you're concerned about public health...

If you want to move from the illicit market into a regulated legal market, then you have to offer the quality and choice that the illicit market can provide. It's fair to say that we heard that over and over again from a wide variety of people we talked to. There are public health reasons and public safety reasons why you would want to authorize or allow edibles in various forms.

That was said by none other than the chair of the task force.

The government claims that this bill is going to legalize cannabis, but I contend that this bill would merely make cannabis less illegal. In fact, more prohibitions would exist when this bill comes into law than currently exist under the Criminal Code or the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. It is a bit of a misnomer to say that we are legalizing cannabis, because it is going to be very tightly regulated, and if someone were to step outside of the boundaries or the confines of this law, the punishments are quite severe. For example, a Canadian in possession of 31 grams would be a criminal, a person in possession of five cannabis plants would be a criminal, and an 18-year-old kid sharing a joint with a 17-year-old best friend would be a criminal.

The penalties associated with some of these offences under this "legalized regime" are extremely harsh, and I look no further than the 14 years that are provided for under clause 9 of the bill. I will read into the record the testimony at the Standing Committee on Health from John Conroy, the lead counsel in *Allard v. Canada*. He stated:

...having this maximum of 14 years, hybridized by indictment, and so on, is frankly totally unrealistic in terms of what goes on on the ground. Even in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal, which is not known to be the most liberal court in the country, the range for trafficking, for example, is 12 to 18 months. Most sentences are up to two years. For tobacco and alcohol, all your maximums are two and three years.

Therefore, this 14-year provision is completely unrealistic and flies in the face of the government's stated aim to reduce the burden on our criminal justice system, especially when we would be operating under the constraints imposed by the Jordan decision of the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Criminal Code is going to be designed to regulate gardening. There was some very colourful testimony from defence lawyer Michael Spratt in that regard. When this bill comes into force, the criminal regime would still be quite onerous on our criminal justice system.

The government likes to say it operates in the spirit of being open, accountable, and transparent, but now we are operating under time allocation. I do not believe many members have had the chance to voice their concerns, all the while marching toward this arbitrary deadline of July 2018. We are doing a disservice to Canadians and our constituents who sent us to this House to make sure that the bill we pass is the very best possible.

We know the legalization regime is coming, but we owe it to Canadians to make sure it is done in the best way possible and recognize the government's stated objectives in this very bill. Clause

7 states that it would "deter illicit activities in relation to cannabis through appropriate sanctions and enforcement measures" and "reduce the burden on the criminal justice system in relation to cannabis". Those are two stated objectives in clause 7, and there are very valid questions as to whether this bill would actually accomplish that. I do not believe we are able to fully explore those with a rushed committee process and a rushed process in this House. This is a revolutionary step to Canada's drug laws, so that is a disservice.

I will end by offering my qualified support for this bill, recognizing that a much better job could have been done, and when New Democrats form government in 2019, we will be looking to improve it.

● (1235)

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

Mr. Speaker, the member appears to be saying that he is supporting the legislation. I believe that is a good thing. The primary reasons for moving on this file are safety, taking millions of dollars out of the hands of criminals, and dealing with cannabis usage among young people. For those three reasons in particular, and there are many more, I believe this is good, solid legislation to move forward with. My colleague has already made reference to those three reasons, but I wonder if he would like to expand on any one of them.

● (1240)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely. I mentioned in my speech that we have very high use among our youth right now. If the law, as it is currently written, is not doing the job, and is indeed a failed approach, after having spent all this money and using considerable police and justice resources to not even meet the objectives set out in our current drug laws, obviously it is time for a change.

I come from a region of Canada where the approach to marijuana is quite liberal. People already regard it as a semi-legal substance. That is the reality on the ground. Therefore, it is time for our drug laws to change to acknowledge that fact.

With respect to children, a lot of the debate on this bill has been slightly misguided, particularly with respect to the sections that deal with youth aged 12 to 18. The way I read the bill, it is very much designed to take kids out of the criminal justice system by specifying an amount they could be in possession of without burdening our criminal justice system. I truly believe that the social harm imposed by a criminal sentence does far more harm to a person's future than any possible use of the drug could itself.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things my colleague did not talk about in his speech was young people and whether they want to work globally, because the fact remains that in the United States, in addition to numerous other countries, marijuana is illegal.

Government Orders

In my border town community, they are starting to ask whether people crossing the border have ever smoked marijuana, and if they say yes, they are not allowed. That will be true as well for other countries. No one is talking about this. It seems to me, with the government having had this on its list for two years, that it should have been part of a public awareness and education campaign to let young people know not only of the harms of smoking but of the damage to their career potential. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Sarnia—Lambton for that question, because I think it points to a gaping hole in the government's approach to cannabis legalization.

The public safety minister appeared at committee and encouraged Canadians who go through the United States' border to be forthright about what they have done, knowing full well that a positive answer on cannabis use may deny a person entry into the United States. The government has to tackle the fact that we are neighbours to a country that views cannabis in a very different light.

If we are going to legalize this drug to make it available to responsible adults, and we expect them to be forthright at the border, what is that going to do to the free movement of people and goods between our two countries, which is so vital to both of our economies? So far, I have not heard a satisfactory answer to that. I believe it is a major contradiction the government needs to address. I certainly hope the various ministers are taking this up at the highest levels in Washington to ensure that we reach some sort of agreement. Right now, the only way I see Canadians possibly surviving this is by lying, because if they tell the truth, they will be prevented from crossing the border, and it will have a major effect on us.

I hope the government addresses that problem. I hope it provides a reasonable answer on what will be done to solve this very serious problem.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill.

I want to start by thanking the committee for its work. Committee members heard from more than 100 witnesses and went through a very detailed clause-by-clause process. It was a very deliberative process, which I think was very instructive. I also want to thank the committee for the amendments, particularly on edibles, which build on some of the understanding and learning from the process of legalization we saw in Washington and Oregon. Of course, this work built upon the work of the expert task force, which had 1,500 meetings with individuals and took submissions from across the country to make sure that there was an exhaustive consultation process before the bill was ever introduced.

It is important to note that while this bill is certainly transformational, it is also transitional. We are going to have an opportunity, with a full review after three years, to take a look at the impact of the legislation and how it is working. The work that was done before by the expert task force and the work that was done by the committee was incredibly helpful, not only for this process but for the review that will be taking place in three years' time.

Some have asked why we do not just defer this or keep putting it off and have even more consultation. There is an imperative reality,

which is that Canada has the highest use of cannabis anywhere on the planet. For young people, the cohort we are most concerned about and that is most talked about in this place, that is north of 20%. In fact, it is double that of tobacco, which is, of course, a legal substance. It is much easier for a young person to get hold of cannabis than it is a cigarette or alcohol. That is, of course, because drug dealers, people who are operating in the shade of criminality, do not really care who they sell to. They are not worried about being fined for selling to someone who is too young. The reality is that it is far too easy. Having three teenagers myself, they tell me stories about how prevalent it is and how easy it is, if they were to so choose. I am lucky that they have not, but it is around them.

On the one hand, we hear from the Conservatives, who talk about doing nothing and sticking with this appalling record on cannabis. They say do not do anything, just be an ostrich and pretend there is no problem. On the other hand, we hear from NDP members who say that this bill would not really legalize it, and we should open it up far more. I think that demonstrates the responsible tone we are taking in this debate, which is that we should learn from the lessons on other controlled substances, such as tobacco and alcohol. Let us learn from other jurisdictions that have legalized cannabis and make sure that we bring forward the most effective regime possible, given the evidence.

I look specifically at tobacco, because I think it is very instructive to the case we have here now. Tobacco prevalence rates among young people exceeded 50%, and that was not more than a few decades ago. We had a massive public health crisis on our hands. That high rate of prevalence among young people was going to lead to unbelievable chronic disease and illness. Therefore, working with the not-for-profit sector, with Heart and Stroke, cancer, and other not-for-profits, they began a process of de-normalization and making sure that young people understood the health effects. Of course, it was not only de-normalization of tobacco but of the companies that were profiting from it.

Through those denormalization campaigns, and through a variety of both federal and provincial measures to restrict and control tobacco, we are where we are today, with some of the lowest rates of tobacco use among young people in the world. Those rates are now into the single digits. We need to drive them still lower, but it is instructive to come from over 50% to below 10%. It is the kind of instructive example I think we should be focusing on when we are talking about cannabis, particularly when the existing policies have so dramatically failed us.

We can look at what has happened in Washington and Oregon. While arrests are way down, the Drug Policy Alliance report of late 2016 basically shows a flatlining of cannabis use among young people, and they have seen traffic fatalities come down, but it is at the same rate as it is in other states.

I think we have to do much more than what we are doing. There are a few specific things tied to this bill that I think are important to recognize.

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•(1245)

The government has announced that there will be up to \$274 million to support law enforcement and border efforts to enforce cannabis legislation and regulation and to deter drug-impaired driving. On the latter, it will commit up to \$161 million of that funding to train front-line officers, build law enforcement capacity, and raise public awareness. This is important. When the members opposite talk about the dangers of driving while high, they are 100% right. What they are wrong about is that it has already happened, but law enforcement officers are simply not given the tools, dollars, or equipment to deal with the problem today.

I remind members that one in five of our young people, unfortunately, are engaging in cannabis. The reality is that by arming the front-line officers with the equipment, dollars, and training they need to make sure that we go after this problem, we have a material opportunity to reduce the prevalence of those individuals who would drive high.

We have committed a further \$113.5 million over five years to make sure that organized crime does not infiltrate the legalized system and to keep cannabis from crossing our borders. That goes to the point of keeping cannabis proceeds out of the hands of criminals. Cannabis has been a major driver of criminality by feeding criminal organizations, giving them dollars to do nefarious things in our country. We have spent untold billions of dollars on policing to try to deal with cannabis use.

Further, in budget 2017, an additional \$9.6 million was committed for public education and awareness to inform Canadians, particularly young people, about the risks of cannabis use. On that we have a guiding light. In this regard, the efforts that were engaged in for tobacco were incredibly effective at de-normalizing tobacco and reducing the prevalence of its use by young people. I think if we could get to the point where we see cannabis prevalence reduced to the same level as tobacco, that would be seen as a major success. Certainly, we would see a reversal of the decades of increased use of cannabis.

As the executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I had the opportunity to intimately look at how that system worked and to work with professionals to deal with substance abuse. It is a realistic approach to a very intricate and complicated problem.

The other point I want to make is specifically with regard to youth. We know that cannabis is at its most dangerous for youth. That is why I reject the comments of the NDP that we should open this up broadly without controlling it tightly, because we know that for a young mind, cannabis is particularly devastating. We want to make sure that we turn around those high rates. That means that we can focus our law enforcement efforts on going after those individuals who would sell to young people. Instead of trying to go after the entire population, which has been an abject failure, we can focus those resources on having a zero tolerance policy for those who are 18 and younger, when we know that those are the individuals who are medically the most vulnerable from the use of cannabis.

That is why we are focusing on public education and making sure that there are strict penalties for those who would trade in cannabis

to young people. That is why we are starting where I wish we had started with tobacco, by controlling how it is promoted, making sure we have plain packaging from day one, and making sure we do not have promotional campaigns that loop into children. It is sad to see in the third world that tobacco companies are still engaging in those practices of trying to addict young people to their substance, when they know that it will kill them. The only outcome of using tobacco is death. We do not want to make the mistakes of tobacco, so we are starting with those proper controls up front.

Many partners agree, whether it is the substance abuse workers, nurses, pharmacists, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, academics, or a variety of experts. The past approach did not work. We need a new approach. This legislation, which is rooted in science and evidence, is our best path forward. I am proud to support the bill on that basis.

•(1250)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about how the government is taking a very cautious approach on the edibles side, but really, it is not, because it is allowing home grow. People could have thousands of grams in their houses that could be baked into brownies, with no quality control of potency whatsoever. Why does he think that would protect young children?

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, clearly, we want to bring forward a regime that is realistic. What we found through the expert task force is that banning people from growing any plants at all is simply unrealistic, that individuals are going to engage in that. We want to make sure that those plants are for personal consumption and not for selling to others. It is very easy to control the sale of cannabis to children on that basis. It is no different from someone deciding they are going to brew alcohol in their own home for their own use. We have an expectation that they will not sell to children, and if they do, or if they allow their children to consume it, then that would obviously be an issue for law enforcement. That is the broader point.

By ensuring that we are focused on going after those who trade in drugs to young people, we can focus our law enforcement efforts on protecting young people and ensuring that the places that are selling cannabis are doing so in a controlled and regulated environment, wherein they will face stiff penalties otherwise. In contrast, a criminal just does not care.

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• (1255)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, there are currently mixed views on the legalization of recreational use of marijuana. One of the things we certainly want to see happen with legalization is an opportunity for our growers to be part of the economy of the future. As a result, about 120 people have gotten together to form a co-operative. They want to grow marijuana outdoors in the sunshine under very tightly controlled circumstances and be part of the future with legalized recreational use of marijuana. I would be interested in the member's views on this kind of approach to the future.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, it certainly is true that more individuals are looking at a controlled, legalized regime and are asking how they can legally produce marijuana. I know that the former Conservative cabinet minister Julian Fantino is heading up one such organization looking at growing cannabis.

I would encourage those individuals who are looking at growing it to look at the legislation and work with the provinces in particular, because they will control a lot of the regulations, and also have conversations with us about how they can develop those businesses in a way that conforms with federal law. If the member wants to have a direct conversation about that, I would be happy to offer my help directly.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that one of the reasons teenagers have easy access to cannabis today is its prevalence in the black market and the fact that organized crime is using these revenues to fund gang activities. The Conservatives are talking about decriminalizing it. Could the hon. member speak about the idea of decriminalizing demand while maintaining supply, or allowing the black market to continue to sell to teenagers and also fund gang activities?

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest problems we have while decriminalizing cannabis, and one of the reasons we are saying that we cannot ease off the laws right now, is that 100% of the proceeds go to the black market, to thugs and gangs, and people involved in activities that destroy communities. It would be abhorrent to allow those individuals to continue to have revenues to decimate our communities. The reality is that a massive part of the problem today is that these organizations rely on cannabis revenues to fuel their gang-related activities. We want to take that away.

Yes, of course we do not want young people using cannabis. We want to reduce its prevalence, but if individuals are using it, we do not want that money to go to organized crime.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of all the ill-considered, unsound, and wacky campaign promises made by the Liberals in the 2015 election campaign, several dozen of which the Liberal government has broken, Bill C-45 most deserves to be broken, or at least seriously postponed.

The House may recall that when the legislation was first introduced, the Liberals assembled five ministers, whom they trotted out and sat down at the table at the press theatre just across Wellington Street, to defend the proposed marijuana legislation. There were the Minister of National Revenue, the Minister of Public Safety, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Health, and the

government's front guy for recreational marijuana, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice.

This was not a celebratory unveiling of new legislation. It looked like middle school detention time. There was not a smile among the group. The “marijuana five” sat grimly during the almost hour-long news conference and not one of the ministers spoke the word “marijuana”. They contorted themselves and their talking points into more coils than a hookah pipe, talking of their concerns about vulnerable kids, of the risks and dangers of the product they were about to make recreational, of any attempt to engage in a price war with organized crime, and repeatedly emphasized that they were not actually advocating marijuana consumption. As I said, not one of the “marijuana five” managed to actually speak the word. Instead, they stuck to the Latin, “cannabis”.

Since then it has all been downhill, and here we are with the Liberals cutting short an essential and important debate for all Canadians to hear by using the legislative guillotine of their Liberal majority.

The parliamentary secretary has reminded the House many times that in his words, “we all care about our kids. We care about their health, their safety, and their outcomes.” The PS has reminded us that he spent most of his adult life fighting crime, that crime and violence can be reduced in society through smart action.

We in the official opposition absolutely recognize the member's service and certainly agree that we all care for Canadian children and that crime and violence can be reduced in Canadian society through smart action, but we strenuously disagree that the Liberals have approached this matter in any way that could remotely be characterized as smart.

The Liberals have rushed to crank out Bill C-45, but in doing so have downloaded almost all of the real responsibilities and costs to the provinces and municipalities. From top to bottom, we have heard serious and worthy concerns from the medical community, from law enforcement, from small town and big city councils, and from provincial legislatures that the Liberals' rush to legalize recreational cannabis by July 2018 is simply going too far, far too fast. It is far too fast for effective education of consumers, young and old. It is far too fast for thorough and rational training of law enforcement officers and agencies. It is far too fast to think through the matters of home-grown marijuana and the volumes that will be produced, access by young children to it, and a variety of landlord-tenant issues.

The proposed federal law allows for four plants per home. In testimony at the health committee, witnesses calculated that four plants of 100 centimetres in height could produce up to 600 grams of marijuana, yet that height limit has now been removed from the bill. No one on the government side has explained how 600 grams fits with the maximum possession limit of 30 grams.

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The health committee also heard in evidence from the United States that whereas Colorado allows home grown marijuana, Washington State does not, the exception being for frail medical consumers. The rather stark results are that in Washington state, where no home grown marijuana was allowed, organized crime's share of the marijuana market was reduced to less than 20% in less than three years. In Colorado, where home grown marijuana was allowed, organized crime jumped into the game and continues to flourish.

• (1300)

We learned last week that some provinces will heed the lessons from those two states and some will not. Quebec's draft legislation will outlaw home grown marijuana, with a purchase and consumption age of 18. However, there are other disparities in the area of distribution. Ontario says that it will only allow distribution through its liquor control board, as will Quebec, but Alberta is going to go the free enterprise, retail route, regulated by provincial regulation, but with no set limit on the number of private stores.

Coming back to testimony from south of the border, we also learned from Colorado that there has been a 32% increase in drug-impaired driving, which brings us to the repeated concerns, expressed both individually and collectively, of the Canadian chiefs of police. These chiefs of police say there is no possible way, zero chance, they will be ready to enforce new laws for the legalization of recreational marijuana by next July, or any month soon thereafter. They have pleaded for more time to properly train officers about the new laws, about the science, and the details of what is allowed and what is not. They want more time to certify an adequate number of officers to conduct roadside drug-impaired driving testing.

They have also asked, along with a variety of other groups, for more time for public education. Without a delay, the chiefs of police warn that there will be a gap between actual legalization and what the Liberals originally, grandiloquently proclaimed would be "Canada cannabis day", before they backed off to a now vague commitment of sometime in July. There is a gap between actual legalization and the ability of the police to properly enforce the spectrum of new laws and regulations. That gap, the police chiefs warn, will give organized crime an opportunity to exploit these new laws and, as Ontario Provincial Police Deputy Commissioner Rick Barnum warned, for organized crime to flourish.

The Liberals claim they will squeeze organized crime out of the marijuana market through predatory pricing, undercutting street prices. The Liberal Government of Ontario is talking about a \$10 a gram price, with sales tax on top of that, of course. The federal Liberal government is talking about another tax, a \$1 a gram federal levy.

The street dealers, the distributors for organized crime, are laughing out loud about prices in the \$8 to \$12 a gram range putting them out of business. On radio talk shows in Toronto the last couple of weeks, it was clear that both sellers and buyers in the market today believe that the illicit market will continue to exist, and quite possibly grow. A year ago a marijuana dealer in Seattle in Washington state was selling marijuana for less than \$5 Canadian a gram.

Coming back for just a moment to the Liberal government's proposed \$1 a gram levy, to be split, it says, 50-50 with the provinces, that is a non-starter. We know it is a non-starter with the provinces, and certainly the municipalities, who are carrying the lion's share of the costs and responsibilities of bringing the Liberals' wacky campaign promise to a too-early reality.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, of all the ill-considered promises made by these Liberals during the 2015 election campaign, several dozen of which they have reluctantly but realistically broken, Bill C-45 most deserves to be broken, or at least seriously postponed.

• (1305)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have the mindset of the status quo, as if the status quo were in the best interests of Canadians. The member who just spoke highlighted just how much the Conservative Party continues to be out of touch with Canadians by not realizing the need for government to take action.

We have the highest consumption of cannabis, or marijuana as my colleague across the way likes to refer to it as, by youth. We have criminal activities in our communities today, including in Winnipeg North, the area I represent. We have gang members and others selling marijuana or cannabis to 12 year olds, 14 year olds, and so forth.

We want to see the hundreds of millions of dollars taken away from the criminal element. We want to make it tougher for young people to have access to marijuana.

The Conservatives seem to be determined to stay in the past and not to take any action whatsoever. We have now heard some of the more progressive members say that we should at least slow down.

When can we anticipate the Conservatives coming to the realization that at times government needs to protect our children, and that this is one of the ways we can actually do that?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, if I might use the word "wacky" one time again, that is an outrageous question. We, on this side of the House, certainly the official opposition and the NDP, recognize the inevitable. This Liberal majority, rushing through using the guillotine legislative tool today to cut short debate, is going to pass Bill C-45. The Liberals are determined to force it on Canadians, Canadian communities, police forces, and society, and are doing it far too soon.

The Liberals talk about not rushing and having had exhaustive consultation, but they are not listening to Canadians. They are not listening to the advice of the police forces, medical associations, and of small towns and large cities. Talk about being out of touch. The Liberal government is on a misguided crusade to impose the Prime Minister's ill-considered off the wall campaign promise made in 2015, whatever the cost to Canadian society.

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• (1310)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I want to ask him a question that just sprang to mind.

Does he think the member for Winnipeg North is aware that his parliamentary work is being influenced by spin doctors?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I might be a little more gentle than my colleague suggests, but the entire Liberal government, the frontbench, all those ministers who were wheeled out to defend the proposed legislation certainly would not smile with expectations of great things for Canadian society, but they constantly express their concern. They think they can use predatory pricing to undercut organized crime. That is not real; it is absolutely unrealistic. We have seen it in American situations and we know it will happen here. Organized crime will use predatory pricing.

We have seen the inability to enforce the illegal tobacco laws in Canada. Schools in my riding of Thornhill in Toronto deal out of the back of trunks of cars in front of the schools. The police enforcement has been absolutely insufficient because the burden of prosecution is simply too great. I fear we are going to see exactly the same thing when organized crime rises to the bait and exploits the loopholes the Liberals are leaving by rushing to implement Bill C-45 far too soon.

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech was very informative. The issue I have right now is that we are potentially allowing 12 year olds to possess five grams. If we transfer the same rules for the marijuana bill to alcohol, we would be saying it is okay for children as young as 12 to possess two ounces of alcohol. I just do not understand this. This is not protecting our children. It is actually downgrading our society to a level I have never seen. This is not good news.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an area of concern. It has been addressed in debate, and it certainly was addressed at a committee. There is that contradiction between the capability of a home grow with four plants, producing up to 600 grams of marijuana product, when the legal possession limit is 30 grams. The government says that it will prosecute anybody selling that or giving it away to children. The fact is that these plants will be in the home. Kids today will learn from one another. When it is legal, despite the allowable age to consume, kids will harvest the leaves and experiment. What we are doing is virtually the same as putting fentanyl on a shelf within reach of kids. Having plants in homes is just as wacky, just as unacceptable, and just as dangerous for Canadian society.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-45, the cannabis act.

Protecting the health and safety of the public is a key priority for all orders of government in Canada. In fact, that is why we introduced Bill C-45. Its goal is to create a strict national framework for controlling the production, distribution, sale, and possession of cannabis in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Bill C-45 would legalize access to cannabis, but only for adults, and would allow a limited amount to be grown at home or purchased through an appropriate retail framework, to make sure it is sourced from a well-regulated industry.

[*English*]

The bill would establish controls to protect youth, including prohibitions on selling and providing cannabis to anyone under the age of 18 and restrictions on marketing and promotional activities directed at young people.

Commercial growers and manufacturers of cannabis would require a federal licence and be subject to strict oversight to control product safety and quality.

While Bill C-45 would use the federal criminal law power to create a strict framework to control and regulate the production, distribution, sale, and possession of cannabis, the effective oversight and control of cannabis cannot be achieved without working with our partners in the provinces, territories, and municipalities.

• (1315)

[*Translation*]

From the outset, our government has been clear that the control and regulation of cannabis requires a pan-Canadian approach, involving all orders of government, at all stages of development and implementation.

[*English*]

This is reflected in the important role that our provincial and territorial partners have played in the work of the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation. This task force was established in June 2016, with a mandate to provide advice to the federal government on how to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis.

Input from the provinces and territories was essential for the successful work of the task force. The provinces and the territories nominated experts to serve on the task force and make suggestions as to who should be consulted. They met with the task force and shared their views on cannabis legalization and regulation, and on how to best achieve our shared objectives of better protecting health and safety.

[*Translation*]

It should not come as a surprise that the views of the provinces and territories helped shape, to a great extent, some of the important provisions of Bill C-45. Like the task force report, Bill C-45 proposes a shared framework for the control and regulation of cannabis based on ongoing federal, provincial, and territorial collaboration.

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[English]

The bill sets out clear controls and standards around cannabis, but provides the flexibility for each government to work within its own jurisdictional authority and experience. Each aspect of the framework would be implemented by those best placed to do so.

At this time, I would like to explain how the different levels of government would share their various roles and responsibilities, beginning with the federal role.

[Translation]

Under the proposed cannabis law, the federal government would be responsible for establishing and implementing a national framework for the regulation of cannabis production, establishing health and safety standards, and creating criminal prohibitions.

[English]

This would include: establishing restrictions on adult access to cannabis and establishing serious criminal penalties for those operating outside the legal system; creating rules to limit how cannabis or cannabis accessories can be promoted, packaged, labelled, and displayed that are in line with the rules that are in place for tobacco products; instituting a federal licensing regime for cannabis production that draws on lessons learned from the current system for access to cannabis for medical purposes; establishing industry-wide rules and standards, for example, serving sizes or potency, as well as the tracking of cannabis from seed to sale to prevent diversion to the illicit market; creating minimum federal conditions to provide a national framework to protect public health and public safety; and enforcing cannabis importation and exportation prohibitions at the border, except when legally authorized.

At the same time, Bill C-45 recognizes that provinces and territories, as well as municipalities, have an important role to play in the new system. Similar to provincial and territorial oversight over the distribution and sale of alcohol, the proposed legislation would recognize provincial and territorial legislative regimes that would oversee and regulate the distribution and retail sale of cannabis in their respective jurisdictions.

[Translation]

The legislative measures would also take into account the fact that the provinces and territories, together with municipalities, have the authority to adapt certain rules to their own jurisdictions and to enforce them with a variety of tools, including tickets.

As per the recommendations of the working group, the provinces and territories, together with municipalities, could establish rules governing the location of facilities for the production, distribution, and sale of cannabis in a community, and locations where cannabis can be consumed in public.

[English]

Provinces and territories could also set additional regulatory requirements to address issues of local concern. For example, provincial and territorial legislatures have the authority to set a higher minimum age for cannabis possession or more restrictive limits on possession for personal cultivation, including the lowering of the number of plants or restricting where they may be cultivated.

As a result, Bill C-45 is drafted in such a way that provinces and territories can establish these stricter rules under their own authority.

Key roles for our municipal counterparts would include setting and enforcing local zoning bylaws, inspecting buildings, and carrying out local enforcement for matters related to minimum age for purchase, personal cultivation, personal possession limits, smoking, and place-of-use restrictions as well as public-nuisance complaints.

• (1320)

[Translation]

As the framework is implemented, I am convinced that our government will be able to work closely with its provincial, territorial, and municipal counterparts.

[English]

I am pleased to note that provinces and territories have already begun to prepare for legalization. For example, our partners in Manitoba have already introduced legislation amending provincial traffic safety laws to help police crack down on drivers who are driving while impaired by drugs and to restrict how cannabis can be transported in a vehicle.

The active involvement of our provincial, territorial, and municipal counterparts will be vital in helping to ensure that young people do not have access to cannabis and that those who sell cannabis outside of the legal framework will face stiff penalties.

[Translation]

Our government has said many times that it will be working with the provinces and territories to raise awareness and educate Canadians on the risks of cannabis use and to monitor the impact of tougher controls around access to cannabis.

In the 2017 budget, the government committed to investing \$9.6 million over five years in a public education and awareness campaign and in surveillance activities.

[English]

As health is a shared responsibility between the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, provinces and territories complement federal public health programming, including through the management of public health and safety issues and school-based education and counselling.

[Translation]

In partnering with the provinces, territories, municipalities, and local communities, our government has announced that it will invest to provide law enforcement with the necessary equipment and education to ensure road safety. It said that it would also meet with the provinces and territories to continue discussions on how cannabis will be taxed.

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Strong collaboration between the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as much in areas of security and supply chains as in public education, is essential to reaching the goals of strict cannabis regulation, including that of keeping proceeds out of the hands of criminals.

[*English*]

Our government will continue to work tirelessly with all levels of government to realize our common goal of protecting the health and safety of Canadians.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just today, Doctors of BC is calling for the province of B.C. to not allow home grow. Add that voice to Quebec that will not allow home grow, to New Brunswick that recognizes it is a problem and wants people to lock up their marijuana, and the other 10 provinces and territories that have come with no plan. Therefore, it is clear that they recognize that home grow does not meet the requirements stated in the bill. It does not ensure a quality-controlled supply. It does not get rid of organized crime. It does not unload the criminal justice system. It does not keep it out of the hands of children.

Why did the government consult broadly and then not listen to any of the provinces?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, the criminal law standard, which is within federal jurisdiction, is a heavy apparatus and through our consultations we set the criminal law standard at four plants to allow a certain flexibility to the provinces. The provinces are, within their jurisdiction, able to further regulate on that point. That a number of provinces have chosen to do so or are planning to do so is indicative of a healthy federal system in which both the federal government and the provinces are attuned to the needs of their people and the health of their populations. There is nothing wrong with some variance across the country, as provincial governments determine what to do with that standard.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP are very troubled by today's time allocation motion on Bill C-45. This is the 25th time allocation motion since the Liberals came to power. The committee has only held eight meetings on Bill C-45, and a proposal from my colleague from Vancouver East was rejected. She had requested two additional hearing days to give young Canadians, authorized producers, and edibles manufacturers time to testify.

The Liberals say they have been open and have listened, but these people did not get a chance to be heard. What is more, the 38 amendments proposed by the NDP were all shot down. Not one of the NDP's amendments to improve this bill was approved.

How can the Liberals claim to be open and transparent? How can they say they consider every proposal aimed at improving this bill and at making sure youth are sufficiently well-informed to know that drugs must not be taken lightly? The Liberals say they want to protect youth and take drugs out of criminal hands, but many questions are still unanswered.

Why do the Liberals want to rush the process even more? Quebec and several other provinces have asked for the process to be extended to allow enough time for a comprehensive study.

What does my colleague opposite have to say about that?

Mr. David Lametti: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question.

We have been working on this for a long time, since taking office, in fact. We have consulted people across the country. We even set up a special committee to study the matter. We have consulted the provinces from the very beginning. We are working with the provinces to find solutions, and their suggestions have been incorporated into the bill.

With this bill, we have sought to strike the right balance. As a government, we sincerely believe we have achieved that. It is time to move forward.

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to discuss Bill C-45, the pot legalization bill, or as I call it Phoenix 2.0. Why do I call it that? It is because it is an example of government rushing through a bill to meet some nonsensical, arbitrary deadline, despite warnings from everyone involved that we are not ready. In this case, instead of hurting those solely in the public sector, we are going to be hurting Canadians across all demographics, and especially the young.

With Phoenix, we had the opposition, the public sector unions, and department chief financial officers saying not to rush forward. With pot legalization, we have police chiefs from across the country, the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, the RCMP, and members of the U.S. enforcement agencies saying not to rush forward. Sadly, as with Phoenix, the government seems intent on barrelling ahead, regardless of the warnings.

The Liberals are desperate to show they can keep a promise after all. "Look at me" the PM will say on July 1, hiking up his pants to show off his socks with marijuana leaves. He is going to spark up the first ceremonial doob on Parliament Hill, and run around taking selfies with those lighting up. No doubt, the clever Liberal marketing machine will say the PM just happened to be running by, shirtless no doubt, and a crowd toking up. Of course, his official photographer will just happen to be there taking some pictures. No doubt they will come up with some clever tag about the PM and hashtag it that he was "photobonging" some group.

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However, there are real consequences to rushing forward when law enforcement is not ready. Let us look at the Liberal policy on pot from its web page, broken down by statement. The first statement is that current laws do not “prevent young people from using marijuana.” The Liberal solution to legalize the substance that is being consumed defies logic, to argue normalizing pot use and making it available everywhere will somehow prevent young people from using it.

Consider some real-world examples. Colorado went from 13th place to first place overall for pot consumption among its youth, after legalization. Washington State's pot use among students, post-legalization, is 42% higher than the rest of the country. Studies from the U.S. show that the young people have a perception, post-legalization, that pot is harmless and does not cause mental issues.

Allowing every citizen to legally grow pot, up to four plants worth at that, means by definition there will be more pot. The government has so far neglected to adequately explain how it plans to keep the extra pot off the streets and out of our schools.

Next it states, “Arresting and prosecuting these offenses is expensive for our criminal justice system. It traps too many Canadians in the criminal justice system for minor, non-violent offenses.” Let us be frank, things have changed since many of us in the House were younger. Police are no longer focusing on arresting kids for having a joint or two, because they are far too busy working on other important issues.

The police chief of Edmonton stated it clearly. He said that police may use the presence of pot as a cause to search a car or search someone, where they may find guns, opioids, or stolen goods. However, to argue for legalization because too many Canadians are trapped in the criminal system simply does not jive with what the experts are saying.

Next, the Liberals say, “...the proceeds from the illegal drug trade support organized crime and greater threats to public safety, like human trafficking and hard drugs”. Here is a clue for the government. The Hells Angels are already involved in the legal part of marijuana. I quote from the RCMP report to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. “There is no shortage of organized criminal groups who have applied to produce medical marijuana under Health Canada's new MMPR, including...Hells Angels”. Legalization is not keeping out organized crime. Organized crime is already taking advantage of the legal regime.

The Liberal plan goes on to state, “To ensure that we keep marijuana out of the hands of children, and the profits out of the hands of criminals, we will legalize, regulate, and restrict access to marijuana.”

In summary, they will keep pot out of the hands of children by legalizing the substance we want to get rid of, legalizing possession for children as young as 12, and making production legal, thus ensuring the supply will skyrocket. At the same time, they say we will keep the profits out of the hands of criminals, even though they have not said how, and they are ignoring the fact that the criminals are already involved in the legal system. The government seems to expect the Hells Angels will just turn over and say, “Well, we had a great run, guys. I guess I'll use my Harley to be an UberEATS driver

now”. Maybe the government could offer the Hells Angels some of those reintegration services they are offering returning ISIS fighters.

Honestly, if people have been buying pot from someone for the past five years, getting a great price, and having it delivered to their door, are they now going to trudge down to the local government-run store, 9 to 5 only, Monday to Friday, of course, and on camera, to buy weed at a higher price? I do not think so. Mind you, Kathleen Wynne would offer them Air Miles points, so there is something.

● (1330)

Continuing on with the Liberal plan, it states we will, “create new, stronger laws to punish more severely those who...operate a motor vehicle while under its influence, and those who sell it outside of the...framework.”

Here is a great one. We have no standards on measuring impairment. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police recently met and narrowed down the roadside testing devices to two. We have not yet decided on the best one, much less have them in the hands of the police. More importantly, the failure rate on the device is as high as 13%. Let us think about that. Every single person charged will have a lawyer begging to take on his or her trial. What judge is going to say, “Hey, a 13% failure rate, that's pretty good. You're guilty”? None.

If the courts are jammed now, what happens once every one of these offences is taken to court? The government is letting accused rapists and murderers walk free under Jordan's principle because of its absolute ineptness and inability to appoint judges, and we are about to add thousands of new cases.

We could do blood testing, but that would require the officer to take someone to an emergency room. Our emergency room wait times are legendary as it is. Do we think any nurse or doctor is going to keep someone with a broken arm or a child with a runaway fever waiting just to draw blood for a cop for a weed DUI?

The costs of these roadside devices are \$45 to \$90 per use. The training for every one of these operators is about \$20,000. How many locations are there to train these officers? There are two in all of North America, in the United States. Edmonton currently has only 24 officers trained out of a force of 1,800. Calgary has fewer, about 10. Maybe the Liberals are hoping that, contrary to decades of experience with drinking and driving, people just will not drive when high.

Government Orders

Let us again look at the statistics in the U.S. In Washington state, after legalization, DUIs with pot increased from 18% to 39%. In Spokane, youth pot DUIs grew 1700% versus pre-legalization.

The Liberal plan goes on. Next is those who sell cannabis outside of the regulatory framework. Our police forces are already stretched to the limits. We are not enforcing casual possession right now to focus on hard criminals, yet somehow, by waving a magic wand, we will have people available to go after those who are selling illegal drugs.

We have told the public that they can set up a legal grow op in every house and apartment in town. In Alberta, people are allowed to buy 30 grams of pot per store visit, not per day. That is 75 joints just from one store. How are we going to monitor every single person who can legally buy 75 joints at a time to make sure that they are only those of age, those who are not driving, and those who are not part of a criminal gang?

Finally, the Liberals have said that they will create a task force with input from experts. The experts in public health say that smoking pot before the age of 25 is damaging to brain development. Law enforcement is similarly clear. The chiefs of police are near unanimous. They have said they are not ready, that we should decriminalize not legalize, and that we should slow down.

The government simply dumped sales and distribution onto cash-strapped provinces and municipalities, so we will have a patchwork framework across the country. The Liberals have not listened to the task force.

I realize we are on the road to legalization. However, I implore the government to slow down until our police and communities are ready. It should not put public safety at risk just to meet an arbitrary political deadline.

I met with Edmonton's chief of police last Friday, and he had a poignant warning. He said that in 20 years we would look back at this as the worst piece of legislation ever tabled in Canada.

Let us slow it down and do what is right for our youth and our country, not what is right for the Liberal mandate tracker.

• (1335)

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was curious as to the hon. member's mention of the rates of impaired driving due to cannabis in Colorado and Washington. When serving on the health committee, I received correspondence from the attorneys general of both Colorado and Washington that states that they did not have comparable detection methods before and after legalization and that comparable numbers do not exist. It also shows that since legalization, when they first started collecting data under the new regime, they found a decrease of 12% in impaired driving in both states. I would like to know how the hon. member would respond to that.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, it came from a 400-page, March 2016 report called, "The Washington State Marijuana Impact Report: Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area", as well as a report called, "Colorado's Legalization of Marijuana and the Impact on Public Safety", which was put together by a coalition of Colorado police agencies. I would suggest that perhaps the members of the health committee and the member across the way read all of

that information instead of just hand-picking the information that suits his cause.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his eloquent speech. There was a little humour thrown in, but it had some very hard-hitting points.

We obviously cannot fit all the points into a 10-minute speech. Unfortunately, the government has called for time allocation, and so we are not going to be able to speak fully on this and put forward the concerns we are hearing from our constituents.

It was interesting to hear the member for Edmonton West speak about meeting with the police force in his riding last week. I did the same and met with the staff sergeant in my riding, who expressed great concern. He said they simply could not be ready. Even if the equipment and detection methods were there, he could not afford to send his staff for the training, and could not get replacement staff while he sent staff for training. He said they just could not be ready.

I would like to hear what the member has to say. Maybe he has a little more time to express more of what he heard last week.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good point, and it was brought up by Edmonton's police chief. He said they are not ready, and it takes time to send people down to the U.S. for the training. He figures that in Edmonton alone, just one city, it would cost \$10 million to train officers for this.

I want to bring up something that came up two weeks ago when we were studying the supplementary estimates. In the supplementary estimates, money was set aside for the RCMP to set up a framework to prevent impaired driving. Keep in mind, just in Edmonton alone for 1,800 officers it would cost \$10 million. How much is set aside in the supplementary estimates (C)? It is \$5 million for the RCMP, which is enough to send 267 officers from the entire country.

Government Orders

One of the issues of the supplementary estimates (C), for which the parliamentary budget officer has criticized the government, is its slow rate of getting out the money, and he even commented that it is going to take months and months to get all the supplementary estimates (C) spending out. We asked the government when it expected to have that money out. Will it be weeks, as is required, or months? The government's comment back was that the money for the RCMP would be months and months, and that was an aspirational goal, not even a commitment to get the money out the door to get our RCMP trained on impaired driving.

Again, I implore the government to slow down. We realize that the government is going to legalize this, but slow it down and wait until the police are ready.

• (1340)

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention to the hon. member that, as we know, Canada is number one in regard to cannabis consumption already. It cannot be worse than that.

I would ask the hon. member to inform us about other countries where cannabis is legalized, whether the consumption of cannabis among youth has increased or decreased.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I was looking at two states that I know have legalized: Washington and Colorado. In one city in Washington, Spokane, which is a fair sized city of about one million people, impaired driving among youth post-legalization was up by 1,700. For Washington state post-legalization, consumption among students was 43% higher than the rest of the U.S. Numbers for Colorado were similar. The statistics show that if it is made more available, people are going to take it up and smoke it, and that includes all demographics, especially the youth.

[Translation]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts.

As my colleagues have pointed out a number of times, the current approach to cannabis is not working. It has put money in the hands of criminals and organized crime and failed to keep cannabis out of the hands of young Canadians.

[English]

The fact that cannabis is a controlled substance has not stopped Canadians from using it. In 2015, approximately 12% of Canadians reported consuming cannabis in the past year. For young adults between the ages of 20 to 24, that rate is more than double at 30%. The vast majority of Canadians are obtaining cannabis products from the illegal market. This cannabis is produced without regard for public health and safety, often in clandestine circumstances, with no oversight over how it is produced, no testing for dangerous or unhealthy contaminants, and no requirements whatsoever with respect to appropriate safeguards, factual and accurate labelling, or child-resistant packaging.

That is why our government is moving to enact this legislation. It would better protect the health and safety of Canadians by providing

access to a legal and quality-controlled supply of cannabis, while implementing strict controls to restrict youth access to cannabis.

On the illegal market, cannabis products are often grown, produced, stored, and sold without regard for public health and safety or accountability to the consumer. The products may be contaminated with pesticides, heavy metals, moulds, and bacteria. The source of this cannabis is often obscure or unknown.

The bill would ensure that the production of cannabis in Canada is subject to a high and consistent national standard, in terms of product quality, as is the case under the current regime for the production of cannabis for medical purposes. This means that, under Bill C-45 and the supporting regulations, all producers would be subject to a licensing process that verifies that they have the capacity to meet the product quality-control standards. Producers would also have to conform to standards in terms of the safety and security of their facilities, the vetting of personnel, record keeping, and inventory controls. This would include rigorous requirements for product quality testing, standard operating procedures that must be observed throughout the facility, a sanitation program, and product recall measures to address any product-related issues.

The proposed framework would require that product quality be controlled through mandatory testing and that a robust compliance and enforcement regime be in place. In fact, Canada already has a world-leading system in place to regulate the production of cannabis for medical purposes, which provides a solid basis upon which to build.

Let me provide some of those regime requirements. Under the current regime, which has been in place since 2014, Health Canada is responsible for licensing and overseeing cannabis producers. These producers are required to operate within the regulations to provide quality-controlled cannabis to registered patients. There are currently 67 producers that are licensed to produce cannabis for medical purposes. These producers are the only commercial source in Canada of legal, quality-controlled cannabis for medical purposes.

The regulatory framework sets out a series of strict requirements that must be met to protect the health and safety of Canadians and the integrity of the legal system. For example, licensed producers are required to utilize strict production practices in their facilities, such as having a quality assurance person and a sanitary program.

Each licensed producer is required to test each and every product lot prior to its sale to the public. This includes tests for metals, mould, bacteria, and other potential contaminants, which can be harmful to public health. If the test results are outside of identified specifications, the product must not be sold.

Government Orders

Licensed producers are also required to test each lot for THC and CBD potency levels, and the results must be displayed on the labels.

Health Canada also announced recently that it will require all licensed producers to conduct mandatory testing for the presence of unauthorized pesticides in all cannabis products destined for sale.

• (1345)

[Translation]

These standards and controls are backed by a robust compliance and law enforcement regime to ensure that licenced producers fully comply with the rules at all stages of the production process.

Under this system, every licenced producer will undergo multiple unannounced inspections every year in order to verify that they are using the best production practices and following specific rules regarding the use of authorized pesticides. These inspections will also ensure compliance with rules on physical and personnel security, and record keeping. Last year, for example, Health Canada inspectors conducted more than 270 inspections on site and every licenced producer in Canada was inspected on average seven or eight times.

[English]

The features described are designed to ensure that any cannabis product released for sale to the public meets a high quality standard, but as in any industry, there may be circumstances in which a product may be released for sale that does not meet the established regulatory standards. Therefore, to address these situations quickly and authoritatively, the regulatory framework requires that licensed producers have a recall system in place to promptly contact clients and remove products that do not meet these high standards.

In short, Bill C-45 would build on a well-functioning, effective system to help ensure that cannabis that is legally sold in Canada is strictly regulated and quality controlled. In addition to setting controls similar to those existing under the cannabis regime for medical purposes, Bill C-45 would put in place a set of additional measures, tools, and resources to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

[Translation]

Industry might use marketing techniques to increase demand and revenues. We have a responsibility to establish reasonable regulations for these marketing activities to ensure that important public policy objectives, such as protecting the health and well-being of young people, are achieved.

The facts are conclusive. We have seen with tobacco that exposure to advertising, even if it targets adults, has an impact on children. Under the bill, advertising restrictions would apply to cannabis based on lessons learned from our experience with tobacco.

[English]

The proposed legislation and supporting regulations would also ensure that packaging is child resistant, reducing the risk of accidental consumption. They would also set limits for potency and portion size and require factual information to be clearly presented on the product. The oversight and regulation of production at the federal level would provide all Canadians with the assurance

that, no matter where cannabis is produced or sold, it would be subject to the same high quality and safety standards and requirements across the country.

In conclusion, this bill provides a real opportunity for Canada to address health and public safety issues associated with the illegal cannabis market. The proposed framework would establish a robust system that would allow adults to have access to legal and quality-controlled products as a result of a well-regulated framework, compliance, and enforcement. This would place Canada in a better position to protect the public health and safety of its youth and Canadians as a whole.

• (1350)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite quite rightly pointed out that we have had a medical marijuana system in Canada for four years. It is a very well regulated and controlled system, with quality control testing and good tracking on the production and distribution of medical marijuana. The health committee heard that Washington state extended its medical marijuana system to recreational marijuana and got the best results in terms of eliminating organized crime and making sure young children, up to the age of 21, cannot get a hold of the drug.

Why did the government not take that experience from Washington, which had the best results, and put that system in place if it is going to legalize it, instead of this haphazard patchwork thing that we have across all provinces and territories?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, for medical purposes, we have a world-leading system of regulation, control, and licensing of the sale of cannabis, and we are using this leading edge to ensure that we can expand it to the recreational as well. This is important. We have to address the situation now because it is in the hands of criminals and our youth, and people are using it now. We need this legislation to be able to protect the Canadian public's health and safety, so they know the quality of the product they are getting and that we have regulatory oversight of it.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to comment on the fact that, although we are hearing warnings from the other side not to rush, we in fact have emergencies across Canada. We have an opioid crisis that is killing literally thousands of people across our country. I want the member to reflect on the fact that the little character at the foot of the stairs who is selling marijuana to our kids today is not just selling marijuana.

Ms. Leona Alleslev: That is at the very core, Mr. Speaker. Fundamentally, we have a crisis. Fundamentally, we have a problem with our youth and organized crime and with the quality and safety of the product, because it is not just marijuana. Often that product is much more than just marijuana.

We do not have the luxury of waiting. We as a federal government have a responsibility to protect public health and safety and to provide a standardized framework across the nation.

Government Orders

We cannot confuse the execution of this with the standards and regulatory responsibility that we have to Canadians. We will determine the execution of this afterward, but at the same time we do not have the luxury of time. We cannot afford to wait.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): It is funny, Mr. Speaker. I hear a lot of Liberals talking about the opioid crisis and the cannabis legislation when in fact the opioid crisis is a legitimate public health emergency and yet, for some reason, they do not consider it enough of an emergency to declare it a public health emergency.

Cannabis is a bit different. While I believe it is imperative to legalize it, there is certainly no emergency to do so. It is not the NDP or the Conservatives who are asking the government to slow the process down; it is the provinces, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, and New Brunswick. Police forces, indigenous communities, and municipalities are also asking the government to slow the process down. We are not talking about defeating the legislation like the Conservatives are doing. New Democrats believe that cannabis should be legalized and we want to work with the government to do so.

My question has to do with pardons, which this legislation does not deal with. Could my hon. colleague tell me if the Liberal government has any plan whatsoever to issue pardons to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who carry criminal records for possession, an offence that this legislation would no longer make a crime after July 1, 2018?

• (1355)

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, Bill C-45 is about taking leadership. It is about setting a new standard. It is about taking the next step in Canadian public health and safety. If not now, then when? It is our responsibility to address a public safety and health issue that is in front of us and is affecting our youth. We do not have the luxury of time. Now is the time to address something that is at the core of our safety.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre. He will have five minutes, and then another five minutes when we return to the bill.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to speak in the House today in support of Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts. In my remarks today I would like to focus on why a new approach to cannabis is needed in this country and why we need to act now.

The evidence is clear. The current approach is simply not working. All that it has managed to achieve is to unduly criminalize Canadians for possessing small amounts of cannabis and to encourage them to engage with criminals in order to consume products of unknown origin, potency, quality, and safety. It has also allowed criminals and organized crime to profit.

[*Translation*]

What the current model does not do is protect Canadians, especially young people, against the risks and dangers of using cannabis.

Although cannabis has been illegal for decades, the usage rate among young Canadians is one of the highest in the world.

[*English*]

We cannot allow this to continue. A new approach is required as soon as possible to better protect our youth and to make sure that adults have access to products that are quality controlled and have known origins, and so that they no longer run the risk of having a criminal record for possessing or sharing small amounts.

During the hearings at the Standing Committee on Health, Mr. Ian Culbert, the executive director of the Canadian Public Health Association, said:

Unfortunately, we don't have the luxury of time, as Canadians are already consuming cannabis at record levels. The individual and societal harms associated with cannabis use are already being felt every day. The proposed legislation and eventual regulation is our best attempt to minimize those harms and protect the well-being of all Canadians.

Any further delay in implementation would simply perpetuate a system that is already failing to protect the health and safety of Canadians. This is exactly why our government is committed to bringing the proposed legislation into force no later than July 2018. Upon the coming into force of Bill C-45, Canadians who are 18 years of age or older would be able to possess, grow, and purchase limited amounts of cannabis for personal use. This would mean that the possession of small amounts of cannabis would no longer be a criminal offence, and it would prevent profits from going into the pockets of criminal organizations and street gangs.

The bill would, for the first time, also make it a specific criminal offence to sell cannabis to a minor and would create significant penalties for those who engage young Canadians in cannabis-related offences.

[*Translation*]

Canada is more than ready for a new approach that will better protect the health and safety of Canadians. As my colleagues are well aware, Canada has already gained valuable experience that will help us create a sound framework for cannabis legalization and regulation. We already have a system in place that provides access to medical marijuana, and that system is recognized as one of the best in the world.

[*English*]

Let me share some more of the features of that system we are building upon. Under the existing health regime that has been in place since 2014, Health Canada is responsible for licensing and overseeing cannabis producers. These producers are required to operate within strict regulations to provide quality-controlled cannabis to registered patients. This rigorous licensing process ensures, for example, that entrants to this market have gone through a thorough security check and that producers have appropriate physical security infrastructure in place.

Statements by Members

Canada also has a world-class compliance and enforcement regime intended to ensure that licensed producers fully comply with the rules in place.

●(1400)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Centre will have six minutes remaining in his speech when the House next returns to this subject.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

TAX HAVENS

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for two weeks now, actor Vincent Graton has been appealing to the Prime Minister. Every day for the past two weeks, Vincent Graton has been asking the Prime Minister to legislate an end to tax havens. He has not received an answer. It has been radio silence, total disregard.

Using tax havens to avoid paying taxes is the ultimate injustice. Banks, multinationals, and white collar criminals are saving billions of dollars, and the rest of us pay the price. Solutions do exist, and we have proposed some, but the Prime Minister refuses to take action. We need to make illegal what is unethical, bring in strict penalties and fines for fraudsters and their accomplices, eliminate the two regulations that make the use of 24 tax havens completely legal, and ratify the OECD framework against the use of tax havens. By refusing to take action, the Liberals are working for white collar crooks and against the middle class. This is no joke. Vincent Graton is speaking out on behalf of the people, and the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Fundy Royal.

* * *

[*English*]

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Fundy Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year was the best year for tourism in over a decade, with nearly three million international travellers arriving in August alone. Last week, *Travel + Leisure* magazine announced Canada as the 2017 destination of the year, referencing, “Canada’s growing prominence as a global leader, a nation defined by tolerance and hope.” In my riding of Fundy Royal, this summer we warmly welcomed over 300,000 visitors to the Hopewell Rocks and record numbers at Fundy National Park, driving business to local hotels, restaurants, and attractions in communities throughout the riding.

As we head into winter, it is important note that the tourism season is not over. Cold-weather adventures await. People can wax up their skis and head to Poley Mountain, fire up their snowmobiles and head to the Caledonia Highlands, and throw on their snowshoes or lace up their skates and head to the oval in Riverview or to the qplex. The very best way to get through a cold Canadian winter is to find something we like and really get out there and enjoy it.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I was on hand to congratulate Big Brothers Big Sisters of Leeds—Grenville for 40 years of mentoring children. Since 1977, the organization has paired adult mentors with children who can greatly benefit from an adult role model.

Last year, the agency provided direct service to 1,782 children throughout Leeds and Grenville, including the traditional match program, as well as a curriculum-based program in schools and an after-school program where children learn skills such as sewing, woodworking, painting, guitar, cooking, and stained-glass work, just to name a few. The agency has a hot-lunch subsidy, courtesy of the Carolyn Sifton Foundation, and provides school supplies, clothing, and support for families at Christmas.

Volunteers, who are always needed, are the backbone of the agency, and I am pleased to recognize everyone who has had a hand in helping raise great children in Leeds—Grenville through the Big Brothers Big Sisters.

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BENJAMIN DE FOREST BAYLY

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every street in Ajax is named after a veteran. During this month of remembrance, I could pick any number of them to highlight their contribution and how much they did for our country. However, I want to focus particularly on one individual, and that is Ajax’s first mayor and British army veteran, Benjamin de Forest Bayly, or, as he went by, Pat.

Pat, like so many Canadians in World War II, was not a soldier first. He was an engineer and was later recruited into the British Security Coordination, achieving the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Pat was assigned to the telecommunications centre, Hydra, an essential project that protected the Allied radio network. Later, he became the assistant director at Canada’s secret intelligence installation, Camp-X. Because of the covert nature of that work, Pat never really got recognition for the work he did to promote peace and in doing all he could for his country.

Pat Bayly is unfortunately no longer with us. On behalf of a grateful nation and on behalf of our community, we thank him and remember him.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is keen to accept accolades for efforts to combat climate change. Regrettably, it has failed to give equal attention to its duties to transboundary waters and to address injustices suffered by indigenous communities from toxic pollution.

Canada has been chastised by the U.N. for failing to protect the Peace—Athabasca Delta and the indigenous communities who depend on it for their survival. In approving Site C, the government ignored the pleas of Alberta first nations to first assess the impacts of it on their treaty and constitutional rights.

Successive governments have turned a deaf ear to these communities seeking studies of the impacts of oil sands emissions on their health, a mandatory duty long vested in the federal minister of health. Despite parliamentary reports recommending regulation of oil sands' toxic emissions, there has been no action. The report by *The Lancet* identifies pollution as the greatest global threat to life and health and decries governments for their failure to address this injustice. The government has the power and the responsibility to act. Why does it continue to abandon these indigenous communities?

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

CULTURAL AWARDS IN THE LAURENTIAN REGION

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 9, the Conseil de la culture des Laurentides hosted the 28th annual Grands prix de la culture des Laurentides. More than half of the finalists were from my riding, Laurentides—Labelle, and I am very proud to say today that seven out of the eight winners are people and organizations from back home.

I congratulate Jessica Viau, winner of the Jeune relève award, Lortie et Martin, winner of the Art-Affaires award, Théâtre le Patriote, recipient of the Ambassadeur award, Polyvalente Saint-Joseph, winner of the Art-Éducation award, Caroline Dusseault, recipient of the Passion award, Michel Robichaud, winner of the Excellence award, and Jean-François Beauchemin, who was crowned Créateur de l'année dans les Laurentides.

All these recipients, as well as the hundreds of people involved in my riding, are proof that culture is essential for regions like mine to grow and prosper. Whether it is through dance, theatre, music, literature, or other forms of art, they give the very best of themselves to the people of Laurentides—Labelle, and for that, I thank them.

* * *

[*English*]

PIERRE PILOTE

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a week ago Sunday, we gathered in Penetanguishene in remembering an amazing man who had made Wyevale and Penetanguishene his home during his last 23 years. He was a hockey great, among the best Canadians to play the sport. He would often comment that his success in the game was from studying others. His humility and attention were always present.

The long-time captain of the Chicago Blackhawks, he won the Stanley Cup in 1961, and three Norris trophies as the NHL's best defenceman. He played on eight all-star teams and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1975.

Pierre Pilote passed away on September 9, at the age of 85. He leaves a loving family, dear friends in Penetanguishene, and thousands of hockey fans across the continent with wonderful memories and hockey moments.

Statements by Members

To his children Denise, Pierre Junior, Renée, David, and their families, I extend our deepest sympathies and pay tribute their dad and papa, Pierre Pilote.

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WORLD WOMEN'S CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of excitement that my hometown is getting ready to rock the world. Starting March 17, 2018, North Bay, Ontario will put out the welcome mat for the Ford World Women's Curling Championship.

[*Translation*]

Over nine days, top-ranked women's teams from across the globe, including some fresh from the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, will vie for the title.

[*English*]

It will be just the second time that these world championships will have taken place in Ontario.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the North Bay Granite Club and the City of North Bay for securing this international sporting event for our city. I wish them the best of luck with the final preparations.

[*English*]

I can tell everyone that fans and competitors alike are looking for a rocking good time.

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ALASKA HIGHWAY

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 75 years ago, the Alaska Highway was officially opened with a ceremony at Soldier's Summit, one of the greatest infrastructure projects in Canadian and American history.

The Alaska Highway opened with 1,700 kilometres of road from Dawson Creek, B.C. to Delta Junction, Alaska. During the Second World War, the Japanese captured a foothold in Alaska. Through mountains, permafrost, muskegs, swamps, and across numerous rivers, the road was built in less than a year, with determination and a wartime need to connect Alaska to the rest of the continent.

The construction of the Alaska Highway resulted in monumental changes to the way of life in the Yukon. There were serious effects on the welfare of social societies of some indigenous peoples along the route, some of who worked on the project.

Today it is a lasting symbol of friendship between Canada and the United States as well as a huge tourism draw, as people from all over the world take this iconic drive and witness the breathtaking scenery and abundance of wildlife.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one March when she was a child, my mother's elementary school teacher gave out paper lambs and lions to colour to celebrate the "in like a lamb and out like a lion" adage. The boys were given lions and the girls lambs. However, my mother told her teacher that she wanted a lion. She was told to behave. Never one to be deterred, she got her lion.

A few weeks ago, I caught a reflection in a window that stopped me in my tracks. The reflection of my 37-year-old self was that of a woman I saw when I was 13, that of my mother. While we are indeed her spit and image, my sister and I often pause to be grateful for her less superficial qualities that she strives to have reflected in us: fearlessness, ferocity, selflessness, and a moral compass set on justice, the heart of a lioness.

On the occasion of my mother entering her seventh decade, we have deep gratitude for her love and for living her life and redefining an adage. She came in like a lion, and we do not see any change in the forecast. I wish Mama a happy 60th birthday.

* * *

GLOBAL PLURALISM AWARD

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 15, three dynamic individuals from three different continents were the recipients of the first Global Pluralism Award. As well, there were honorary recipients from seven additional countries.

The award recognizes these exemplary world leaders who have responded creatively to the challenges of diversity. They have shown that difference is not a threat but an opportunity that should be embraced.

The award ceremony was presided by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Right Hon. Beverley McLachlin. The winners were selected by an independent, international jury, chaired by the Right Hon. Joe Clark, former prime minister of Canada. Each recipient is awarded \$50,000 to further his or her work in support of pluralism. As the recipients stated, "You have put pluralism on the world stage and given us the momentum to carry out our work."

I congratulate them all.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, I was thrilled to drive on the new 137 kilometre road connecting Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk on the shores of the Arctic Ocean.

I was joined by the Governor General, the Ministers of Infrastructure and Crown-Indigenous Relations, the GNWT premier and cabinet ministers, and community members to celebrate a project that has been discussed for decades. As a former transportation minister in the Government of the Northwest Territories during the early planning stages, I was especially pleased to be included on this inaugural trip.

Connecting our country from coast to coast to coast has long been a dream of many Canadians. Now that this first link is complete, it is more important than ever to ensure that all northerners are connected to the same services and opportunities available to those in the south.

I congratulate the residents of Tuk, Inuvik, and the entire Inuvialuit region on this very historic day.

* * *

HINDU HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this month is Hindu Heritage Month.

Since the first Hindu immigrants arrived in Canada at the beginning of the 20th century, Hindu Canadians have made significant contributions across various fields such as science, education, medicine, law, politics, business, and many more fields. They have been a positive force in society and have helped shape Canada in being a very multicultural and positive society by integrating traditions and festivals such as Diwali, Durga Puja, and Navaratri. Hindu Canadians have also helped build our country into the greatest place to live, work, and raise families.

On behalf of the people of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, I would like to thank and congratulate Hindu Canadians all across Canada on Hindu Heritage Month.

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WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Children's Day. I was honoured to be invited to the United Nations in New York to witness a kid's takeover of the proceedings.

Children from all over the world gave inspirational presentations to the UN delegates. Canada's representative was Basel Al Rashdan.

Basel is a 12-year-old Syrian refugee who now proudly calls Canada and, more specific, Charlottetown, home. He attends St. Jean Elementary School, where he is often called "The Little Mayor". His school projects focus on themes of empathy and fairness.

At the UN, he spoke of his journey from Syria through Jordan to Prince Edward Island in 2015, and how his initial fear and apprehension was, over time, transformed into pride, hope, optimism, and happiness.

Before he spoke, he received a phone call from the Prime Minister, wishing him good luck. Basel represented Canada well, raising his voice, our voice, for international children's rights today and every day.

I thank Basel. Canada is very proud of him.

●(1415)

[Translation]

PANACHE AWARDS GALA

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, small businesses are the engine of our economy. However, in the north, they are critically important. This week, the Hearst Economic Development Corporation will recognize the contribution of young entrepreneurs at the Panache awards gala. It will also celebrate the 65th anniversary of Ted Wilson's Men's Wear, which is still run by the Wilson family.

[English]

This is just weeks after the chambers of commerce in Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing honoured exceptional businesses.

In Kapuskasing, the Chamber of Commerce handed out awards to Blooming Bouquet Flowers and Gift Shop, the Kap Royal Theatre, Kap Healthy Kids Community, Alain Murray, Kapuskasing Agri Services, Kevin Prevost and Eastview Chevrolet GMC, Chez Lizette Restaurant, and Cabin Fever Motorsports and Marine.

[Translation]

Simon and Louise Dubosq, owners of La Boulangerie, won the Hommage award in the life and career category.

[English]

The Elliot Lake chamber honoured In Motion Fitness, Jib and Debbie Turner. The Red Briffett Award for Community Involvement went to Peter and Betty Seidel.

I congratulate the winners, nominees, and all our small businesses who keep communities vital and strong.

* * *

NAVY DAY

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Navy Day, a day dedicated to the men and women of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Coast Guard, and the exceptional sailor program.

Our senior service traces its roots back to Tudor England, where a standing navy was established long before a standing army and, of course, an air force was still a theoretical Da Vinci dream.

The Royal Canadian Navy's beginnings date back to 1910, growing quickly during the First World War, and by the end of the Second World War, Canada had the third-largest navy in the world.

The Canadian Coast Guard was formed in 1962, and now boasts a fleet of more than 100 vessels of various purposes and sizes.

Now, challenges do remain with procurement and shipbuilding programs, but today we salute the men and women who have served in war and peace, who serve now in Canadian waters and around the world. We salute their service and the navy's motto: *Parati Vero Parati*, Ready Aye Ready.

Oral Questions

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was Universal Children's Day. In light of this, I am proud to get up in the House and talk about the work our government has done with the introduction of the Canada child benefit, which will help lift an estimated 300,000 children out of poverty.

Initiatives like bread not stones, a United Church of Canada project, help raise awareness to reduce child poverty in Canada. We welcome several representatives of this initiative this afternoon. Our guests are honoured to present all MPs with rag dolls that act as powerful symbols of child poverty. I encourage all my colleagues in the House to pick up their doll of hope in their lobby.

Bread not stones and its event partners, Campaign 2000 and Citizens for Public Justice, urge everyone to keep working for our most vulnerable children until the job is done.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve easy access to accurate information from the Canada Revenue Agency.

However, the Auditor General announced today that CRA call centre agents block nearly half of all the calls they receive.

This Prime Minister is the one who is causing so much confusion and raising taxes for small businesses and middle-class families.

Why then, when Canadians are looking for answers, does the Prime Minister respond with nothing more than a busy signal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know that we are going to have a great discussion today about the Auditor General's report. It is an excellent report that will be very helpful for our government in improving services. We realize that there are things that we could have done better, and we will do better.

However, at the same time, it is important to recognize the fact that the previous government's decision to spend 10 years cutting services, particularly near the end, so that it could balance its budget at any cost, was not without consequences. We are working hard to bring services to Canadians back to the way they should be, and we will continue to do so.

●(1420)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, getting in touch with the Prime Minister's Canada Revenue Agency is notoriously difficult. The Auditor General reports that 29 million calls from Canadians went unanswered. Canadians who need advice on their tax situation are blocked, get a busy signal, are told to call back, or are disconnected, but when his friend, Stephen Bronfman, needed an answer on his tax situation, the Prime Minister answered the call pretty darn quick and gave him the answer that he was looking for.

Oral Questions

Why is it that Liberal friends get their calls answered and the answers they want and ordinary Canadians have to be put on hold?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are going to be talking about the Auditor General's report, as we should. It is an excellent report and, actually, a very helpful report. We realize that there are many things that we could have done better and we will do better, and we thank the Auditor General for his work.

At the same time, we have to understand that when the previous government chose to cut government services, particularly through the last years of its mandate, in order to balance the budget at all costs, there are consequences. We are working hard to restore services to Canadians at the level they expect and we have more work to do to fix the Conservatives' messes.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): That is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. I bet that the accounts payable calls get answered pretty quickly under the Liberal government.

Today we learned that the minister did not get the Ethics Commissioner's permission to introduce his pension legislation, even though he claimed otherwise. This legislation enables the exact product that his family's company specializes in and for which the finance minister himself lobbied for before he entered politics.

Did the Prime Minister ever request assurances from the finance minister that he was working with the Ethics Commissioner before introducing the legislation?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members of this House work with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that their personal finances, their personal interests are in line with the expectations that Canadians have of all members of this House to live up to the high expectations of citizens. All of us, including the finance minister, work with the Ethics Commissioner and listen to and follow her counsel.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just yesterday, the Prime Minister said that the Minister of Finance had always worked closely with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Therefore, I am asking him one more time: did the Prime Minister verify with the Minister of Finance that the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner had allowed him to introduce his pension legislation, Bill C-27?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, MPs on both sides of the House often engage in attacks that are sometimes personal and sometimes based on facts. That is how democracy works. That is how we know that a government is rigorous in the way it deals with various issues.

However, we are working with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to go beyond partisan politics and to make sure Canadians know that every person in this House follows the rules and is worthy of the confidence of Canadians. That is what the Minister of Finance did.

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these Liberals only work with the Ethics Commissioner after they get caught breaking the ethics laws.

Therefore, let us be clear. Either the finance minister lied to the Prime Minister, or the Prime Minister did not even bother to ask, or the Prime Minister simply believes that Liberals are just above the rules. Which is it? Did anyone ever tell the Prime Minister that his finance minister was clear to table Bill C-27 before the bill was introduced in Parliament?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every member of this House, when they arrive to serve, works with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that their personal situation, their financial situation, is in order and aligned with the high expectations that Canadians have of each of us in this House. The Minister of Finance worked with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that the decisions he would take, whether it was putting in a screen or whether it was various personal dispositions, would ensure that Canadians could have confidence that everyone in this House is following the rules.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we ask about the Phoenix pay system fiasco, every answer from the Liberals is to blame the Conservatives for it. Against the advice of their experts and public servants, they decided to push the button.

They cannot hide behind the Conservatives. They have underestimated the problems. They still do not have a comprehensive plan, and worse, they do not know the full extent and causes of those problems. While they act like amateurs, hundreds of thousands of public servants are feeling the pain.

How long will the Liberals keep throwing good money after bad? Who will be held accountable and who will fix this mess?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government did not create this mess, but we are going to fix this mess.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know that everybody wants to take part in question period, but, of course, the way it works is that only two members do and the rest are required to listen and not interrupt. I know that members do not want to break the rules.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government bought this system, created this system, and we will fix this system. It is unacceptable that Canadians not be paid for the work they are doing. That is why we are working so hard with different ministries, public servants, and different unions to ensure that we fix this Phoenix pay system. It is something that Canadians expect, and it is something that we are going to fix.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was the current government that said that the system was good to go.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals have no idea what is causing the problem, nor do they know the extent of it, and to top it off, they are making the situation worse.

The Auditor General made it clear that fixing Phoenix, if indeed it can be fixed, will take years and cost us over \$1 billion. In response, the Prime Minister said the same thing he said last year, the same thing he said the year before, and the same thing he is likely to say a year from now.

When Canadians buy something that does not work, they take it back for a refund.

Have the Liberals kept the receipt so they can get their money back, or will Canadians end up paying for this?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians know, the former Conservative government bought the system, developed it, and fired the workers who were supposed to handle the transition.

We are fixing Phoenix. We are working with the public service, with unions, and with all our private-sector partners to fix and improve the system. We are working hard because people not getting paid, not getting the money they are entitled to, is unacceptable.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hello, you have reached the Canada Revenue Agency. Your call is important to us.

Seriously, if you expect to speak with a person, good luck. Half the time your call will be blocked, and more often than not, you will not get through to a person. If you actually happen to speak to someone, there is a 30% chance that you will be given the wrong information. Have a nice day.

While the Liberals allow their friends to get richer using tax havens, they are turning their backs on Canadians who could use a little help.

Is this how the Liberals deliver public services to Canadians and Quebeckers?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected on a promise to improve services to Canadians.

We recognize that we had a lot of work to do, because for years under the Conservative government, massive cuts were made to the Canada Revenue Agency. That is why, in our first budget, we invested \$50 million to improve services to Canadians.

However, we know that there is still a lot of work to be done, and we are working on it. We thank the Auditor General for his report, and we continue to work together.

[*English*]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do we all get the sense that even he does not believe his own spin anymore? The PM needs to change his slogan from “real change” to “Please hold. Your call is important to us. Waiting time is forever.”

The Auditor General has exposed how the government is totally failing Canadians. CRA has been blocking half the calls, and the one-third that actually make it through get bad or wrong advice. For those looking to avoid paying their taxes, Liberals have a good answer for them. For Canadians trying to pay their taxes, they put them on hold.

Let us all listen to the Prime Minister explain how this mess is helping out the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, two parties, the Conservatives and the NDP, committed to balance the budget at all costs, including through cutting services—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1430)

The Speaker: Order. Do members wish to shorten question period?

Order. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what happens when governments choose to balance the books at all costs. They cut services to Canadians, and Canadians suffer. We are working hard to fix their messes. We are working hard to improve services for Canadians.

We thank the Auditor General for his report, which is very helpful. We will endeavour to do even more to serve Canadians the way they need.

The Speaker: Order. This is a place where there are criticisms that fly back and forth, and most members can hear them without reacting. I think the rest are capable of doing the same.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance swore that he put his shares in a blind trust and then we learned that he never did. The Minister of Finance assured us that he had declared all his assets and then we learned that he was fined by the commissioner for failing to disclose a company. From the beginning of the session, the minister has repeated that he has always worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and, oddly enough, today we read in the *Globe and Mail* that the minister never worked with the commissioner on his Bill C-27.

Can the Prime Minister tell us why Canadians would still trust the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is expected of all parliamentarians in the House is that they work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. The Minister of Finance did so as soon as he took office. He has always followed the recommendations of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, including setting up a screen to prevent conflicts of interest, which he did at the outset. That screen is still in place today. The minister announced that he would go the extra mile and divest himself of all his shares in Morneau Shepell and place all his assets in a blind trust so he could continue focusing on the important work he has been doing for two years. I can understand that the opposition members do not want to talk about the Minister of Finance's record, which includes 500,000 jobs and the lowest unemployment rate in 10 years, because such an achievement is beyond their wildest dreams.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister's so-called ethical screen gets weaker every day. After introducing Bill C-27, which helps his own family business, the only argument the minister has left is to say that he now miraculously has some integrity because he sold his shares and made a donation. What does the government have to say about the level of integrity he has shown over the past two years?

Will the Prime Minister finally admit what all Canadians know, that his finance minister has been in a direct conflict of interest for the past two years?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what all Canadians know is that, in this place, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner is responsible for safeguarding the integrity of Parliament. Like us, Canadians expect all parliamentarians to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and follow her recommendations. They expect her to tell each of us what to do based on our own individual circumstances. That is what the commissioner did for the Minister of Finance. He always followed her advice and recommendations. He will continue to work with her to live up to the highest standards of integrity that Canadians expect.

[English]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the finance minister are the two most powerful lawmakers in Canada. The finance minister's Bill C-27 will directly benefit his billion dollar family business, Morneau Shepell, and he

still held shares in Morneau Shepell when he introduced that bill. The Prime Minister and the finance minister and his staff all claim he has been working with the Ethics Commissioner from the start, but now, the Prime Minister and two of his cabinet ministers are under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is expected of all parliamentarians is to work with the Ethics Commissioner, who is responsible to safeguard the integrity of this Parliament. The finance minister has always worked in full transparency with the Ethics Commissioner, has always followed her recommendations, will continue to do so, and of his own accord has decided to go above and beyond, divesting all his shares in Morneau Shepell, and placing all of his assets in a blind trust so that he can continue to do the important work and avoid any further distraction. I understand the opposition. Members do not want to talk about his record because, when it comes to the economy, he has steered the ship in the right direction for the last two years, creating half a million jobs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: I would ask the hon. member for Abbotsford not to be talking throughout the time when someone else has the floor. We love to hear his voice. It is a great baritone, but only when he has the floor.

The hon. member for Lakeland.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the Prime Minister to safeguard integrity, but the Prime Minister is the first Canadian prime minister under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner; and the finance minister is being investigated for using his public powers to enrich himself and his family.

He claims he worked with the Ethics Commissioner and that there was a so-called ethical screen in place, but apparently she was not aware they were working together because now she is investigating him for it, and obviously that screen was a wide-open window. At first, he also said he told her about his French company, but she did not know about that either and she fined him for hiding it.

Again, how can Canadians trust the Prime Minister, the finance minister, or any of—

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that conflict of interest screen that was put in place following the recommendation of the Ethics Commissioner, which she deemed to be the best measure of compliance, was a measure that was good enough for the member for Milton and for Denis Lebel when they were in office.

The finance minister has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner and will always work with the Ethics Commissioner. He has mentioned he would go above and beyond to continue the work that he has done remarkably well over the last two years for the Canadian economy and for Canadians.

Oral Questions

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister made his shares in Morneau Shepell go above and beyond.

Let us break this down. He had shares in a pension company and introduced a pension bill. That pension bill was on targeted benefit pension plans. His company designs targeted benefit pension plans. The model of choice was New Brunswick. His company had designed New Brunswick's system of targeted benefit pension plans.

Is there anything about his bill that was not previously written by his own company?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned time and time again, the finance minister has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner in full transparency, disclosing all of his assets and following her recommendation, the path she set forward. On this side of the House, we respect the Ethics Commissioner's work, and we follow her recommendations to make sure that all rules are followed.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, however, the Ethics Commissioner did not recommend that the minister could introduce a bill on pensions while he had shares in a pension company. He made ill-gotten gains that he now claims he is going to give back to charity. That will entitle him to a massive tax break. There are numerous tax benefits people can get for donating to charity. Which one will the finance minister use?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance introduced Bill C-27 to ensure that Canadians have a secure and stable retirement, so that they may live out their retirement with dignity. The Minister of Finance has always worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He followed through on her recommendation to set up a conflict of interest screen. The commissioner felt that this was the best way to prevent any appearance of conflict of interest or any conflict of interest. The Minister of Finance will continue to work with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner to ensure that all the rules are followed and he will continue to serve Canadians.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser sent money to a tax haven. This morning, the NDP asked that Stephen Bronfman appear before the Standing Committee on Finance. The Liberals refused.

The Minister of Finance failed to put his assets in a blind trust. He also introduced Bill C-27, which helped Morneau Shepell rake in millions of dollars without running this by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. He is currently under investigation.

Is that the Liberals' approach to governing?

They do nothing about tax havens and introduce bills to get richer and to make their millionaire friends richer?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the chance to contrast our track record with that of my colleague opposite. Our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. In our last two budgets, we allocated nearly \$1 billion to doing just that, and we are on track to recoup \$25 billion. Our plan is working. We are targeting four jurisdictions a year, and we are

working to finalize the hiring of 100 auditors. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us lay out the facts for the Prime Minister.

First, before entering “public service” the finance minister advocated for targeted pensions. That makes sense. He made millions off of it. Second, his company buys Mercer Canada that runs the pensions for 93,000 Canada Post workers and retirees. Then after being elected and still owning and controlling millions of dollars of shares in Morneau Shepell, he sponsors a bill that would benefit Morneau Shepell and himself personally.

If this does not qualify as a conflict of interest in the heart and mind of the Prime Minister, then what does?

● (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the minister answered the call to public service, he did what is expected of every minister and parliamentarian. He sat down with the Ethics Commissioner and followed the recommendations she made based on his situation. She recommended that a conflict of interest screen be put in place. That is what she considered to be the best possible measure.

Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind everything that the Minister of Finance has done in the past two years. He has reduced child poverty in this country by 40%, helped 900,000 seniors through the guaranteed income supplement, and created 500,000 jobs. That is a track record to be proud of.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true. The Minister of Finance did not sit down with the Ethics Commissioner. He did so only after he was in conflict of interest.

We know that Morneau Shepell deals in target benefit pension plans, and that is what the minister put forward in his Bill C-27.

The question here is simple. How can the minister think that he is not in conflict of interest when he makes the laws that govern a business in which he holds shares? How can the Minister of Finance say that he is not in conflict of interest?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is working with the Ethics Commissioner, who is responsible for determining if there is conflict of interest, and that is what he has always done.

Oral Questions

Upon arriving in Ottawa, he did what is expected of all parliamentarians. He disclosed his situation transparently and acted on her recommendations to ensure he was complying with the laws and rules that govern us and the strictest ethical standards. That is what the minister did.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister misled the House because he did not in fact work with the Ethics Commissioner. That is what we read today in the *Globe and Mail*. He decided to work with the commissioner only after he was in complete conflict of interest. That is what really happened. There are no ethics.

It is important to note that he benefited from legislation. He got sums of money that drove up his shares on the stock market. He was in conflict of interest.

Why does the Prime Minister continue to protect the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member for Beauce knows how the House works, as well as the institutions that protect the integrity of the House. One institution that we on this side of the House respect is the Ethics Commissioner. We respect her judgment and her recommendations.

After presenting his entire situation, the Minister of Finance followed every one of the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations and will continue to do so. He divested himself of all his shares in Morneau Shepell and made a charitable donation of the difference in value in his shares since the election. He announced that was putting all his assets in a blind trust so that he can continue the important work that he has been doing for Canadians for two years now.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years, the Minister of Finance led Canadians to believe that his personal assets were in a blind trust. That was not true. He controlled his millions of Morneau Shepell shares the entire time.

He also said that he worked with the Ethics Commissioner before introducing pension reform legislation, legislation that just happened to benefit his family business. We know that was not true and she never signed off on that blatant conflict of interest.

Why should Canadians trust the finance minister, when he is under investigation yet again for misleading Canadians and breaking the rules?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that Canadians can trust that the Ethics Commissioner will do her job, will guide parliamentarians, and will ensure that the rules are obeyed in order to avoid any conflict of interest, real or perceived.

The minister has always worked with the Ethics Commissioner from the very beginning. He put in place a conflict of interest screen, and the commissioner herself believed that it was the best option. The minister will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner.

[English]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for two years the finance minister sheltered millions in Morneau Shepell shares in a numbered company, shares that skyrocketed after he introduced pension reform legislation that benefited his family company. Now that he has been caught and forced to dispose of those shares, he says that he can now start to work for Canadians. I guess we know who he has been working for over the last two years.

He misled Canadians about his personal assets. He misled Canadians about working with the Ethics Commissioner. He is under investigation yet again.

Why should Canadians trust anything he says?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this member wants to talk about what the Minister of Finance is doing for Canadians. We can talk about that.

We can talk about the Canada child benefit, which has lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. We can talk about the guaranteed income supplement, which is helping 900,000 seniors living in poverty. We can talk about the 500,000 jobs he created. This is the most jobs created in the past 10 years. The Conservatives have the worst job creation record since the Second World War.

That is what it means to work for Canadians, and that is what the minister has been doing for two years.

* * *

●(1445)

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we celebrated International Children's Rights Day, although there was really nothing worth celebrating. According to a Campaign 2000 report, nearly one child in five lives in a family that struggles with poverty. Even more disgraceful, one indigenous child in three living on reserve is poor.

How is it that we are still in this situation in 2017? When will the government finally assume its responsibilities and lift all children out of poverty?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank and congratulate my colleague on her question.

I wish to remind my colleague that our government takes poverty among families and children very seriously. I would like to remind her that, across Canada, the families of six million children are currently receiving a Canada child benefit that is better and worth more than the one provided by the previous government. This also means we are lifting 300,000 children out of poverty, which will translate into the lowest child poverty rate in the history of Canada and the greatest poverty reduction ever achieved in our great nation.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Campaign 2000's latest report has confirmed, yet again, staggering rates of poverty for indigenous children, both on and off reserve. The message from today's parliamentary budget officer's report is equally clear.

If the Liberals are really serious about addressing child poverty, they need an action plan that includes concrete targets and a timeline to meet them. If two whole years in office were not enough for the government to act, can the Liberals tell us how much longer they are going to ask these children to wait?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for asking this very relevant question.

This government is the first government that will put in place a poverty reduction strategy. We are working very hard with partners around the country, who have been waiting for us for a long time, to build this strategy. They are very dedicated to assisting us in making poverty something that is going to be not only falling over time but disappearing in the long term.

* * *

*[Translation]***TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Richard Hébert (Lac-Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these days, reliable access to the Internet is critical and even vital to economic development. This is a major issue in rural Canada, where computer and telecommunications systems do not meet basic standards and access to broadband is limited or even non-existent.

I am happy to have the opportunity to ask my colleague, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, how the connect to innovate program will provide Canadians with better Internet access.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again welcome my colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean.

High-speed Internet is not a luxury. It is an essential service. That is why, yesterday, I announced an investment of over \$290 million for all regions of Quebec. A total of 100,000 households will benefit. We will be announcing the details for each region in the near future. This investment will create many opportunities for all of the regions.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems the minister does not actually know how many Canadians have fought for ISIS or other terrorist groups around the world. The figures he gave us yesterday seem to contradict those put out by his own department.

We know that some have returned to Canada, that some are planning to return, and that some did not have permission to travel abroad to fight because they were known to have hostile intentions.

Can the minister finally give us the correct figures and show some transparency?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did give the member the numbers yesterday.

I would also inform him that, in the usual course, we publish an annual report on the threat assessment with respect to Canada. That is a normal thing that the Government of Canada does periodically to make sure Canadians are fully informed about the nature of the threats Canada faces.

That next threat assessment will be made public in the course of the next several weeks. The hon. member and all Canadians will be able to be right up to date with all of the necessary information.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we can sit around and wait for the reports to come out, but in the meantime, the terrorists who went abroad to fight are coming back to Canada. We need information sooner rather than later.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that the minister says he wants to create reintegration programs for ISIS fighters. Yesterday, the minister cited all kinds of reasons to justify his inability to arrest these traitors in Canada or provide any information about them.

How can he tell Canadians their safety is not being jeopardized? Can he at least assure us that these people are under round-the-clock surveillance?

● (1450)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, the number is approximately 60. That is exactly the same number as under the previous government, of which the hon. gentleman is a defender. Yes, indeed, I can assure him that all of the police and security agencies of Canada are doing their job to make sure that the threat is properly contained.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite did not answer my colleague's question, so I will give him another chance. Of the number of people who have been identified as fighting for ISIS and have returned to Canada, how many of those persons are under 24-hour surveillance?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, I am sure, would not want me to engage in operational discussions on the floor of the House of Commons that could in fact disclose the security posture of the Government of Canada. What the hon. member needs to know is that the RCMP, CSIS, and all of the other relevant agencies of the Government of Canada are doing their job to take every necessary step to make sure that Canadians are safe, and at the same time that all of the rights and freedoms of Canadian citizens are properly respected.

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Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): The answer to that question should be all of them, Mr. Speaker.

It concerns me that the minister will not give that number. I wonder what he is hiding, especially given the fact that the Prime Minister said yesterday that even one ISIS fighter posed a threat to this country. We know that these people have fought for a group that has beheaded people, burned allied soldiers, raped women, and indeed carried out terrorist attacks on countries around the world, including Canada. Why is every single one of these people not under 24-hour surveillance?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the police of this country, particularly the RCMP, but also in collaboration with all other police forces in Canada, and the CBSA at the border, and CSIS, our intelligence service, do the monitoring to make sure that every threat to the national security of Canada is properly monitored, surveilled, and investigated, and that when evidence is found of any offence, charges are laid.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the U.S. government announced that it will end temporary resident status for millions of Haitians living in the United States.

This summer, many of those people chose to come to Canada. The government should have seen that coming, but it did not.

Since we know something similar is likely to happen again in the coming months, will the government do what it should have done in the first place and suspend the safe third country agreement?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will always be an open and welcoming country for people seeking refuge. Our government will nevertheless ensure an orderly immigration process.

We have always maintained that entering Canada irregularly does not guarantee status in this country. There are very strict rules that must be followed. We are stepping up our efforts to raise awareness among people likely to have their temporary status in the United States revoked. We want to make sure they are familiar with Canadian immigration laws.

We will launch other awareness-raising initiatives led by MPs and government officials to make sure those affected know Canadian immigration laws.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with Trump's latest move, close to 60,000 Haitians in the U.S. may face deportation. This would no doubt lead to more Haitians trying to make irregular crossings to Canada. With winter setting in, it is dangerous, and no one wants to see more tragedies. It is time for Canada to reconsider the safe third country agreement. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's most recent report called on Canada to at least temporarily suspend the safe third country agreement. Will the government do just that?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we have always maintained that anyone who crosses irregularly into Canada will not have guaranteed status in Canada.

We are intensifying our efforts to raise awareness among people likely to have their temporary protection in the United States taken away, to make sure that they are familiar with Canada's immigration laws.

Many members will be going to the U.S., and some are there now, to make sure that people are familiar with our immigration laws and know how our asylum system works.

* * *

● (1455)

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have asked the revenue minister the following question countless times and she refuses to come clean with Canadians. We have proof that the minister changed the policy interpretation for approving diabetics for the disability tax credit. Now 80% of the disability tax credit applicants who used to be approved are being rejected. She rejects 80% of vulnerable diabetics, but goes after 0% of wealthy Liberal friends hiding money offshore.

When will the revenue minister focus efforts on real tax cheats instead of targeting the vulnerable?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the credits and benefits to which they are entitled. I want to reiterate for my colleague opposite that the eligibility requirements for this tax credit have not changed. It is important to recognize that far too many Canadians are struggling and need help. In addition, we are making it possible for low-income workers to keep more of their hard-earned money by enhancing the working income tax benefit by an additional \$500 million per year, starting in 2019. We are keeping the promises we made to Canadians and to those most in need.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after all that overspending, the government has run out of taxpayer money. To replenish its coffers, the Liberals are picking the pockets of Canadians once again. This time, it is persons with disabilities who are paying the price. A person in my riding was denied the disability tax credit for the first time in 20 years. The reason provided was that his illness does not affect him 90% of the time.

Why is this government counting the seconds when persons with disabilities are affected, but not the billions of dollars that the Prime Minister's friends are hiding in tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the benefits and credits to which they are entitled. We are introducing national legislation on persons with disabilities that will eliminate the obstacles by focusing on accessibility for all Canadians living with a disability. We have made it easier to access the disability tax credit. We simplified the forms. We are allowing specialized nurse practitioners to fill out the forms if the applicants do not have a doctor. In budget 2017, we continue to work for the most vulnerable.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' denying tax credits for diabetics and chronically ill Canadians is a heartless Liberal policy, and it gets worse. The Liberals' asinine policy of cutting pay for injured members of the Canadian Armed Forces is also wrong. These members have sustained mental and physical injuries in service of Canada, and instead of thanking them, what does the defence minister do? He cuts their pay.

When will the Liberal government reverse this cold-hearted policy and actually start to support our injured troops and give back the money they deserve?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through our defence policy, our government is committed to providing unprecedented support to our people and their families. This government is committed to ensuring that our military members receive their fair compensation for their service to their country. That is why our government has recently approved a 6.3% pay raise for most of the military's members. In addition to their pay, our members are given allowances for performing unique duties and being exposed to higher risks and hardship. Most of these allowances are also benefiting from a 5.1% increase. Our members will be well compensated for the important work they do on behalf of our country.

* * *

SCIENCE

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, constituents in my riding of Guelph, like Pierre Fogal, who leads the PEARL research station, have been working on climate change research initiatives for many years, accumulating data for longitudinal studies. Climate science in the Canadian Arctic plays an important role globally in monitoring the effects of climate change.

Can the Minister of Science please update this House as to how we are supporting this important research?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government understands the importance of Arctic science as we address the challenges of climate change in the north. Recently, I joined the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to announce \$1.6 million to continue the operations and research at this unique

Oral Questions

facility that monitors the changes we are seeing in the Arctic atmosphere and the environment. I want to thank the member for Guelph for his important work on this important issue.

* * *

● (1500)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture is not involved in the NAFTA and TPP negotiations, and supply management is being pummelled. Yesterday, the parliamentary secretary spread concern in the agriculture sector by refusing to confirm that supply management is excluded from the TPP. Meanwhile, the United States is getting more aggressive in demanding an end to supply management.

Did the Prime Minister trade away supply management to make up for his insulting attitude towards the leaders of the 10 other TPP partners?

Dairy, egg, and poultry producers want answers, not excuses.

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this side of the House supports dairy, egg, and poultry producers and supply management.

We have always been very clear and have said all along that we will continue to support our farmers and their families, as well as Canada's agricultural interests.

My hon. colleagues opposite should speak to the member from Beauce and convince him to do the same.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government promised to invest billions of dollars in infrastructure, but we have now learned that over 20% of VIA Rail's fleet will be retired by 2024.

To make matters worse, the negative impact of this decision will be felt in the Quebec-Windsor corridor as early as 2020. If nothing is done, communities in this corridor could lose their passenger rail service, and Canada will have squandered yet another opportunity to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Does the Minister of Transport believe in passenger rail? If so, when will he take action and reinvest in VIA Rail?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course we are committed to passenger rail.

That is why, in the 2016 budget, we allocated \$7.7 million to look at replacing VIA Rail's fleet. We are working with VIA Rail and will replace the fleet in due course to continue providing modern facilities for Canadian rail passengers.

*Oral Questions***SPORTS**

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): The Minister of Transport went to Paris in September and to Seoul last week on behalf of the federal government to support keeping the World Anti-Doping Agency's headquarters in Montreal. Montrealers are proud that their city has been home to the agency's headquarters since 2001.

Can the minister tell my constituents and all Montrealers about the work our governments are doing to keep the agency's headquarters in Montreal?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to. I thank my colleague from Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle for her excellent question.

We are very proud that the World Anti-Doping Agency is going to stay in Montreal until at least 2031. This is a good example of cooperation between three levels of government. The City of Montreal, the Province of Quebec, and the federal government worked with Montréal International to keep this agency in the great Canadian city of Montreal until at least 2031.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer's report on the 2017 fall economic statement came out today, and I have bad news. The budgetary outlook means more deficits as far as the eye can see. Now, the Minister of Finance appeared at the finance committee, and we did not ask just him once when the budget would be balanced, but 13 times. He evaded the question every single time. We asked him what day it would be balanced. He did not know. What week would it be balanced? He did not know. What decade would it be balanced? He did not know.

Mr. Speaker, since Batman is not in the House today, is there any minister in the government who can tell us when the budget will be balanced?

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind the hon. member for Calgary Shepard that we do not call each other names in this place. In some cases, some might consider that a compliment, but others would not. Either way, we do not do that, and I would ask him not to do that in the future.

I see the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance is rising.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we place ourselves back in 2015 during the last election campaign, Canadians were wondering if we were in or heading into a recession.

This government made smart investments in infrastructure and jump-started the Canada child benefit to make sure that our economy started growing again, and it has grown by 500,000 jobs over the last two years.

I can say that we are very proud that our debt to GDP ratio has gone down from 32.5% when we took office to 30.5%, and will fall

below the levels it was in 1977 in due time, in the course of the next few years.

* * *

• (1505)

[Translation]

MARIJUANA

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Ottawa is handing off its problems to the provinces.

It is not the Liberals who will have to deal with the health and safety problems caused by the legalization of cannabis. All they will do is collect the money and distribute licences to their cronies.

The Quebec government and first nations are calling for a one-year delay on marijuana legalization. It is frankly irresponsible to forge ahead blindly when no one is ready.

Can the Prime Minister explain just why legalizing pot is so urgent?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand up to speak to Bill C-45, which is currently being debated. Our government has been and will always be committed to moving forward to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis in order to keep it out of the hands of children and the proceeds out of the hands of criminals. We are going to continue to work collaboratively with the provinces and territories and municipalities, based on the robust consultation that we have done through the task force through engaging with Canadians, to ensure that we have a robust framework for the legalization and strict regulation of cannabis in July 2018.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the nail care lobby seems to have a lot of influence with the Minister of Transport.

His claim that six-centimetre blades will allow people to clean their nails on the plane is ludicrous. There is no reason to allow knives in an aircraft cabin when they can easily be stowed in the hold.

Will the minister listen to reason and leave knives on the prohibited items list?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the safety of passengers and the air transportation system remains a top priority.

We periodically review the lists of permitted and non-permitted items. In this case, we decided to allow certain items with a view to harmonizing our policies with international standards. This had nothing to do with pleasing any particular group. It was done for one reason and one reason only, namely to ensure the safety of certain items that will be permitted or not permitted.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is in reference to question period. I would like to seek unanimous consent to table documents that illustrate what the Leader of the Official Opposition was saying, that in fact there is Liberal culpability on the Phoenix pay fiasco.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: No.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANNABIS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton Centre has six minutes remaining in his speech.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

• (1510)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to continue my remarks on Bill C-45. As I shift into my discussion and the details of the legislation, I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the former deputy prime minister of Canada and former member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre, the hon. Anne McLellan. Her work, and the work of her task force, has laid a foundation for a new legislative regime that will make Canada a leader in the safe regulation of recreational cannabis.

Let me share some of the details found in the legislation. Under the existing regime, which has been in place since 2014, Health Canada is responsible for licensing and overseeing cannabis producers. These producers are required to operate within the regulations to provide quality-controlled cannabis to registered patients. This rigorous licensing process ensures, for example, that entrants to this market have gone through a thorough security check and that producers have appropriate physical security infrastructure in place. Canada also has a world-class compliance and enforcement regime intended to ensure that licensed producers fully comply with the rules in place.

Over the course of the last year, a licensed producer in Canada was inspected an average of seven to eight times, for a total of approximately 274 inspections. In May, 2017, Health Canada announced it will require all licensed producers to conduct mandatory testing for the presence of unauthorized pesticides in all cannabis products destined for sale. This adds to the system of controls in place that oversee the quality of federally regulated cannabis products. This experience will have a direct impact on the health of Canadians who may choose to use this product.

Believe it or not, a large number of Canadians who get cannabis on the black market cannot rely on quality control regulations. This bill is about safety. It is working when it comes to medical cannabis,

and it is going to work under this framework. The commercial industry now has more than four years of experience and serves over 200,000 active patient registrations. This licensed production under the medical regime provides a solid basis to support cannabis production under the bill.

With the world-renown regime for producing cannabis for medical purposes, the government is on solid ground to successfully move to a new approach to cannabis that would better protect Canadians.

Our government has been working and will continue to work very closely with provinces, territories, municipalities, and indigenous communities to support the implementation of this new framework. In fact, I had a meeting with councillors from my own city of Edmonton, who met with the parliamentary secretary for the minister of justice on this file. It was a very frank and open conversation about the work the Government of Canada will be doing with the province and with the City of Edmonton. This collaboration will be critical to ensuring that all the pieces are in place to support the success of the new approach. We are pleased to note the progress being achieved by our provincial and territorial partners in developing their respective approaches.

Canada is a federal system. Provinces and territories will and must have a key role to play in the success of the new system. They would be responsible for the oversight and regulation of the distribution and retail sale of cannabis, in close collaboration with municipalities.

[Translation]

In cases where provinces or territories do not have a fully functional retail sales system in place once the bill takes effect, adults will be able to buy cannabis directly from the authorized federal producer by ordering it online for secure home delivery by mail or courier.

[English]

Industry representatives have indicated they are getting ready to support the timely implementation of the new regime and to ensure that high standards are met in the production of regulated product. A representative for the Cannabis Canada Association, Colette Rivet, pointed out:

Licensed producers are eager to work in collaboration and compliance with the federal and provincial governments to quickly establish effective, low-risk distribution and retail models that are well regulated, highly secure, and tailored to the needs of each province.

Upon the coming into force of the bill, adult Canadians would have access to a range of quality controlled products, including dried cannabis, fresh cannabis, and cannabis oil, which could be consumed in a number of different ways. In jurisdictions that have legalized cannabis, these products constitute the largest part of cannabis products sold on the market.

Government Orders

Our government also recognizes the need to permit the legal sale of cannabis edible products and cannabis concentrates as part of the federal framework as soon as possible. While it would be irresponsible to further delay the implementation of the framework to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis, it would be equally irresponsible to move in a rush when it comes to regulating edible cannabis products and concentrates. Experience in other jurisdictions, such as Colorado, as well as expert testimonies heard during the hearings of the committee, have underlined the unique health and safety challenges and risks associated with these products. Under this proposed timeline, the government would not have to rush to put these novel cannabis products on the market at the expense of public health and safety.

● (1515)

As I mentioned earlier, the existing system is a failure. It is a failure at keeping cannabis away from Canadian youth. It is a failure to Canadians who have faced criminal sanctions for something as simple as possessing a joint. It is a failure to health professionals who are prevented from having honest conversations with patients who hide their cannabis use because of its criminalization. It is a failure to Canadians who face the risk of purchasing cannabis on the black market.

The time has come for Canada to adopt a new approach. The time has come to bring cannabis use out of the black market and into a safe and regulated market that will protect Canadians and keep cannabis out of the hands of youth. I am proud of the work of the Standing Committee on Health in this matter, proud of the work of the department, and proud to stand as a member of this government in seeing that cannabis is safe and legally regulated in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I listened to what he said, and here is what I would like to know. How long has marijuana legalization been part of the Liberal Party of Canada's political agenda?

What group of people influenced the party to adopt the position we are debating in the House today?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Obviously, we live in a democracy that has political parties. Our government takes the health and well-being of Canadians very seriously. This is something we in the Liberal Party have been talking about for years. Members of our party who are very well informed about this issue have made it clear that the current system has resulted in Canadian youth having one of the highest cannabis consumption levels in the world.

It is clear that our predecessors' approach is not working. It is time to introduce a new system. That is exactly what our government set out to do, and that is what we will do to protect Canadians.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I note the member sits on the committee with my colleague, our health critic, and so he is well aware of the fact that our party has tried to get the Liberal government to address the issue of pardons and that a bill has been drafted that would not allow for expedited

pardons for the tens of thousands of youth who are going to have a criminal record despite the fact this is going to be legalized.

The hon. member said that he had frank discussions with officials in Edmonton and Alberta. I am wondering if he is aware of the letter that went from the president of the treasury board in Alberta to the federal Minister of Finance remonstrating that the provinces are only going to be given 50% of the revenue of the tax on cannabis despite the fact that they have to cover enforcement, road safety, justice, health and education, as do the municipalities? Is he going to support Alberta's needs, or is he going to stand with his own government?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, it is clear we have work to do with the provinces and cities to make sure we get this right. It has been clear in our conversations with the provinces and cities that we want to do this in a timely manner to protect the lives of Canadians. Our job as a federal government is to protect the health and safety of Canadians. This is not a jurisdictional issue, this is an issue of safety. This is an issue of taking cannabis out of the hands of criminal gangs. This is taking money out of criminal gangs and making sure it is being used for providing health and safety for Canadians, getting Canadians who are addicted to substances off those substances, and making sure there is a shared revenue arrangement between provinces and territories so we can manage all that will come from helping Canadians to be safer.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a number of excellent points. One of the things I would like to emphasize and get my colleague to further comment on is the sense of commitment from this government to address a very important social issue that was brought in as an election platform issue, which I would suggest ultimately shows how important it is that we move forward on it.

What does my colleague have to say in terms of the benefits of moving forward? It has now been two years, it was an election platform, and this is something that is going to deal with things like crime on the streets and discouraging young people from getting and using cannabis, given that we already have the highest consumption in terms of the western world among our youth. Can the member add his thoughts on that?

● (1520)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I have heard Edmontonians on the doorsteps ask me to get this done, because they see that the current legislative framework against cannabis makes it a gateway drug into the use of harder substances. They simply do not want to have a criminal record for having access to cannabis. We have done broad consultations within our own party, and the Standing Committee on Health and the Standing Committee on Justice have heard testimony on this fact.

In working with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada on this, it is clear that we are looking at the same kind of transformation in our era that happened with anti-gambling units in every city in every province in this country in the seventies and eighties. When the government stepped into an area that was formerly governed by criminal gangs, the gangs disappeared, and that is exactly what we are looking to do when it comes to legal cannabis.

Government Orders

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this House today to speak in opposition to Bill C-45, the Liberal government's bill to legalize marijuana. I say I am pleased to speak to it because this is perhaps one of the most controversial bills that the current government has brought forward; very seldom have we seen new drugs being legalized in this country. I am pleased to speak to it because my constituents have spoken to me about it, but also because there are very few members in this House who will have an opportunity any longer to speak to this, because earlier today the government moved time allocation. The Liberals moved closure so they could rush this legislation through. Many different groups are telling them to slow down, and they went in the opposite direction and decided to rush it. That is what the government is trying to do. It is trying to bring forward full legalization of marijuana.

With full legalization, the Liberals know the fears. They know the concerns around rushing. They know the adverse effects it would have on children, and they know that others who are most susceptible to the dangers of marijuana would now have greater access to it. This bill is not about decriminalization. The Liberal government is not proceeding slowly on the legalization of marijuana. It is not proceeding carefully on this file. The government has been warned by many groups that it is moving too fast and it should not.

We are debating the release of a narcotic on the people of Canada. This past week, we have seen that the provincial government in Quebec unveiled legislation that would severely curtail what the Liberals in Ottawa have planned for the entire country of Canada. On the other hand, we have seen the NDP provincial government in Alberta unveil the most liberalized of all provincial pot legislation that provinces have brought on; the NDP in Alberta has gone even further. Again I will repeat that by far the majority of constituents who have emailed, phoned, and stopped into my office to talk to me from Battle River—Crowfoot are opposed to the full legalization of marijuana.

That being said, many of my constituents are not opposed to the decriminalization of marijuana. That is, many of them believe that some young individuals who have been caught with a joint or with one marijuana cigarette should perhaps not be given a criminal record for life. However, that does not mean that we have to put the entire population of our country at risk by giving the go-ahead to our Canadian society, and that is what the Liberal plan is.

Everyone knows that marijuana can be a powerful intoxicant. It impairs judgment. It impairs a person who drives a vehicle or operates a tractor or any other type of equipment. We know, according to Perrin Beatty and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, that it would have an adverse effect on productivity in the workplace; it would be diminished, not enhanced. Innocent people would be hurt, and some would be killed. This is the record of the states and areas that have legalized marijuana.

The Canadian Medical Association says that our youngest Canadians are going to be placed at risk because their mental capacity and their brains are still developing until after the age of 25. After the legislation, moving forward, there would be marijuana available to the youngest children in homes across Canada. Parents,

perhaps even grandparents, could buy marijuana and have it at home. Again, it would become more accessible for young children. Members can bet their boots that young Timmy and Jane are going to do everything they can to get hold of "one of those marijuanas" and try it. They will be determined, just as children are. We have seen it with alcohol and with tobacco. They will try it.

Kyle Peterson: They are trying it now.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: One member across the aisle is chuckling and saying they are trying it right now. This legislation would even allow them the opportunity to have it legally in their home, and we know many more will try it. Maybe he will laugh at that as well.

• (1525)

They do it now, they will do it then, and they will do it even more; the member is right. They may get hurt if they manage to get greater access to it. I really believe that the Liberals have not thought out the long-term consequences of what they are doing. Many constituents have written me with concerns about these very types of scenarios.

The Liberals speaking in this debate continue to say our current marijuana laws are not working. Indeed, that is what the member just hollered across the hallway: "They are trying it now". My constituents say that, if they are doing it now, Bill C-45 is not an answer to anything. How can police determine what marijuana has been purchased legally and what marijuana has been obtained from criminal organizations, the dealers? They cannot. The Liberals are not helping our police with that question and many more.

Our border guards will also face a major dilemma. We have already heard about the lineups at border crossings. We have also heard that patrol dogs at Canada's border crossings can detect marijuana. Many vehicles will be held up in long lines for many hours as our border agents try to find out what the particular vehicle has in it that the dog is reacting to. Sometimes the agents will be satisfied that the vehicle merely had an occupant who had smoked marijuana a day or two before. The agents will find out that the driver of the vehicle may not be intoxicated and there are no drugs or marijuana in the vehicle now, but they may find that out after an hour of searching. It has taken a long time for the border agents to do their job.

It will not be the Canadians' fault. They are trying to comply. It will not be the border agents' fault. It will not be the dogs' fault. It will be the Liberals' fault. It will be the Liberals who have to deal with the long lineups, and already we have lineups. The delays will be longer and longer. Trade between Canada and the United States, our largest customer, will be at risk and will slow down. The border will become thicker.

Knowing the health risks, are we not trying to discourage Canadians from smoking tobacco? The answer is yes. We see health agencies and government agencies continuously trying to do it, so why now would the Liberals try to allow Canadians to smoke marijuana? We know baked goods are not included in the bill. Goods baked with marijuana, such as cookies, brownies, and candies, all pose a major concern to Canadians, but they will not be allowed. There will be people who decide to bake with marijuana, if they have access to it, and people may consume it without even being aware.

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The Canadian Medical Association has said that cannabis has a significant impact on mental development. The Canadian Paediatric Society considers that young people using marijuana up to age 25 are jeopardizing their mental health, yet the government rushes through.

Bill C-45 proposes to regulate and legalize the production, possession, and distribution of marijuana across Canada. The Liberals want to impose it by July 1, 2018. Canada Day will be the celebratory day for the Liberal Party, as then it would be legal. Stakeholders across this country are saying, "Please do not rush this legislation". The Liberals will not allow another six months or any extra time. That is their deadline. They have moved closure today.

Clauses 8 and 9 of the legislation state that an individual can possess or distribute four cannabis plants that are not budding or flowering. Children in the household would have access to marijuana.

Bill C-45 states the quantity of marijuana that children may legally possess. Paragraph 8(1)(c) says that children under the age of 18 are prohibited from possessing the equivalent of five grams of marijuana or more. A child under the age of 18 can use or distribute marijuana as long as he or she has less than five grams.

I have already heard from families with children who have been using marijuana and now have developed schizophrenia. They are concerned about this. They believe it triggers something that causes the disease.

● (1530)

I see that my time is up. Again, I would caution the government. It is moving too fast and does not know the ramifications. It has not studied where it has taken effect in the States, and there are problems.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about cannabis as an intoxicant, and he is correct. He said it impairs, and he is right about that. He said it has potentially adverse impacts. He is right about that. He also said that innocent people will be killed, and that is his rationale for wanting to continue with prohibition. Under that criterion, the same would hold true for alcohol, which the World Health Organization says is responsible for 6% of all deaths worldwide.

The hon. member can go to his local liquor store and legally purchase enough alcohol to kill himself or a family member or a kid who can get into the liquor cabinet. Why is there one set of rules for alcohol and another set of rules for cannabis, when cannabis is not a more dangerous drug than alcohol?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, I respectfully disagree with the member that cannabis is no different than alcohol. That would assume that second-hand smoke is no problem at all. If someone is having a drink at home, an innocent child, a bystander who is just sitting around, is not inhaling or taking in any alcohol fumes.

Let me defer to the "Washington State Marijuana Impact Report". This report lays out very clearly the dangers of marijuana use. They saw a spike in deaths on highways because of it.

Our police associations and chief of police associations in Canada are opposing this bill. The government is moving too quickly. The

Liberals have heard the voices of those security administrators, police officers, and others, but it seems they have turned a deaf ear to them.

We know that deaths on highways will increase. We know that we do not have a proper way of telling the level of intoxication of a person smoking a joint of marijuana, unlike what we have with alcohol. At best, what the government is saying is that a police officer will have the ability to assess whether someone is high on marijuana. I wonder how that will hold up in court. How will that judgment call hold up in court?

The Liberals are chuckling away, as if it does not really matter.

These are the questions we need answered. Again, the Liberals are moving closure. They say they will push the bill through regardless. That is a shame. We talk about mental brain development in youth, safety on the highways, and safety in the workplace.

We are going into a free trade agreement now where the big problem Canada has is productivity and competitiveness with other countries, yet we are bringing in something that will lower our productivity and put us in an unfair place to attract business.

● (1535)

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

Mr. Speaker, I hear Conservative after Conservative try to give the impression that the legislation is going to pass, and all these Canadians will be smoking cannabis. I have news for the Conservative Party: they are actually smoking cannabis today. We have the highest participation of youth smoking marijuana in the western world. This legislation is a step forward.

The Conservative members say that this government is moving too quickly. If it was 20 years from now, they would still be saying that we are moving too quickly. We have seen that demonstrated in speech after speech by members of the former government, which decided to take no action on this important social issue.

Why does the Conservative Party not recognize the reality of the situation we have and see the benefits of fighting criminals by taking away the hundreds of millions of dollars the criminals get every year from the illegal sale of cannabis? Why do the Conservatives not want to deal with the issue of our youth consuming cannabis today?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about youth using cannabis today. Again, the Liberal answer is that there are people using this evil already. This is changing the definition of what is wrong or what is evil. They are saying to let them make it right, then all these problems will go away.

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The member asked whether the Conservatives in 20 years will say we should legalize it. We will not if the proof is that it is not safe for our youth. We will not legalize it if we do not have a way on the highway of determining whether someone is intoxicated, because we believe quite firmly in the protection of society as our guiding principle. If someone on the highway is not protected, because someone else is inebriated, and the police cannot make that judgment call, then we should hold off.

The Liberal answer to all is, “Rush ahead, let us do it now, and worry about everything else later”. That will get us into a big mess.

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-45, the proposed cannabis act as amended by the Standing Committee on Health. I support this legislation, in particular because Canada's historic approach to dealing with cannabis is simply not working. My remarks today will focus on why the status quo is failing Canadians, especially our youth.

Cannabis has been prohibited in Canada since the 1920s and is currently listed as a controlled substance in schedule II of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The prohibition of cannabis has not led to abstinence. As the Minister of Health stated at the Standing Committee on Health hearings on Bill C-45:

...cannabis has become the most commonly used illegal substance in Canada. Today 21% of our youth and 30% of our young adults use cannabis. Our youth have the highest prevalence of cannabis use when compared with peers in other developed countries.

This clearly shows that significant numbers of Canadians are using cannabis in the face of prohibition. One would conclude from these numbers that the prohibition approach is not impacting the consumption patterns for cannabis use.

In the face of such non-medical use of cannabis, what has been the impact of the prohibitionist approach? As heard by health committee members, the impacts of the existing approach have been, first of all, to sustain a cannabis industry run by organized crime; second, to jeopardize public health and public safety; and finally, to subject recreational users of small amounts of cannabis to unwarranted criminal liability.

The link between organized crime and the illicit cannabis market is well known. Cannabis is the most trafficked drug in the world. Organized crime groups are more than happy to supply the general public with cannabis.

The Standing Committee on Health heard from the public safety minister, who said:

Canada's non-medical cannabis industry is entirely criminal. The illegal cannabis trade in this country puts \$7 billion annually, perhaps more, into the pockets of organized crime. Over half of Canadian organized crime groups are suspected or known to be involved in the cannabis market. Canadian law enforcement spends upwards of \$2 billion every year trying to enforce what is currently an ineffective legal regime.

We know that organized crime groups pose a significant threat to public safety and negatively affect the daily lives of Canadians. These groups are tied to illegal activities, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, theft, and human trafficking, and have a violent and corrupting effect on the communities and cities where they operate.

The minister also noted:

With legalization and regulation, we can enable law enforcement resources to be used more effectively, and we can dramatically reduce the involvement of and the flow of money to organized crime.

The overall impact of organized crime groups in Canada extends beyond the obvious and immediate threat of these activities. Unseen impacts include greater costs for law enforcement and the justice and correctional systems, costs that are typically borne by all Canadians.

I would acknowledge that organized crime is not going to disappear from Canada by virtue of the passage of Bill C-45. Organized criminal activity in Canada is a multi-faceted problem that requires a broad-based, integrated response. That said, the current approach to cannabis has clearly been failing on many fronts for close to a century, and that continues to bolster the profits of such criminal organizations. Our government recognizes this and has acted.

Another impact of the failed prohibition approach to cannabis is on public health and public safety. During the Standing Committee on Health's study of Bill C-45, we heard from witnesses who emphasized the need to act now and end the current prohibition.

During its testimony, the Canadian Public Health Association stated:

The proposed legislation and eventual regulation is our best attempt to minimize those harms and protect the well-being of all Canadians.

I briefly noted earlier the threats to public safety posed by the existence of organized crime groups in our communities, but there are many more aspects of public health and public safety in the context of the illicit cannabis market. The existence of clandestine grow ops operating in communities across the country serves to damage properties and threaten the safety of our neighbourhoods. Such grow ops create risks due to mould, improper electrical installation and the associated fire hazards, unchecked use of pesticides and fertilizers, and break-ins and thefts, all of which result in dangers to neighbouring residences and first responders.

● (1540)

The current mechanism through which Canadians can access cannabis leaves much to be desired. The risk to cannabis consumers is heightened in the context of cannabis supply, which is unregulated and not subject to any quality control or packaging requirements clearly indicating the potency of the product. Currently, cannabis consumers do not know what they are getting, and there is no framework to promote the safety of the cannabis supply. Simply put, the cannabis being sold today is unregulated, untested, and often unsafe.

Dispensaries continue to operate illegally across Canada in defiance of our laws. The existence of clandestine grow ops highlights the need for a new approach, one that will ensure that adult Canadians who choose to consume cannabis will have access to a quality-controlled supply that is subject to national standards and contributes to minimizing the potential harms.

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Finally, I would like to address the impact that the current prohibitionist approach has had on a significant number of our citizens, many of whom have been labelled as criminals because of their personal decision to consume cannabis. In 2016, there were nearly 55,000 cannabis-related offences reported to police. This is more than half of all police-reported drug offences. This resulted in approximately 23,000 cannabis-related charges being laid.

The criminal records that result from these charges are, in many cases, more than the individuals deserved for their actions. These individuals may often have difficulty finding employment and housing as a result, and may have been prevented from travelling outside Canada. Furthermore, the criminal justice system resources required to deal with many of these minor infractions inhibits the system from devoting resources to more serious matters.

To deal with criminal charges and records, the opposition would simply have us decriminalize cannabis. Let me be clear: decriminalization will not work. It will not achieve our objectives of taking cannabis out of the hands of our youth and the profits out of the hands of criminals.

Through Bill C-45, our government is proposing a better approach. With Bill C-45, our government has introduced legislation that would strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis. Bill C-45 would deter illegal activities in relation to cannabis through appropriate sanctions and enforcement measures. Bill C-45 aims to protect the health of young persons by restricting their access to cannabis, all the while ensuring that Canadian adults are able to legally possess, grow, and purchase limited amounts of cannabis across Canada.

Based on that, I would encourage all members to support Bill C-45 as amended.

• (1545)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I made a point of listening.

Today we learned that it was certain members of the Liberal Party who added the legalization of marijuana to its election platform. I would like to know whether these members or these groups of individuals are the same people who currently have interests in cannabis production.

Is it a small group of individuals that has influenced all the party's policies in a way that is detrimental to the future of our country? Perhaps it was just a few individuals with a great deal of influence within the Liberal Party who added this policy to its platform.

Can my colleague tell me whether any members of the Liberal Party have direct ties to marijuana production?

[English]

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the lead person behind this plan to regulate and control cannabis has been the hon. parliamentary secretary to the ministers of health and justice, a member of Parliament. Before he was here, he served 40 years in his community as a police officer and as the chief of police. His integrity should not be questioned in this place based on this bill. He has devoted himself to public service, and his rationale behind supporting this legislation

is to improve the health and safety of our communities. He has seen far too much crime. We have all seen too much crime in our communities, based on organized crime both within our communities and beyond. However, the motivation behind this is to get cannabis out of the hands of our youth.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said in his speech that decriminalization would not work. We have a government that ran on a clear promise to legalize marijuana. It has introduced legislation to legalize marijuana, and yet in this interim period, we are still arresting and laying criminal charges against thousands of Canadians across this country who will now, as a result, have criminal records for the rest of their lives based on something the government now says is fine and should be legal.

Could the member comment on the Liberals' complete failure to do anything about this problem? We are taking up valuable court and police time. We have criminals who are going free because they are not going to trial soon enough. We should decriminalize it in the interim so that people will not be saddled with criminal records for the rest of their lives, but can get jobs and cross the border, because we now say that marijuana is fine and we should legalize it. Could the member comment on that situation?

Mr. Chris Bittle: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives say we are moving too fast on this legislation and the New Democrats say we are moving too slowly, so we must be doing it at the appropriate speed.

This was a campaign commitment we made to Canadians and, quite plainly, we are fulfilling that commitment. It is currently an illegal activity. We are working hard to fix that. As the parliamentary secretary mentioned earlier, the law is the law is the law, and Canadians are expected to follow it. We are looking to change that and are on pace to meet our campaign commitment by July 2018.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. The bill is at report stage, meaning that it was already before committee where there would have been a number of experts who testified and made recommendations. Can the member cite a single quote from any medical expert at committee who suggested it is a good idea for anybody under the age of 25 to use marijuana?

• (1550)

Mr. Chris Bittle: I will do one better, Mr. Speaker. My wife is a paediatrician, so I do hear it at home, and the hon. member is correct that individuals under the age of 25 should not use cannabis. However, prohibition has not worked. The Conservative Party said that we have tried nothing, and that has not worked, and there is no other plan available for Canadians. Let us use an approach that has worked on something like tobacco, for example. It is legalized, it is regulated, it is taxed, and we can use that revenue to pursue public education. After decades, we have had significant success in Canada in reducing teen usage of tobacco to all-time lows. This is something that can be done.

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The hon. member is right. This is not a harmless substance and we do want to keep it out of the hands of our kids, but the only way to approach this is through legalization, because prohibition has completely failed.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today to Bill C-45, the legislation that would legalize marijuana in Canada. I will say off the top that I support the legalization of marijuana and will be supporting this bill in general, but I have some concerns about the process it maps out for regulating the marijuana industry across this country. I spoke to this bill at second reading, but I want to say more now that it has passed committee, and I have heard from more constituents about it, and we know more details of the government's intentions regarding marijuana legalization.

In the interest of full disclosure, I will say that I represent the beautiful riding of South Okanagan—West Kootenay, where it is public knowledge or at least widely recognized that the production of marijuana has been an important part of the local economy of my region for many years. I do not have any precise figures on its economic impact, since it is a black market. Certainly it is used widely, as I can attest after door knocking throughout my riding. It is because the government recognizes this widespread black market and recognizes that marijuana is used by many Canadians for both medical and recreational purposes that it has brought forward this bill to regulate marijuana, so that it will be used as safely as possible and that the economic activity it generates can be properly taxed.

We in the NDP support the legalization of marijuana, with some caveats. First, we are concerned, as I think we all are here—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): There are members in the chamber who are competing with the hon. member who speaking. I would like to hear the hon. member. I am sure you all have something interesting to say, but I am trying to listen to the hon. member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. I will let him continue.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was indeed a bit distracting.

First, we are concerned, as I think everyone here is, about the use of marijuana by children and young people, and recognize there must be no advertising of these products to them. We are happy to see that Bill C-45 recognizes these concerns as well.

Second, there must be a taxation strategy that produces a long-term revenue stream for programs that promote public health, education, and research. One of the big problems with the criminalization of marijuana is that it has made research into its effects, particularly its long-term effects, very difficult. Hopefully, legalization in this country will stimulate serious research on this critical issue and, hopefully, there will be sufficient funds provided by the government to ensure that this research can take place.

Third, there must be legislation in effect to deal with drivers impaired by marijuana. This is covered under Bill C-46, which has already passed the House. I stated my concerns about this issue during debate on that bill earlier. Suffice it to say that I was disappointed with the government's faith in roadside saliva testing,

which will not relate to impairment at all and will undoubtedly result in charges being laid against people who are not impaired. I hear that there are already groups lining up to challenge that bill in court.

However, our main concern with the marijuana legalization route the government has taken is that it has not considered immediate interim decriminalization of simple possession of marijuana, or at least allowing discretion on the part of prosecutors and police not to enforce an unjust law. Here we have a government that was elected on a clear promise to legalize marijuana, and yet two years later courts across the country are still giving people criminal records for simple possession. On the one hand, the government is saying that using marijuana is okay, and on the other hand, it is ruining people's lives, often those of young people, visible minorities, and racialized Canadians, by giving them criminal records for using marijuana. It does not make sense. It is really a cruel injustice.

Also, it is clogging our courtrooms for no good reason. We are seeing more and more real criminals go free because they cannot get a trial in a reasonable time frame. We should be looking for ways to clear up the courtroom logjam, and stopping the prosecution of simple possession charges would be an obvious place to start. We should also be pardoning Canadians who have a criminal record based only on past convictions for simple possession of small amounts of marijuana. These people have a very hard time finding work because of their criminal records and cannot cross borders, yet we are now saying that what they did was not criminal at all and, in fact, will now be completely legal. Let us pardon them so they can get on with their lives.

I want to change gears a bit and talk about some of the lessons we might have learned from alcohol prohibition. Marijuana became illegal in Canada back in 1923 at about the same time alcohol was illegal. Alcohol prohibition was rather short-lived and alcohol consumption was made legal again in most provinces by 1930. However, early regulations made consumption of alcohol not much fun. When I was growing up in British Columbia, there were separate entrances for men and women in beer parlours, people had to be sitting when they drank, could not listen to music, and certainly could not dance. Things have changed, and I think most people would agree that the earlier restrictions seem rather silly now, and certainly were not effective in curbing public intoxication.

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Beer was once produced only by large, monolithic brewing companies, but now we have hundreds of small craft breweries springing up across the country. They not only produce good beer, but provide good jobs and diversify the economy of many small towns. In my riding, we also make the best wine in Canada. There are hundreds of small wineries in B.C. and Ontario, and a growing number in other provinces. The wine industry is a huge part of the economy in my riding, not only through the sales of wine but also by boosting the tourism industry that is so important in the Okanagan Valley.

What most people like about small estate wineries and small craft breweries is that they are small. They produce diverse products. People can go to meet the people who make the wine and beer. A lot of it is made from organic products, and many advertise the small ecological footprint of their operations.

A lot of my constituents say they feel that Bill C-45 will be like prohibition 2.0. This is not what they voted for when they voted for marijuana legalization. They do not want to buy marijuana from huge companies that produce huge quantities of product in indoor facilities that use a lot of power and pesticides to keep production levels up.

● (1555)

I recently met with a group of farmers and business people in my riding who want to grow marijuana on a smaller scale. They would like to grow outside, using sunlight instead of indoor grow lamps and heaters. They want to grow outside so they go organic. They will not have to use the chemicals needed to keep indoor plants free from fungus. They would like to grow co-operatively, each farming maybe a hectare of highly secure land and processing the crop at a central location for distribution. It sounds great. It sounds like the 21st century. It is allowed just across the border in neighbouring Washington state, but all of this would be illegal under Bill C-45.

In committee, the NDP moved 38 amendments to improve the bill and one amendment would have given the provinces the option to create their own licensing frameworks, such as those to allow for craft growers and small producers. The government side voted every one of these amendments down.

I agree that we need to legalize marijuana. We need to get the industry out in the open, away from gangs and organized crime. We need to tax it so we can fund the education, research, and health programs necessary to deal with drug use and addiction that are already so prevalent in our country. However, restricting the production of marijuana so tightly by making producers grow indoors and banning co-operative ventures, we will be incentivizing an ongoing black market that will defeat the original purpose of the bill.

Therefore, let us learn from alcohol prohibition. Let us not go back to 1930 for legalizing marijuana. Let us regulate it in a modern and intelligent way so Canadians who wish to use cannabis can do so in a practical, safe, and healthy manner.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has a new leader, Jagmeet Singh. He has been pushing the Prime Minister to decriminalize all drugs in the midst of

the opioid crisis. In fact, the new leader has indicated that he wants it to be a formal part of the NDP election platform.

My colleague spent a lot of time talking about legalizing cannabis, saying that it should be the priority of the government. Does the member support what his party's newly elected leader is advocating, which seems to be decriminalizing all drugs?

● (1600)

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to make up NDP policy on the fly in the House. I think the member and all his colleagues would agree that the reason we are legalizing marijuana is so we can regulate it, tax it, educate people about it, and keep it out of the hands of kids, where it is now. That type of project may work for other drugs. It has certainly worked in other countries, such as Portugal, and it might be a very good thing to look into. The government is taking that approach with marijuana for those very reasons.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleague for his views about the concern I hear from many of my constituents of people driving while high. In particular, the concern is about the reliability of the testing that exists.

We know that for driving while impaired by alcohol, there are well-established ways of testing people's blood alcohol levels and precisely correlating levels of impairment with blood alcohol level. The technology is simply not there with regard to impairment by marijuana because the substance works differently. It is fat soluble as opposed to water soluble. There is not the same clear, reliable way of testing impairment on the basis of something like levels in blood.

Is the member concerned that with the government's rush to legalization, we do not have the capacity to effectively assess impairment and respond to it to ensure that people are safe on the roads?

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is precisely my concern with roadside testing for marijuana, which we heard all about in Bill C-46. The justice committee heard testimony from expert witnesses who said, as the member said, that the level of THC in the blood being measured with roadside tests had absolutely nothing to do with impairment. The amount of THC goes up in the blood, but it is only when it is out of the blood and in the brain that it actually impairs people. Therefore, these tests have no relation with impairment, and that is a real difficulty.

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We have to find a different way for measuring impairment with THC than with alcohol. As he said, with alcohol, it is very different. The amount of alcohol in someone's blood is highly correlated with the amount of impairment, but it does not work that way with marijuana. As I mentioned in my speech, groups will be fighting Bill C-46 in court over just this issue. People will be charged for being impaired when they are not impaired at all.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, safety while driving is one concern. Another concern I hear from the industry in my riding is the impact on workplace safety. Without the reliable mechanism for testing impairment if we legalize marijuana, there are significant concerns about people working on industrial job sites while impaired and the impact that could have on others. I wonder if the member shares those concerns, safety while driving yes, but also in an industrial context and in the workplace in general.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Mr. Speaker, it is a similar situation. There is a great concern now about people on work sites who might be impaired. However, if we use these methods for testing the blood levels of THC, it will show that the people who use marijuana regularly are impaired when they are not and are totally capable of doing the work. Therefore, we have to come up with new ways of testing impairment to look at this problem. The method we use for alcohol will not work at all.

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in support of Bill C-45 at report stage debate. This historic legislation represents a positive first step in the complex process of legalizing, strictly regulating, and restricting access to cannabis.

Since the introduction of the bill, it has been emphasized that the approach proposed by the bill is grounded in the basis of public health and public safety, including the goal of keeping cannabis away from young people.

Consistent with the commitments to protect the well-being of Canadians, our government introduced companion legislation, Bill C-46, which targets those who drive while impaired by drugs. This distinct piece of proposed legislation would strengthen the criminal law response to drug-impaired driving and help to increase the safety of our public streets and roads.

In its consideration of Bill C-45, the Standing Committee on Health heard from the Ontario Public Health Association that "impaired driving is a leading criminal cause of death and injury on our roadways, and cannabinoids are among the most common psychoactive substances found in deceased and injured drivers in Canada."

Despite having made progress in deterring and reducing the amount of alcohol-impaired driving over the past decades, statistics indicate that drug-impaired driving is actually increasing.

I am fortunate enough to be a member of the Standing Committee of Justice and Human Rights. We studied the companion legislation to Bill C-45, that being Bill C-46. It is obvious that there is a problem on our roads today with drug-impaired driving, and the problem under the current system keeps getting worse.

According to Statistics Canada, of the more than 72,000 police-reported impaired driving incidents in 2015, almost 3,000 of those were related to drugs. This may not seem like a large proportion, but

when we consider that this is double the amount of drug-impaired driving incidents since just 2009, the upward trend becomes very worrisome.

According to a recent publication by the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, 20% of cannabis users self-report as having driven at least once within two hours of using cannabis.

Another recent study based on the Victoria healthy youth survey in British Columbia indicates that 64% of males and 33% of females who were heavy users of cannabis reported that they drove while drug impaired.

The Ontario student drug use and health survey of 2015 reported that the percentage of drivers in grades 10 to 12 who reported driving after consuming cannabis was higher than those who reported driving after consuming alcohol. This survey further indicated that an estimated 29,500 adolescent drivers in Ontario alone drove within one hour after consuming cannabis within the previous year.

I think I can speak for all of us when I say that I find this to be very troubling. The fact that driving while impaired by drugs is currently a criminal offence punishable by a mandatory minimum fine of \$1,000 on a first offence does not seem to be a sufficient deterrent for an increasing number of drivers.

However, the penalty is not the whole answer anyway. What is clear to me and what the preponderance of the evidence demonstrates is that it is the fear of getting caught that acts as the real deterrent to impaired driving.

Given the current statistics on cannabis consumption before driving, I am fully supportive of the government's approach to strengthen the criminal law framework addressing drug-impaired driving. The proposals on impaired driving would authorize a new tool for police officers to better detect drivers with drugs in their body. These devices would determine whether a driver had certain drugs in his or her oral fluid, including THC, which is the impairing compound in cannabis.

The presence of THC in oral fluid is a strong indicator that cannabis was recently consumed and therefore provides useful information to a police officer who is conducting a roadside investigation. Again, what is essential here is that people will know they will be much more likely to get caught if they drive while impaired by cannabis. This will act as a real deterrent and keep our roads safer.

While reviewing Bill C-45, health committee members heard from the public safety minister who recognized "Essential to this new regime is engagement with and support for police and border officers to ensure that they have the tools they need to enforce the law."

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•(1605)

To this end, the government recently announced an investment of \$274 million to support law enforcement and border efforts to detect and deter drug-impaired driving and for enforcement of the proposed cannabis legalization and regulation scheme.

Provinces and territories will be able to access up to \$81 million over the next five years for new law enforcement training and to build capacity and enforce new and stronger laws related to drug-impaired driving.

The impaired driving bill also proposes new legal limit offences for drugs and driving. Once these offences are enacted, the crown would no longer have to prove that a driver was impaired by a drug if an analysis of their blood showed that they had a prohibited level of drugs in their body. This legal efficiency would provide a much more timely way to prosecute and punish those who choose to mix impairing drugs with driving activity.

I am pleased to note that one of the proposed offences prohibits certain levels of alcohol and THC which, as I indicated earlier, is a particularly impairing combination of substances. This proposed offence would send a strong message against driving after mixing cannabis with alcohol.

In my view, the proposals to address drug-impaired driving are a positive reflection of the government's broader approach to cannabis legalization in that they represent a cautious, public safety-driven response with the ultimate goal of public protection.

To reiterate the remarks of the Minister of Public Safety to the health committee:

...cannabis impaired driving is happening on our streets right now. The faster we get the right tools, the funding, the training, and the legislative and regulatory authorities in place, the safer Canadians will be. Legislative delay does not make the problem go away or get better.

At committee, amendments were adopted to require a review of both Bill C-45 and Bill C-46 three years after coming into force and to table reports before Parliament on the results of these reviews. This would allow the government to clearly communicate the impacts of the new legislation and to determine whether future changes are necessary.

I am pleased to recognize the substantial efforts of the government to fulfill two of its key platform commitments to legalize cannabis and also, importantly, to create new and stronger laws to apprehend and actually deter those who would otherwise drive while under the influence.

In conclusion, it is critical to underscore the objectives of Bill C-45, which is designed to legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis. With the highest usage of young people using cannabis in the developed world, it is clear the current system is not working. We must make it harder for young people to access cannabis, take business away from criminals, and put public health and safety front and centre. That is what Bill C-45 does and that is why all members should support this important legislation.

•(1610)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work that the member for West

Nova does at the justice committee of which I am also a member. I am glad that the hon. member talked about the seriousness of drug-impaired driving.

In terms of the government's rushed and arbitrary timeline to move forward with marijuana legalization legislation, in terms of drug-impaired driving right now there is no approved screening device. There are serious questions about per se limits and how scientific they are given that there are a lot of questions about the correlation between impairment and THC levels.

According to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, some 6,000 police officers need to be trained but will not be trained in time for July 1, 2018, and then there are currently only about 600 drug recognition experts, whereas evidence at the justice committee and the health committee indicated there is a need for somewhere in the neighbourhood of up to 2,000 drug recognition experts.

In light of all of those things, how can the hon. member say with any confidence that we can be ready for legalization on July 1?

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we did hear lots of interesting testimony at our committee. I appreciate the question the member is asking.

However, it is important to keep in mind a couple of things. First of all, the current system is not working. It is not working as we have the highest cannabis usage rate by young people in the entire world. Second, we also have to recognize that the criminal elements that are involved are profiting greatly from the current system.

As part of Bill C-45, the government, rightly, put in place a framework through which we can ensure that we are able to combat the scourge of drug-impaired driving on our roads, which is happening now. We know that there is an effect that will take place if people are fearful that they will get caught, that if they are using cannabis and driving they will be caught, and that if they are impaired, they will be prosecuted.

With regard to some of the comments my friend made regarding the tools and the training that police officers need, the government has put substantial resources behind the legislative framework to ensure police officers have the tools and the training they need. It is almost \$300 million for that alone to be rolled out in due course. It is very important and vital that we get this right. The government is committed to doing it. It will be reviewed in three years' time. The money is there to make sure that the police have the tools and the training they need.

•(1615)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Nova Scotia who I know does diligent and exhaustive work with the justice and human rights committee. I certainly appreciate his counsel on this and many other matters.

Government Orders

He has spoken about how he has followed the government's plans from task force, through to the reading in the House, exhaustive committee work, and this report-stage debate, as well as consultation with constituents.

Could my friend perhaps talk about what he has heard from witnesses, and what conversations have reinforced his view that this is the proper approach for the government to take at this time?

Mr. Colin Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from New Brunswick for the excellent work that he does in Parliament.

It is an important discussion to have with communities across the country. I understand that there can be apprehension to the sorts of changes that are taking place. However, the most fundamental and basic principle is that the current system is not working. This is a matter of public health and public safety.

The way that we are going to make the system better is by ensuring that there is a regulatory framework in place that makes it harder for young people to access cannabis, and that gets the criminal element out of profiting from selling these drugs and taking advantage of vulnerable people.

Our government is committed to doing that. That is what I have heard from constituents I have talked to about this, that we have to get it right. We have to make sure that the proper regulatory framework is in place. The government is listening to those consultations and, importantly, putting those consultations into a framework that will work for all Canadians, keeping Canadians safe, keeping young Canadians safer, and ensuring that we have the right tools and training for our police forces to enforce the law.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I begin speaking to Bill C-45, I would like to highlight for those who are watching today that the Liberals took the opportunity to move time allocation on this important bill. In essence, that means they cut down the debate. They are actually refusing to hear from the members on the opposite side of the House today because they want to rush it through and get it to a vote. Why is it they want to rush it through and get it to a vote? Because they have party preparations to put in place for July 1, 2018. That is unfortunate. It is degrading to our parliamentary process to not have the opportunity to enter into a robust debate with respect to the topic at hand on behalf of the Canadians who have elected us to represent them here.

With that said, when I talk about Bill C-45 and the legalization of marijuana, I am not talking about its legalization for medical purposes, I am not talking about the legalization of marijuana in a way that is well-researched, thoughtful, or has taken into account the different factors that need to be considered, I am not talking about a bill that came out of a lengthy consultation process or a scientific endeavour, I am talking about a bill that was incredibly rushed in nature. It really did not take scientific evidence into consideration. It did not take the insight of law enforcement agents, health care practitioners, or experts into consideration. Really all it does is rush through this piece of legislation at a rate that is unnecessary and with a deadline that is arbitrary. That is of course, July 1, 2018.

I have heard from many people who are very worried about this legislation. Many have spoken out at a national level, including aboriginal leaders, law enforcement agents, health experts, municipalities, provinces, and of course concerned citizens from all across

the country. Some of the things that they are saying are that they are concerned about children accessing marijuana easily and the age at which they are legally able to acquire it, the lack of education programs, the timeline and the fact that it is very rushed, the costs to the municipalities and provinces, and the fact that they really do not feel they have been given adequate time to respond. I am hearing from law enforcement agents much the same about the costs and the timeline. As well, they are bringing up drug-impaired driving. Then there is the issue around taxation. Therefore, in this time that I have, I would like to address some of these issues to a greater extent.

When it comes to children, I believe the government should take them and their future very seriously. That is part of what this place is about. There are 338 of us who have been elected to make decisions on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast. Yes, we make those decisions for today, but we also have to be aware of how those decisions will impact those who would come after us tomorrow.

Unfortunately, this legislation is ill-drafted in terms of its legal age of access, which is age 18. If we were to talk to the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Paediatric Society, or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, they would all say that the age of 18 is too young, that the human brain is developing until the age of 25, and that the use of marijuana impedes the full development of the human brain. Therefore, they have called for the legal age to be 25, and then said that perhaps age 21 would be a good negotiating point. That amendment was brought forward at committee. Of course, the Liberals shut that down. Therefore, it begs the question of whether the government is acting responsibly by setting the age at 18. The government also said that it would take the next generation seriously. It said that it would be the party that wants to keep marijuana out of the hands of young people. However, by setting the legal age at 18, and allowing four plants to be grown in our homes, which I will talk about momentarily, it is really not looking that seriously at keeping it out of the hands of young people.

Not only that, I heard from a group of young people who I meet with on a monthly basis to advise me on different topics at hand. We talked about the legalization of marijuana, and they said this, "If we legalize marijuana", and of course we are going down that road, "and we do it according to the mechanisms that are at play here without education", which there is none of right now, "it will normalize it and young people will think it is just okay, that there are no negative repercussions to the use of marijuana." The young people I am listening to are telling me they are quite concerned. They are concerned for themselves, for their peers, and are very concerned for their younger siblings and what they might fall prey to. I think that is definitely worth considering.

• (1620)

A further point we need to consider related to child access is definitely education. In their budget, the Liberals did promise a considerable amount for education. They said \$9.6 million over five years. In my estimation, that is not enough. I do not know if they are going to be able to afford an adequate education campaign with that amount of money over five years. Nevertheless, it is money put aside. It is money that was promised to this cause, and the Liberals did commit to a "robust", which is the Prime Minister's word, campaign with regard to educating young people.

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To date, we have seen nothing. There has been no action, nothing, just a broken promise. We see them talking out of one side of their face saying that education is very important and we want to keep it out of the hands of young people, but then out of the other side, they are actually not willing to move the dial and invest money in getting an education program up and running, which of course means that we are actually setting young people up for experimentation and for the normalization of drug use among our children.

I have yet another concern. This proposed legislation would allow for four plants to be in every household. Let me amuse the House for just one moment. I did a little research, and one plant equals 1.2 kilograms or 1,200 grams of marijuana, which is how much that would produce. If there is 0.66 grams in each joint on average, which is what my research told me, then one plant would actually produce 792 joints. However, we would be allowed not one but four plants, and four plants would actually produce 3,168 joints. Now at 3,168 joints—and on average people smoke about three joints a day, which is what my research told me—then four plants in a household would produce 1,056 days worth of joints. I ask the House if that sounds like a personal amount. I am just curious. This would leave plenty to sell and plenty to use, and those plants would be right in a person's home.

I am not speaking out on this on my own. Law enforcement agents are also very concerned about this, and they are begging the question of why we would allow four plants in a home when we are legalizing marijuana and people can go down the street and get it a store.

My next point is with regard to law enforcement agents. They came to the committee and told us their concerns, and there are many of them. One is that they are concerned about the deadline of July 1. They are telling us that they will not have their men and women in uniform trained to deal with this. They are saying that the wait list for training is super-long and the cost is extravagant. Not only that, but agents would have to be sent to the United States to access that training. In essence, they told the committee that they needed more time and more than double the number of police officers who are certified to conduct roadside drug-impaired driving testing.

This should concern us. I do not want to be on the road. I do not want my nieces, nephews, brother, sisters, parents, or anyone else on the road when there are individuals out there who are impaired, and that is normal. I am not okay with that. Again, we need that robust education program put in place so that people understand. Also, we need law enforcement agents in place so that they can actually enforce the law.

The officers who came to committee also said that we can expect about a six- to 12-month gap between the legislation coming into effect when people legally have access to marijuana and the point where the police are actually caught up and able to enforce. This is a six- to 12-month gap, and they said that this will allow organized crime to “flourish”. So much for keeping organized crime down.

I also want to draw to members' attention the costs and consequences that this proposed legislation would mean for municipalities and provinces. We are talking about a cost for our law enforcement agents. We are talking about a cost with regard to putting policy in place. We are talking about insurance costs for

private employers and policy costs at that level as well. We are talking about costs with regard to just different legislative pieces that have to be put in place, and all of the consultations and legal work that have to be done around that.

All in all, the point I wish to make today is that the Liberals are rushing through with the bill. They are choosing to rush this proposed legislation through based on an arbitrary deadline that carries absolutely no weight or essence in the House. They could stop it. They could halt it. They could adequately consult. They could be responsible and listen to the experts who have spoken on this proposed legislation. Right now, the government is choosing to act irresponsibly, and I highlight the word “choosing”. They are choosing to put inadequate legislation in place over this country.

● (1625)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am concerned. One thing is very clear, and the facts support it. The hon. member talked a lot about children and young people. Currently, 20% of youth are using marijuana. Over 20% of young Canadians are saying they are using it. The strategy we currently have is not working.

She talked about investing in public education. We are investing \$45 million over five years in public education. She said she has not seen any of this. In Ontario, in my riding in Kingston, all summer long I heard ads on the radio promoting safe use of cannabis, anticipating the introduction of this legislation.

Therefore, I would argue that she is wrong. Public education is already working, because we know that is how we are going to successfully get through to young people, so that we see a significant reduction in usage.

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure there was a question there, but he said there was over \$45 million available to help with education. I would actually love to see those documents tabled, if he would not mind, because if those are federal dollars, I would like to know how he is accessing them outside of what is stated in the budget. I believe our responsibility is to hold the government to account with regard to the budget, and the budget does not give that number. If they are eliciting funds through some backdoor channel to get education to his riding—as he highlighted, it is obviously going to the kids in his riding, not to the rest of Canada—then we should be aware of those funds. It seems appropriate, does it not?

With regard to 20% of our young people using, basically we are saying 20% are using so let us just legalize it so we can facilitate 100% using. People misuse guns all the time. Perhaps the appropriate way to handle that is to just take away any prohibition.

• (1630)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to visit three schools in my city of Saskatoon as part of Bring Your MP to School Day. I am a former trustee with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association in Saskatoon. The government has spent no money. I hear \$45 million is going to be rolled out over five years, or maybe more.

I was the guest speaker last Sunday in Regina at the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, one of the members of the Canadian School Boards Association. As I sat here all day and listened to arguments on this, I noted that no one mentioned reaching out to any school boards in the country. There was not one cent going to the Canadian school boards for education on cannabis. Who deals with this? It is teachers in our classrooms. I heard the government say cannabis will be available for 12-year-olds. They are allowed five grams in their pocket, yet I have not heard about the education that should start in elementary schools, where I was last week, for grades 6 to 12.

Could the hon. member for Lethbridge tell us what the government should do to educate our young people who are not taking cannabis and do not want to take cannabis regardless of what comes in on July 1?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is one I spent much of my speech on with regard to education and making sure that young people are actually receiving the facts about cannabis use, how it will impact them, and what safe use looks like if they choose to use it as a young adult.

In terms of education, we really have not seen anything. Again, I highlight the fact that the government talks about the importance of education. The Prime Minister talked about the importance of a robust campaign around education for cannabis use, but we have seen absolutely nothing. If the government's idea of robust is to do nothing, it is doing a very robust job in governing Canada.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today to Bill C-45 concerning the legalization of cannabis. This issue is important to people in my community. I have heard from many constituents about their interests, desires, and concerns related to the legalization of cannabis. I have heard from many people who are in favour of legalization. They would like this bill to become law as quickly as possible. They are in favour because they themselves consume cannabis or are concerned about the negative effects of maintaining the criminalization of cannabis in our communities.

I have also heard from many people who are not necessarily opposed to legalization, but they have concerns. I hope to address these concerns today. I understand their concerns about using cannabis. I am a mother and recognize the concerns raised in that respect. As I say that, I can imagine my kids rolling their eyes at home. As a parent, I worry about my children, too. I understand they will make mistakes, but the legalization of cannabis is not one of my top concerns for my children going forward. I also believe that through the legalization and regulation of cannabis, concerns about cannabis consumption by youth or people operating vehicles can be addressed.

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In many parts of my community, a spring walk through the park will bring the smell of lilacs and pot. I do not say this to make light of cannabis use, but simply to point out that it is very common in my community and very common in a situation where it remains illegal. It is very clear, based on a walk down my streets but also on statistics, that the criminalization of cannabis is not keeping it out of the hands of people in our communities, adults or youth.

I understand that the statistics are that 21% of youth have used marijuana and 30% of young adults use it. Those are high numbers. If the goal is to keep people from trying marijuana or using it, the approach of criminalization has not worked. As has been stated in this place many times, but it bears repeating, the World Health Organization found in 2009-10 that the number of Canadians under 15 who had tried cannabis was at a higher rate than for any other country studied. As well, in a 2013-14 study by the WHO, Canada remained in the top five countries of 15-year-olds and was number one for cannabis use among children 13 years of age or younger. Clearly, if a person is concerned about youth access to cannabis, the current system is not working.

Here is the crux of the matter: the threat of a criminal record is not deterring youth from consuming cannabis. They are still doing it. However, once they have a criminal record, this can impact their future opportunities. It can close doors, and to what end? Under the new legislation, as with alcohol, there will be regulations to prohibit the purchase and use of cannabis by youth, but as with alcohol, we will not be threatening them with a criminal record. The criminal record brought only negative consequences without achieving its purported goal, which was to deter use.

Finally, we want to continue to collaborate with the provinces and territories to make sure that the public education campaign can also be done collaboratively and that we all have access to the same information.

Another point is on the nuts and bolts of working with youth. It is harder to have conversations and convey information about something that is hidden. Our government has announced \$46 million for a public education program to accompany the legalization of marijuana. Having an open conversation is much more effective. Health Canada has published detailed information on the health risks of cannabis use on its website, and I encourage all Canadians to review it. It is there to be found.

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•(1635)

As we talk about youth, I am also concerned about the fact that people who are consuming marijuana are exposing themselves to risks that go beyond health issues related to consumption. For example, there is no way to trace source or ensure the quality of the marijuana they purchase. We saw situations during the prohibition of alcohol where people consumed alcohol that had impurities. It was somehow made in a way that was not safe and would make people sick. Under our current legalized and regulated system for alcohol, we rarely hear of such incidents.

In the same way, in the legalized market, we have more controls over the safety of production and the safety of the method of sale. Personally, I would rather see people going to a store that is regulated to purchase their cannabis than to a drug dealer.

The model of decriminalization fails to address consumer safety. That is not the other option here. The model of decriminalization has and maintains a lot of the harms associated with the prohibition of cannabis use. Decriminalization does not address the concerns raised by my constituents, and it leaves us with a grey zone. It leaves us with a market that remains in the hands of organized crime.

I would like to share some statements made by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto from its cannabis policy framework. It states:

Under decriminalization, cannabis remains unregulated, meaning that users know little or nothing about its potency or quality.

As long as cannabis use is illegal, it is difficult for health care or education professionals to effectively address and help prevent problematic use. The law enforcement focus of prohibition drives cannabis users away from prevention, risk reduction and treatment services.

Decriminalization may encourage commercialization of cannabis production and distribution – without giving government additional regulatory tools. Those activities remain under the control of criminal elements, and for the most part users must still obtain cannabis in the illicit market where they may be exposed to other drugs and to criminal activity.

Our government is proposing a system that allows for regulatory control of production, distribution, and sale. Along with the experts at CAMH, I support our government position of legalizing and restricting access, to allow opportunity to regulate cannabis and mitigate the risks.

Our government has committed up to \$161 million for training front-line officers on how to recognize signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving. Whether legal or not, drug-impaired driving is happening in our communities.

In 2008, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police unanimously urged the government of the day to make resources available for the training of drug recognition experts and for all officers in field sobriety testing. That plea resulted in no action from the government. In 2013, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police asked the government to make available oral fluid testing technology, and no action was taken by the former Conservative government.

Our government is listening to the concerns of law enforcement agencies and providing the training, resources, access to technology, and legal authority to allow police across the country to provide them with what they need to keep our communities safe.

Currently, Canada's non-medical cannabis industry is entirely criminal, meaning that all non-medical cannabis being sold or purchased in our communities is helping to put approximately \$7 billion annually into the pockets of organized crime. Upwards of \$2 billion every year are spent trying to enforce our current ineffectual cannabis prohibition regime. Smart action is what is needed to drive down the black market for cannabis. With legalization and regulation, law enforcement resources can be used effectively and we can reduce the involvement of organized crime.

For too long, in my community and across the country, cannabis has been easily accessible among our youth who have been using it at record rates to the great profits of organized crime.

I support Bill C-45 to enact the cannabis act, to provide legal access to cannabis and to control and regulate its production, distribution, and sale.

•(1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I made a point of listening to my colleague opposite. She said that she is concerned about 13- and 14-year-olds using cannabis.

Bill C-45 allows four plants per home. Do they think that our young people are not going to want to take a few leaves, dry them, and try them, or give them to their friends?

With this bill, all young people will have access to cannabis, not just those who are 13 and 14, but also those who are 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15.

Can my colleague tell us whether amendments will be made to this bill?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, not every house will have four plants in it, although that is the number of plants people will be entitled to. That being said, there is alcohol in many households, but that does not mean children drink all the time. Parents need to manage their households appropriately.

What we are doing here is creating a system in which cannabis will be legal, but with rules to keep it out of the hands of children. Even children younger than 13 are already using cannabis, so it is not like children do not have access to it. The only difference is that right now they get it from drug dealers. In my opinion, that is much more dangerous.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what are the member's thoughts on pardons? We are going to legalize marijuana. We are going to create a situation where people across the country will be able to smoke marijuana legally. Parents of young Canadians in their twenties might have a criminal record because they were charged in the past with possession of a small amount of marijuana. Their lives were altered forever.

We should have a blanket pardon for all Canadians who have a criminal record only because they were once convicted of possession of a small amount of marijuana. What are my colleague's thoughts on this?

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●(1645)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: I understand the concern the member has raised, Mr. Speaker, and we need to think about that.

Right now, cannabis remains illegal and it is not helpful at this moment to get into that conversation because it creates extra confusion. We need to make it clear that cannabis remains illegal now. This is a conversation we will need to think about more carefully in the time to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I support harm reduction.

To justify his rush to legalize marijuana, the Prime Minister constantly brings up the spectre of our children doing business with organized crime. However, there is no legislation anywhere in Canada that will allow minors to have access to marijuana.

How then will this bill squeeze out organized crime?

Ms. Julie Dabrusin: Mr. Speaker, back when there were laws banning alcohol, organized crime got into the business of selling it. Once alcohol became legal and available to anyone who was of age, organized crime got out of the business. In our experience, that is because legalizing alcohol caused the market to dry up.

Legalizing cannabis will therefore have a positive effect. This has been confirmed by experts, and police officers and stakeholders working in this field agree.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Families, Children and Social Development; the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence; and the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, Ethics.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that a member of the Bloc Québécois is finally being given the opportunity to speak to the legalization of marijuana.

The Liberal government has taken a rather lighthearted approach to this issue that borders on the irresponsible. Like millions of Quebecers, I think that our society has reached the point where there is no longer a valid reason for the use of cannabis to be a criminal offence.

That being said, how can the government legalize a substance without promoting it? How can we send the message that, although we want to make this substance available to everyone, we also do not want to see its use increase? It is not easy. We need to take the time to do things right, but that is clearly not what the government wants to do. The government is in a hurry. It is treating the situation as urgent. When the provinces say that they are not ready, the government responds, “be ready”. The Liberals and their Prime Minister are in a rush, but we have never heard them offer Quebec or the other provinces any help whatsoever in implementing the legalization of marijuana.

Quebec asked for a little more time, one year, to make sure that this will not put Quebecers at risk and to put the appropriate measures in place to protect public health. Quebec asked for 365

days, but Ottawa refused, so the following motion was moved in the Quebec National Assembly:

That the National Assembly ask the federal government to defer the official date for the legalization of cannabis, which is currently planned for July 1, 2018, to July 1, 2019, at the earliest.

Ottawa, however, is digging in its heels. The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador added its voice to Quebec's appeal, but it is hopeless. No one can understand this. The Liberals would have us believe that urgent action is needed on marijuana, as though there were some sort of life or death national emergency. Why? What could possibly explain this obstinacy? Is this about fulfilling an election promise?

As we saw from the electoral reform fiasco, we know that the Liberals have no problem breaking an election promise. Why? Is this because the Liberals' friends are eager to see a return on their investments in cannabis grow ops? Is it because there is some money to be made on this? We have every reason to ask the question.

The Liberals' haste is making it very difficult to implement marijuana legalization effectively. Frankly, there is no good reason for rushing things like this. Quebec's minister responsible for rehabilitation, youth protection, public health and healthy living, Lucie Charlebois, said:

The provinces and municipalities will be left to implement all this legislation being introduced by the federal government. They are the ones who will be responsible for the services and for that, we at the provincial level need to come to an understanding with all those who will be providing the services...

Ottawa is legalizing cannabis, but Quebec, the provinces, and first nations will have to deal with the fallout. That is the truth of the matter. Who has to change the rules of the road? Who has to put on prevention campaigns? Who will have to open stores to sell cannabis? Who will train the personnel and cover the social and public health related costs? Will it be Ottawa or Quebec?

The answer to all these questions is: Quebec. Ottawa is legalizing cannabis, collecting the cash, charging an excise tax, and making its little producer friends happy. Quebec and the provinces are being left with all the costs, the risks, the problems, and a very tight deadline. The following are some examples.

A Université de Montréal study showed a direct link between marijuana use and psychosis. For adolescents, progressing from occasional marijuana use to weekly or daily use increases the risk of experiencing recurrent psychotic episodes by 159%. Will Ottawa be doing more to protect our young people's mental health? No. Ottawa is actually cutting health transfers. That is outrageous. Quebec will be forced to invest in prevention to protect our young people from these unfortunate experiences.

Another example is evaluation officers. The Fédération des policiers et policières municipaux du Québec is concerned about the shortage of evaluation officers in Quebec's municipal police forces.

●(1650)

Evaluation officers are the ones who enforce the zero tolerance policy for impaired driving. They are the experts who have to measure how much cannabis is in a driver's system. Here is what Robin Côté, president of the Fédération des policiers et policières municipaux du Québec, said on Radio-Canada:

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Right now, we have 15 municipal police forces that have one single evaluation officer and five that have none. I do not know how that shortage will play out in the end.

It is not me saying that, it is the president of the Fédération des policiers et policières municipaux du Québec. He went on to say this:

Obviously, what we need is more properly trained evaluation officers.... At this moment in time, it does not look like the ratio of evaluation officers will be high enough on July 1. Currently, just under 0.5% of the association's members are trained as evaluation officers.

They will not be ready by July 1. Is that clear? Here is another example. The mayor of Terrebonne recently asked some very good questions:

What are we supposed to do if, say, tomorrow morning, an employee decides to take a coffee break and smoke some marijuana? What kind of legal framework, what kind of labour laws will be in place to address that in a city like Terrebonne with its 1,100 employees?

Once again the overused property tax is going to fund the provincial and federal policies for which 100% of the revenues will stay in the pockets of the central governments, while the expenses will be incurred by the local governments.

Here is a fourth example. In a November 16 press release, the UMQ said:

...cannabis legalization will represent additional costs to municipalities, including for enforcing the rules on consuming in public places and for training police officers and municipal officials.

The president of the UMQ, Alexandre Cusson, has questions around zoning for the new Crown corporation's outlets and stores.

Clearly no one is ready, not in terms of prevention, public health, or in administration. Public safety is not ready. Only Ottawa is unilaterally imposing a completely irresponsible deadline that no one wants.

Today, to add insult to injury, the government is imposing time allocation. According to the Liberals, we have exhausted the issue. I have bad news for them: we have only just begun.

The Bloc Québécois has already spoken out in favour of legalizing marijuana. There is nothing new there. We talked about it during the last election campaign. However, this needs to be done responsibly. That is why, like the National Assembly, we are asking that marijuana legalization be pushed back by a year.

However, Ottawa has chosen to be irresponsible. We have no choice but to vote against this bill and speak out against the government's lighthearted approach to this issue and its inflexibility regarding the deadline.

Again, Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has let us down and is putting Quebec in a tough spot. It is pathetic, but not surprising.

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind the hon. member that when referring to another member, whether the Prime Minister, a minister, or any member, he must use that individual's title and not his or her name.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it does not matter which area of the country it is, whether Quebec, Newfoundland, Manitoba, my home province, or British Columbia, the message is always the same. We have a government that made a commitment during the last election to do what Bill C-45 aims to do. The opposition can say what it will, but over two years, the government has come up with an approach to deal with a very important social issue. Whether it was in the province of Quebec or any other province, there was support for this government to move forward on this very important issue.

Would the member across the way not at least acknowledge that it is good to have some sort of national standard as to how best to deal with the legalization of cannabis, and that moving forward is in the best interests of all citizens of our country?

[Translation]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, this is not the right approach.

My colleague is saying that the provinces want the government to take urgent action, but that is not the case in Quebec. Quebec, like many other provinces, asked that this be pushed back by one year.

First of all, we, the members of the Bloc Québécois, who represent only the interests and values of Quebec, we were not invited to participate in the committee's work. Secondly, the Government of Quebec passed a unanimous motion calling for it to be postponed, and Ottawa thumbs its nose at Quebec.

I do not want to hear that the provinces are asking the Liberal government to act quickly. On the contrary, they want the federal government to take its time and do this right, in a responsible and orderly fashion. There are major health and safety issues at play here that are more important than an election promise from the Liberal government.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is frustrating to hear government members tell us that the current system is not working and therefore that we have to try something completely different. The government members clearly have not looked at the numbers for marijuana use over time. Let me share some of them.

In 2004, 14.1% of Canadians reported having used marijuana in the last year. In 2008, it was 11.4%. In 2010, it was 10.7%, and in 2011 it was 9.1%. This is from the Statistics Canada website, which shows that there has been a relatively significant reduction over the last 10 years or so in the number of Canadians who report using marijuana. Obviously, the numbers are higher than we would like them to be, given the risks, but we are seeing those numbers going progressively downward as more public health information comes out about the risks associated with marijuana use.

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Therefore, I wonder why members of the government keep saying that things are getting worse when things are actually getting progressively better. Also, I wonder if they will change their position if, as I suspect, there is a significant increase in the number of Canadians using marijuana after the government proceeds with the bill. That is what we've seen in other jurisdictions, and there is no reason why Canada would be any different.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rhéal Fortin: Mr. Speaker, the figures are what they are, but even if just 1% of the population was taking cannabis illegally, it would be worthwhile to have legislation governing the consumption of cannabis. That is not the issue.

As I said, we in the Bloc Québécois have come out in favour of legalizing marijuana. However, we are opposed to what the government is doing now, because it is doing a sloppy job, and our youth will pay the price. It is the same in Quebec and in the rest of Canada.

I am in favour of knives, but I would certainly object to someone stabbing me in the back. I am in favour of marijuana legalization, but what this government is doing verges on the criminal. It is dangerous and irresponsible, and we will have to pay the price.

I urge this government to come to its senses and consider what Canadians want.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join the debate on Bill C-45, the marijuana legalization bill.

I would like to start by saying that when I was elected to serve the people of Lévis—Lotbinière back in 2006, I never imagined that I would one day have to debate a bill aimed at legalizing a drug that is harmful to Canadians' health.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would live to see the day the Liberal Party of Canada pulled off this feat, if it can be called a feat.

It is also disgusting and crass to see rich investors taking pleasure in owning shares in Canopy Growth Corporation. These investors have made a lot of money since the share price started to climb, fuelled by leaked information from the report on marijuana legalization.

Members will recall that the report's findings indicated that there have been disastrous consequences wherever cannabis has been legalized. Our duty, as legislators in this place, is to leave Canada a better place as a result of all our work and diligence.

We can very well imagine that there must be a great sense of unease, and I would even say a major conflict of values, at Health Canada, which continues to warn about the dangers of consuming marijuana on its government Internet site and in its documentation.

I am wondering what is going through the minds of these people who, like health professionals, parents, and grandparents who bring healthy and positive values to our society, are completely taken aback by the idea that our loved ones will be able to lawfully destroy their lives and their potential by consuming cannabis.

A number of my colleagues opposite are saying that it is just pot. I invite them to visit the psychiatric wing of a hospital and to see what happens when loved ones are held in a secure wing, under surveillance 24/7, because they no longer know how to live and are a danger to themselves. I invite them to go and see these poor people who have been disrupted and dehumanized. Then I want to hear what they have to say.

As everyone here knows, my colleagues and I have spoken at length about the dangers and all of the repercussions associated with using this drug at the critical ages of 13, 14, or even younger. It can cause irreparable harm.

With that in mind, I am still trying to understand why the Liberals have decided to proceed with marijuana legalization. When I participate in policy discussions and debates in the House, I am dismayed at their simplistic and utterly amoral reasoning about how it is our duty to protect our young people and our society and to keep organized crime in check. Unfortunately, we are talking about a market that holds an obscure sway over the facts.

What we have seen in U.S. states that made certain choices will not help us live in a peaceful, respectful, orderly society, drive on safe roads, and achieve progress and prosperity. Anyone who thinks it will is deluded. Back in 2006, during my first year as an MP, I became aware of the groups lobbying the Liberals to go down this path. I rejected it wholesale, and its pernicious influence never took root within me. The Conservatives wanted nothing to do with those lobby groups. We wanted to work on Canadians' real priorities.

Could someone explain to me how the Liberal Party's financial backers, those with the deepest pockets, managed to use our democracy to legalize cannabis, which is currently a source of worry and torment for so many people in distress?

I would like to come back to the word "priority". Who is pushing the Liberals to make this a national priority? That is a fundamental question to which we must find the answer. There is a good chance that it is people who are untouchable because they have large family fortunes. Rather than creating collective wealth, these people, who are born into money with a silver spoon in their mouth, are unscrupulously using that money for more nefarious purposes.

I am talking about influential people of untold financial means who should not have control over our future. How do those people sleep at night?

● (1705)

Do they not feel any remorse for what they are about to make the Liberal members opposite do? The Liberals will likely not have the privilege of voting according to their own conscience and beliefs.

I think greed is overshadowing common sense here. A person has to be pretty twisted to see a societal problem as a business opportunity.

Members will forgive the comparison, but it seems obvious. The only people I have seen, both in the movies and, unfortunately, in real life, who are capable of using subterfuge to achieve their goals and get what they want are people with psychopathic tendencies.

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I do not want to offend my colleagues, but there is no denying that the only people who are able to cause other people harm without feeling any remorse or emotion, while remaining cold and detached, are psychopaths, at least to my knowledge. The issue that is currently before us just does not make any sense.

From a young age, we teach children to watch out for bad guys, not to trust strangers, not to give in to bad influences, and to listen to that little voice inside them when it tells them they are on the wrong track.

I would add that for years, police officers have been working on prevention in our primary and secondary schools, warning our children about people who might offer them some pot and urging them to avoid people who use it.

Now we are having a debate on legalizing a substance that sends so many people to hospital, to prison, or leads them to homelessness. This substance sends young people to youth centres or foster homes. It is a gateway drug to more harmful substances. Far too often, these people end up in the morgue. Yes, I said morgue. The common thread among people who use drugs is that they started by using marijuana.

Where is this Prime Minister's ethics and common sense? Where are his emotions for our young people? Why are the Liberal MPs following him? Who is making the decisions in that party? That is a question that remains unanswered. Is it the Minister of Finance, a bunch of people from Toronto, or a handful of influential rich people? Let us wake up before it is too late or let us free ourselves from the Liberals.

We are fortunate in Canada to have three entities for limiting power. We have the House, the Senate, and the Supreme Court. I am calling on them at this moment in time because the House is heading in the wrong direction despite the Conservatives' efforts.

If the Senate truly represents the wisdom of this country, and if the Prime Minister appointed 25 senators who are worthy of the position when he took office, those individuals will see to it that this does not pass. They have a duty to do so.

Our Canada cannot remain strong and prosperous with marijuana flowing freely in our homes, on our streets, on our construction sites, amongst our skilled workers, in public areas, and in the hands of our loved ones, who are usually our flesh and blood.

An entire generation is going to be left in shambles by this Liberal recklessness. This generation is already up to its neck in debt, and now it will be mentally burdened on top of that. It is shameful.

I have a question for all senators across party lines. Do they really want to have this weighing on their conscience, on their shoulders? I am not talking about the weight of a gram of pot; I am talking about the downfall of an entire generation, an entire nation.

I am also talking about the massive human and financial costs that will be put on the provinces, which can barely meet the health care needs of their citizens as it is. These costs will continue to rise because of the legacy the Liberals are leaving to future generations.

I ask the good Lord to rid us of the Liberals.

Being trustworthy is going to be a factor here. The Liberals' improprieties and tax havens are nothing compared to what lies ahead. Someone needs to stand up and say "no" to pot in our homes, "no" to the Liberal Party, and "no" to this unworthy Prime Minister who left his judgment who knows where, and who is preparing a living hell for us here far away from any tax havens. That is my prediction.

● (1710)

Mr. Matt DeCourcey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite never misses an opportunity to rise and engage in flights of rhetoric on whatever issue the House is debating.

I was disappointed to hear him start his speech by saying that never in his wildest dreams did he imagine he would have to stand up in the House and talk about this issue. He needs to realize that this issue is important to Canadians. It is an issue that we must debate, as MPs elected to represent Canadians, because it involves Canadians' health.

We all know that the current marijuana system does not work and that our approach as a government is centred on health. We also know that the current approach allows criminals and organized crime to profit and fails to keep cannabis out of the hands of Canadian youth.

As a member elected to stand up for Canadians' best interests, why does he think it is not important to talk about a public policy issue that is so pressing right now?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a very important issue, and if the government were treating it as such, it would have allowed all the members of this House to debate it. It would not have imposed a time allocation motion on us. The Liberal Party is imposing a policy that will be harmful for future generations.

The Liberals are acting like this is no big deal. One day, they will realize they made a mistake, but it will be too late to fix it. However, they can fix their mistake now by giving all the members a chance to debate this bill. The debate should not stop today or Wednesday. We need to allow enough time for all the Liberals, all the NDP members, all my fellow Bloc colleagues, all the Conservatives, and all the independents to rise in the House and speak for their constituents.

Furthermore, we need to consult Canadians properly instead of doing fake surveys. If Canadians are asked what they think of the bill, it will become clear that we on this side of the aisle are on the right track.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I am very pleased that Quebeckers have decided that they will not allow four plants per house and that they have asked the government to not rush the passage of this bill.

Does the member agree?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I agree.

Let us imagine that there are four plants this tall and this wide in each house. They could produce 3,150 joints a year. A family could be stoned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 52 weeks a year and there would be some left over to sell or give away.

Do we believe that these plants will be controlled, as the Liberals are claiming? They want to control the quality of the product, but one in three houses will not be controlled and will be able to distribute this product across the country. Let us imagine children smoking a small joint before going to school in the morning. That is unbelievable.

• (1715)

[English]

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

Mr. Speaker, the member just made reference to having marijuana plants in homes. I have news for the member across the way that people have alcohol in their homes. Many individuals have bottles and bottles of alcohol. Many individuals have enough bottles in their home that if they drank it all they could die from it.

Is the member implying that people should also have limited amounts of alcohol in homes, because he is so offended that under this legislation people are limited to four plants?

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to ask my colleague whether he will be able to look himself in the mirror after he votes for this bill.

I invite my colleague to visit all the psychiatric wings of the hospitals in his riding, to observe the young people there, and to ask himself what got them there. The common denominator is that they started by using marijuana, which led them to other drugs and other circumstances. He should go and tour the hospitals.

[English]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to debate Bill C-45. I want to start by saying opposition members are fooling themselves if they believe that young people are not already using cannabis. They are using cannabis in record numbers. The present system just does not work, and we need to do something. In some cases, we have heard it is easier to buy cannabis than it is to buy cigarettes and beer.

The current system is allowing criminals and organized crime to profit. Some people argue, as the former member did, that cannabis is a gateway to far worse drugs. I will tell the House what a gateway is. A gateway is when our young people are buying cannabis from a pusher whose only goal is to get this kid hooked on something even far worse. That is the gateway.

I agree that something needs to be done as far as education is concerned. Bill C-45 includes this. We need to warn young people about the harmful effects of using pot. I was happy to attend, just in the last hour, an event sponsored by the Canadian Nurses Association. Their members are aware that everyone needs to be educated. They released a list of how to reduce the harms of non-medical cannabis use. I thought it was very helpful, so I thought I would mention some of the ideas they have. Barb Shellian, who is the president of the Canadian Nurses Association, says this is a non-judgmental approach, because they agree that whether we like it or not young people are going to consume cannabis. I will list some of the concerns they have, because they are concerns for all of us.

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Number one, they say to reduce the harms of non-medical cannabis use, delay use until early adulthood.

Since the risk of dependence is higher when use begins at an earlier age, cannabis use disorder and its related health harms may be reduced or avoided if use is delayed until early adulthood.

I agree. We agree. This is the education that must get out to our young people.

Number two:

Minimize frequency of use—Because the risk of harm increases with the rate of use, avoid frequent, daily or near-daily use.

That is good advice.

Number three:

Try to stop when use becomes hard to control—Frequent users of non-medical cannabis who experience difficulty controlling their use should attempt to stop, with professional help, as necessary.

Number four:

Minimize respiratory complications—To reduce respiratory complications, avoid smoking cannabis with tobacco, refrain from deep inhalation and breath holding, and consider using a vaporizer rather than smoking.

Number five:

Avoid using amounts that are large or highly concentrated—Be wary of excessive use or high-potency THC cannabis, including synthetic cannabinoid products. Consider adjusting the dose by using only the amount needed to achieve the desired effect.

While some people might think this is encouraging the use of cannabis, this is education our young people need. I am so glad that the Canadian Nurses Association has put this together. There are a number of further ideas that I think we should all hear about.

Number six:

Refrain from using non-medical cannabis with alcohol—Mixing non-medical cannabis with alcohol can increase impairment exponentially and can also cause anxiety, nausea, vomiting, or fainting.

Number seven, of course:

Avoid driving while high—Given the effect of cannabis consumed by inhalation typically peaks after 30 minutes and gradually subsides after 1 to 3.5 hours... avoid driving for at least 6 hours after use by inhalation... Wait longer if high-potency products or larger doses were used, if acute impairment persists or if the cannabis was used with other substances (including alcohol).

This is information we need, and information our young people need. We know young people are consuming cannabis, but are they getting this information? I am so glad that the Canadian Nurses Association has put this out.

Number eight, share with care is an interesting point:

Users should take care to minimize lip contact with joints or implements for smoking or vaporization. Shared items that come in contact with the lips increase the risk of transmitting infections, including meningitis, influenza and other pathogens.

Government Orders

● (1720)

Vulnerable groups should abstain from use—An increased risk for cannabis-related problems can occur in high-risk groups, including pregnant women and individuals with a personal or family history of psychosis. These groups should avoid use altogether.

I could not agree more, and this is information our young people need. It continues:

Use caution when ingesting cannabis—To avoid accidental overdose with cannabis edibles, “start low and go slow.” States where cannabis is legal recommend starting with no more than 10 mg of THC and waiting at least two hours before ingesting more.

This is really good information that comes from the Canadian Nurses Association. I am sure it is on its website, if members want to check it out.

I am so happy that our government is investing in public education and law enforcement, because we not only need to regulate, we need to educate. Therefore, our government is investing up to \$274 million to support law enforcement and border efforts to detect and deter drug-impaired driving and to enforce the proposed cannabis legislation and regulations.

We have committed up to \$161 million for training front-line officers in how to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving; building law enforcement capacity across the country; providing access to drug-screening devices; developing policy and bolstering research; and raising public awareness about the dangers of drug-impaired driving.

Provinces and territories will be able to access up to \$81 million over the next five years for new law enforcement training. This is important. We know that we need to do this hand in hand with legalizing cannabis.

Our government has also committed \$46 million over five years for public education, awareness, and surveillance. These additional resources will also allow the government to undertake a robust public awareness campaign so that Canadians, especially young Canadians under the age of 25, are well informed about the dangers of driving under the influence of cannabis and other drugs.

Our government will invest additional resources as needed to make sure there is appropriate capacity in Health Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canada Border Services Agency, and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to license, inspect, and enforce all aspects of this proposed legislation.

In the months ahead, our government will share more details of a new licensing fee and excise tax system. It will also continue to engage with all levels of government and indigenous people, because we know that not only the federal government but the provinces and municipalities are very interested in how we are going to roll this out and how the tax system will impact the coffers of their governments.

I want to go back to what I was talking about before, about how we cannot keep our heads in the sand. We have to be realistic that the number of young people smoking pot, consuming cannabis, is very high in Canada. It is one of the highest in the world. This is something that has concerned every parent of a teenager. My children are adults now. I am a grandmother. I worry about the

harmful effects of cannabis on my young grandchildren when they get to be teenagers, but I know that by then, we will have the education they need to make sure they are making wise decisions. Decisions are being made by young children every day in this country, and for the most part right now, many young people are making those decisions without thinking twice, without even considering the harm it will do if they decide to start to smoke cannabis.

I look forward to any questions.

● (1725)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is quite right that with all the children who are now smoking marijuana, we need to get them off it. It is public education and restricting access that will do that.

I was also at the Canadian Nurses Association event, and I am pleased that it brought out that public awareness and education campaign. Do members know why it was brought out? It was because there is a total gap in that area. Although the current government has been committed to this promise for two years, it has done absolutely nothing.

I have seen the RFP that went out for a contractor to put together a program to roll out public education and awareness. That RFP was awarded at the end of October. There is no education program. I have certainly been looking for it.

Why did the Liberals, if they knew they were going to legalize marijuana, not start on public education and awareness two years ago?

Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, the member's point is well taken. We do need to educate, and we are doing that today. We need to make sure that our young people get the information, because the way they receive information is a lot different from how we used to receive information. We are going to start now in the House as we debate this legislation. We are going to talk about it.

We thank the Canadian Nurses Association for getting involved in this education campaign. We agree that we need to do even more, and that is why our government is committed to spending millions of dollars to educate people across Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I represent Winnipeg North. As in many communities across our country, we have a lot of young people who are especially vulnerable. They are vulnerable to individuals who participate in gangs or the criminal element. There is a financial incentive to go to our schools and our playgrounds to promote the use of cannabis. The single objective of these people is to bring money into an organization or to put money in their own pockets. They are not thinking of health and well-being or the long-term impact it will have on our young people.

For the first time, we are seeing government legislation that would go a long way toward dealing with that issue. I wonder if my colleague could provide her thoughts on my comments.

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Ms. Kate Young: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising that issue and for talking about the gateway drug.

Prior to getting into politics, I worked for a school board, and we would talk quite often about drugs in schools and how to combat them. It was very difficult. I was concerned about what schools my children were going to. I was hoping they would be in a school where there were no drugs. This was when my children were young. I spoke to both a trustee and one of the superintendents of that school. It was disheartening to hear them say that there are drugs in all schools.

That was years ago, and it has not gone away. If people think they can make sure their young people are not faced with this issue, they are really mistaken. Unfortunately, young people are getting drugs from people who have nothing but their own interests in mind. They want to make money, and they are making money illegally. The best thing for us to do is to legalize cannabis and make sure that we provide strategic education to make sure that our young people know the risks involved.

● (1730)

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak on Bill C-45, because so many Canadians are talking about it right now. If one goes to a school in the Pontiac, and I have visited several, or to a municipal council to talk about what the federal government is doing that is new, much of the same thing is heard, which is that Canadians are interested and concerned. More than anything, they are open-minded about finding the right path on this issue of marijuana and cannabis legalization. Why? Simply put, it is because they know that what has been done in the past has not worked. At the end of the day, Canadians expect the government to not simply stick its head in the sand but to react to evidence and the problems of everyday communities, where we see rates of the consumption of cannabis by our youth that really concerns them.

It is very important that we are taking this opportunity today to debate this bill and to consider what our communities are saying. I would like to report a bit on what I have heard and speak about why I am hearing support from my constituents in the Pontiac for this bill.

Number one, there is an appreciation that a public health approach is being brought on this matter. At the end of the day, slapping criminal sanctions on individual Canadians for engaging in the consumption of cannabis is an approach that has not worked. It has landed a lot of people in jail, and in particular, it has landed a lot of indigenous Canadians in jail. That is a major concern for constituents in the riding of Pontiac.

It has allowed criminals, organized crime, to take advantage of a market and sell products in an uncontrolled fashion to the most vulnerable in our community. That is simply not acceptable. We need to do better.

I was playing ping pong the other day in a high school in Fort-Coulange, and I was thinking about how great it was that we were able to play a sport in a school and have fun. I knew that just down hall, at some other point in the day, there would be an opportunity for a kid to buy marijuana. Why? It is because the market is uncontrolled. The market is unregulated, and it is being run by criminals. We can no longer hide, and we can no longer fail Canadians on this important issue.

Our youth deserve protection. It should not be easier to buy marijuana than it is to buy a pack of cigarettes or a six-pack of beer. It should not be that way.

I am proud of our government for acting and for all the consultation it has done. It has consulted with law enforcement, with health experts, and with safety experts, road safety experts in particular. There was a Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation, and pursuant to its advice, this legislation was developed. This was not done in a hurry. It was done after careful consideration.

I am so pleased that caucus members, in particular the parliamentary secretary to the minister of health at the time, came to visit the Pontiac to discuss the concerns of our community. If we are going to get to a place where we legalize but strictly regulate and restrict access to cannabis, we need to do so in a manner that has the full confidence of Canadians.

I appreciate that it is the opposition's job to oppose and to raise issues it is hearing from constituents as well, and that is a good thing. However, this issue of cannabis legalization and strict regulation and control has to be done with a view to the public interest.

● (1735)

I do believe there is a strong consensus emerging in Canada that we can get there by learning from the mistakes and successes internationally, and that we can create a new framework that will ultimately protect our kids, clean up our streets, and get us to a healthier country because, at the end of the day, that is what we all want. We want safer communities, healthier Canadians, and protected kids. It is comforting to many of my Pontiac constituents.

I will admit quite frankly that many seniors in my riding have expressed concerns about whether this will just open the floodgates. The response is no, not at all. In fact, this bill, complete with the investments our government is making, which I will speak to in a moment, is the single best way to tighten the societal measures that will restrict access. When I tell constituents that this bill would make it a specific criminal offence to sell cannabis to a minor and establish significant penalties for those who engage young Canadians in cannabis-related activities, whether consumption or distribution, etc., they understand that this is not a free-for-all. It is absolutely not about that. It is about protecting our communities in a smarter and better way.

[*Translation*]

I would like to take a moment to talk about investments in public education and law enforcement. This is not just a law that our government is presenting; it is a whole investment program that will ensure that these protections and regulations are put in place. For example, our government promised to invest \$46 million over five years in public education, awareness, and surveillance. These additional resources would allow the government to undertake a robust public awareness campaign so that Canadians, especially our children, are well informed about the dangers of driving under the influence of cannabis and other drugs.

Government Orders

The people in our ridings are well aware that, for a long time, young people across Canada have been making the poor decision to smoke, rather than drink, before getting behind the wheel because they think that it is somehow more acceptable or that they will not be caught. We all know that this is not true, but we need an awareness campaign, and our law enforcement officers need to be given the resources they need. We are making sure that happens. We have committed up to \$161 million to train front-line officers to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug-impaired driving, build law enforcement capacity across the country, provide access to drug-screening devices, develop policy, bolster research, and raise public awareness of the dangers of drug-impaired driving.

● (1740)

[*English*]

This is a serious set of legislative measures and investments. What we are really doing is investing in the future of a smarter Canada, which does not stick its head in the sand, does not say there is no health issue, and does not ignore the fact that youth consumption of cannabis products is at unacceptable rates, but does accept that we can do better if we look at the evidence, go into it with our eyes open, and tell ourselves yes, we can do better.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I fully agree that this is going to be a big change for Canada. We know that 88% of Canadians do not use cannabis and will be subject to unintended consequences if we do not do this right.

The member talked about the need for public education, and I certainly heard today from the benches across the aisle that it is no different from alcohol. That is not true for young people, because it is extremely harmful to them. Therefore, part of the problem will be to educate the members on the benches across the aisle. If public education is so important, why did the government do nothing for the last two years on public awareness?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, the answer is clear. There is no truth to the statement that the government has done nothing. This government, by virtue of engaging in this very debate, by virtue of bringing forward legislation, and by virtue of campaigning on the need to shift our approach, has brought this debate to the very front and centre of Canadian politics.

I can tell members that when I go to high schools, which I regularly do in the Pontiac, the very first question raised is cannabis legalization and how it is going to work. The youth of today are hungry for education on this issue, because they have been learning it on their own without the help of government for so many years.

We need to change the channel here and to be honest with our kids. I think my nine year old and six year old are going to look back on this era and think, thank goodness, the government took its head out of the sand.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

However, I would like to remind him that, in their 2015 platform, the Liberals stated that arresting and prosecuting these offences is expensive for our criminal justice system, which was clogged with

far too many minor, non-violent offences. We agreed and they were quite right.

However, the Liberals refused to listen to the NDP's solution, which was to decriminalize marijuana as soon as they were elected. Consequently, people continue to be arrested and charged. People have criminal records. This is going to cause problems for these people when they apply for jobs, look for housing, work abroad, and travel.

What are the Liberals going to do about pardons for people who have a criminal record because the Liberals did not do the right thing?

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I find this very curious because we now find ourselves in a situation where the NDP opposition is interested in the issue of decriminalization of various drugs.

The Liberal Party is prepared to discuss legalization, very strict regulation, and control of drugs. However, we are not interested in the notion of decriminalization, whether of cannabis or of any other drug.

I concur that we are on the same wavelength when it comes to focusing on public health issues. I see that we agree on that. However, Canadians are not interested in moving forward with decriminalization.

I am convinced that by using an approach based on evidence, Canada will head down the right path one step at a time.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for mentioning it is a program, and not just a law. During the previous administration, 10 years of doing nothing made it much easier for our kids to buy cannabis than a pack of cigarettes or a bottle of beer.

Could my hon. colleague expand on how it is good to have a combination of legislation and education on this particular issue?

● (1745)

Mr. William Amos: Mr. Speaker, that is an important question.

Yes, it would be inappropriate for this government to advance a legislative proposal without significant funds, and that is exactly what we are seeing. Canadians expect this. They expect us to have a series of measures that will educate and protect in collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners. This is one aspect I may not have raised sufficiently in my earlier points.

At the end of the day, this is a joint initiative. I have been really impressed by how the provinces have come to the table and been working hard. As people are well aware, there have been meetings of high-level officials every two weeks for many months. That is because we all understand that this is going to take a collaborative effort to bring us to a place where we are focusing on the health outcomes of Canadians, the safety of Canadians, and not simply on slapping criminal penalties on those who otherwise should not be in jail.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:45 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[English]

The question is on Motion No. 2. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[English]

The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of Bill C-45.

Call in the members.

• (1815)

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 2.

• (1825)

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negatived on the following division:)

Government Orders

(Division No. 397)

YEAS

Members

Aubin	Benson
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau	Cannings
Caron	Choquette
Christopherson	Cullen
Davies	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseau	Duvall
Garrison	Hardcastle
Hughes	Johns
Julian	Laverdière
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Moore
Mulcair	Nantel
Rankin	Stetski
Trudel— 35	

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Allison	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Beaulieu	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Bemier	Berthold
Bezan	Bittle
Blair	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boucher
Boudrias	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brown	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Clarke
Clement	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Deltell
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Drouin
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Egliniski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Freeland	Fuhr
Gallant	Garneau
Généreux	Genius
Gerretsen	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Harder
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hehr
Hoback	Holland

Government Orders

Housefather	Hutchings
Iacono	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kelly	Kent
Khalid	Khera
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lambropoulos	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leitch
Leslie	Levitt
Liepert	Lightbound
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Lukowski
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Maloney
Maril	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Ng
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	O'Toole
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Rempel	Richards
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Shiple	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Sorenson
Spengemann	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Tootoo	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Viersen
Virani	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Yurdiga	Zahid
Zimmer— 263	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 defeated.*[Translation]*

The next question is on Motion No. 3.

● (1835)

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

(Division No. 398)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreesen	Egliniski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genius
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kusie	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukowski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCaughey (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Motz	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
Obhrai	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Rayes	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shiple	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 90

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beaulieu
Bennett	Benson
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brousseau
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen

Government Orders

Choquette
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hébert
 Holland
 Hughes
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Leboutillier
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouelletle
 Peschisolido
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan

Christopherson
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhaliwal
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Freeland
 Gameau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Khalid
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marcil
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 Ng
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani

Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 208

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 3 defeated.

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in.

The Speaker: 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:

• (1840)

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

(Division No. 399)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brosseau
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Erskine-Smith	Eyking
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Fortier	Fragiskatos

Private Members' Business

Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)	Calkins	Carrie
Freeland	Fuhr	Clarke	Clement
Garneau	Garrison	Cooper	Deltell
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones	Diotte	Doherty
Goodale	Gould	Dreeshen	Eglinski
Graham	Grewal	Falk	Fast
Hajdu	Hardcastle	Finley	Fortin
Hardie	Harvey	Gallant	Généreux
Hébert	Hehr	Genuis	Gill
Holland	Housefather	Gladu	Godin
Hughes	Hutchings	Gourde	Harder
Iacono	Johns	Hoback	Jeneroux
Joly	Jones	Kelly	Kent
Jordan	Jowhari	Kitchen	Kmiec
Julian	Khalid	Kusie	Lake
Khera	Lambropoulos	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Leitch
Lametti	Lamoureux	LeBlanc	Liepert
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lefebvre	Lukiwski
Laverdière	LeBlanc	Levitt	Maguire
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre	Lockhart	McCauley (Edmonton West)
Leslie	Levitt	Longfield	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Lightbound	Lockhart	MacGregor	Nater
Long	Longfield	Malcolmson	Nuttall
Ludwig	MacGregor	Masse (Windsor West)	O'Toole
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Malcolmson	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Pauzé
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen	Poilievre
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)		May (Cambridge)	Rempel
Mathysen		McCrimmon	Saroya
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)	McGuinty	Schmale
McCrimmon	McDonald	McKenna	Sorensen
McGuinty	McKay	McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Ste-Marie
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	Mendicino	Stubbs
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	Thériault
Mendicino	Mihychuk	Monsef	Van Kesteren
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)		Moore	Viersen
Monsef		Morrissey	Warawa
Moore	Morneau	Murray	Waugh
Morrissey	Mulcair	Nassif	Wong
Murray	Nantel	Ng	Zimmer — 97
Nassif	Nault	Oliphant	
Ng	O'Connell	O'Regan	
Oliphant	Oliver	Paradis	
O'Regan	Ouellette	Peterson	
Paradis	Peschisolido	Picard	
Peterson	Philpott	Qualtrough	
Picard	Poissant	Ratansi	
Qualtrough	Rankin	Robillard	
Ratansi	Rioux	Romanado	
Robillard	Rodriguez	Ruimy	
Romanado	Rota	Sahota	
Ruimy	Rusnak	Sajjan	
Sahota	Saini	Sangha	
Sajjan	Samson	Scarpaleggia	
Sangha	Sarai	Schulte	
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke	Shanahan	
Schulte	Sgro	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	
Shanahan	Sheehan	Sikand	
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sohi	
Sikand	Simms	Spengemann	
Sohi	Sorbara	Tabbara	
Spengemann	Stetski	Tassi	
Tabbara	Tan	Trudel	
Tassi	Tootoo	Vandenbeld	
Trudel	Vandal	Virani	
Vandenbeld	Vaughan	Wilkinson	
Virani	Whalen	Wrzesnewskyj	
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould	Zahid — 201	
Wrzesnewskyj	Young		
Zahid — 201			

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benzen
Bergen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Brassard	Brown

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being 6:42 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1845)

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC) moved that Bill C-365, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firefighting equipment), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-365, an act that seeks to amend the Criminal Code of Canada in relation to mischief or theft of firefighting equipment.

Firefighters count on their equipment to be in place and ready to go at a moment's notice, 365 days a year. However, if that equipment is not ready to be used as a result of theft or mischief, the safety of firefighters and the public they protect can be quickly undermined.

Private Members' Business

Before I go any further, I must express my appreciation for the support I have received for this bill from the firefighting community across Canada. I would like to thank the International Association of Fire Fighters Canada and the 23,000 firefighters it represents for their support. I would also like to thank the Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association for its support. Members of the Fire Prevention Officers Association of BC have also issued their support, and I thank them. I also thank the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs and the 3,500 fire halls it represents across Canada for their support and getting the word out to support this bill.

This past summer during the worst fire season in British Columbia's history, I was disturbed by reports of firefighting equipment being stolen and vandalized when firefighting crews needed their equipment the most. As it turns out, mischief and theft of firefighting equipment is not isolated to wildfire lands in B.C. Unfortunately, there are instances of mischief and theft of firefighting equipment right across Canada.

Such actions can appear to be a minor in threat to public safety, but this appearance is deceiving. Take, for instance, a case in Hamilton, Ontario earlier this year when an individual was arrested and charged for stealing fire nozzles from inside two apartment buildings. The reality is that whether mischief or theft of firefighting occurs in a fire hall, a fire camp, or an apartment building, it can quickly increase the danger to our firefighters and the Canadians they help to protect.

Fire is a hazardous threat that each of us must contend with whether we are at work or at home. Indeed, this Parliament building that we convene in today was rebuilt 100 years ago, one year after being burnt to the ground by fire in 1916.

When Canadians face the destructive force of fire, Canada's firefighters and their equipment serve as the first line of defence. From coast to coast to coast, Canadians depend on their local firefighters to answer the call of duty when fire threatens their homes, lives, and their loved ones. Canada's firefighters answer this call of duty, and I know all members share my appreciation for their selfless dedication.

I am glad to see colleagues from all sides at this debate today, because it is not just an important debate, but also an important opportunity to support Canada's firefighters and fire halls from coast to coast to coast. It is an opportunity for the House to establish clear denunciation and deterrence for mischief and theft related to firefighting equipment in the Criminal Code.

The bill proposes a new and specific offence for theft of firefighting equipment that causes actual danger to life. The proposed offence is necessitated by inconsistency in the code's provisions applicable to cases of mischief or theft of firefighting equipment, especially in cases where such mischief or theft causes actual danger to life.

Currently under the code, vandalism or tampering is treated as mischief. Mischief that causes actual danger to life can be prosecuted as an indictable offence and is punishable with a sentence of up to life imprisonment. However, the code contains no provision for theft of property that causes actual danger to life. In the absence of such a provision, theft offences, including theft causing actual danger to

life, are limited to maximum penalties of two years' imprisonment for theft under \$5,000 or 10 years' imprisonment for theft over \$5,000.

● (1850)

It is not hard to see how theft of firefighting equipment could quickly cause danger to life regardless of the monetary value of the equipment. Take for instance the fire nozzles in apartment buildings or the fire extinguishers at a service station. Although these pieces of equipment may not be of high monetary value, they are often the first line of defence in an emergency situation.

By establishing this proposed offence for theft and the corresponding maximum penalty, the bill would establish consistency in the Criminal Code's provisions applicable to mischief and theft of firefighting equipment when such offences cause actual danger to life. To be clear, the proposed maximum penalty of life imprisonment for theft of firefighting equipment that causes actual danger to life would not be an automatic or mandatory sentence. One reason for this is that prosecutors considering charges for a specific case would first need to elect this offence and win the conviction on the charge for the maximum sentence to be considered.

A conviction under this proposed offence would require a prosecutor to demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt: (a) that there was a theft, (b) that the theft included firefighting equipment, and (c) that the theft caused actual danger to life.

Because this proposed penalty does not stipulate a minimum sentence, the application of the sentence would need to be elected by the sentencing judge at his or her discretion. I hope it is clear that we are not considering throwing someone in jail for a long time for stealing a fire extinguisher without actual danger to life having been caused. This new proposed offence will confront acts of theft that cause danger to life when firefighting equipment is stolen.

For this new offence, Bill C-365 proposes the same condition of causing actual danger to life and penalty parameters that currently exist in the code for mischief causing actual danger to life. Considering that theft of firefighting equipment can cause the same danger to life that mischief of firefighting equipment can cause, it is appropriate that the same penalty options be available to prosecutors and judges to work in cases where actual danger to life has been caused.

Private Members' Business

The second part of Bill C-365 proposes to establish mischief related to firefighting equipment as an aggravating circumstance. This aggravating circumstance would add gravity to the offence of mischief related to firefighting equipment in the course of a judge's determination of a sentence. It is at this stage of the process that a judge considers both aggravating and mitigating circumstances to ascertain the appropriate sentence. The aggravating circumstance would establish in the Criminal Code the principle that mischief related to firefighting equipment is more serious than simple mischief.

The third component of Bill C-365 seeks to establish clarity on what the objective of the sentence should be when a judge is determining a sentence for any theft of firefighting equipment, regardless of whether or not danger to life has been caused.

As I discussed moments ago, the proposed new offence focuses on theft of firefighting equipment that causes actual danger to life. The theft of firefighting equipment that does not cause actual danger to life would continue to be prosecuted in the Criminal Code's existing provisions, namely, theft offences under section 322 and penalties under section 334.

The key to this part of the bill is that for the sake of sentencing, it identifies the theft of firefighting equipment as a more serious offence than simple theft of other property. As a result, the sentence should focus on the objective of denunciation of the crime and establishing deterrence. Again, the sentencing objective would be waived by the sentencing judge with all the facts of the case and all of the relevant circumstances to determine the appropriate sentence. This special consideration is necessitated when theft involves firefighting equipment that is in place to protect people's lives.

• (1855)

For the sake of comparison, section 718.03 of the Criminal Code has a similar sentencing objective for anyone who kills, maims, wounds, poisons, or injures a law enforcement or military animal. The sentencing objective sets these animals apart from animals the same way the proposed sentencing objective of Bill C-365 would differentiate between property and firefighting equipment when it comes to mischief and theft.

In closing, Bill C-365 has been conceived and developed through research of real-life situations faced by firefighters and the Canadians they help protect. We know that mischief and theft related to firefighting equipment happens. We know that it is more serious than simple mischief or theft. When these offences involve firefighting equipment, there is an inherent risk to public safety, and danger to life can be caused. We know that the Criminal Code, as it stands today, does not offer prosecutors and judges the same range of offences and penalties for theft of firefighting equipment as it does for mischief related to firefighting equipment.

The proposals in this bill are balanced and appropriate, because they do not seek to impede or limit prosecutorial or judicial discretion. In actuality, the proposals in this bill seek to provide prosecutors and judges with more flexibility to deliver stiffer sentences when such sentences are required, especially when danger to life is involved.

The Criminal Code's fundamental principle for sentencing states, "A sentence must be proportionate to the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender." The proposals in this bill would allow prosecutors and judges to better uphold this principle when dealing with cases where mischief or theft of firefighting equipment has occurred, especially when danger to life has been caused. When mischief or theft undermines the capacity of our firefighters to protect our community, the mischief or theft deserves to be denounced by this House.

Canadians across our nation depend on the ability of our firefighters to do their jobs. Firefighters need to be able to do their jobs with the equipment put there to protect us all. Canadians depend on us, as members of Parliament, to be responsible and responsive to the realities across our nation when we have the opportunity to denounce and deter.

I certainly hope all members will support Bill C-365 and support what it proposes for the firefighters and the equipment that support our communities and helps keep them safe 365 days a year.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as many know, I have stood in the House a number of times and talked about the unprecedented fire season we had in British Columbia and in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George. Not only did our firefighters and those tasked to protect homes and lives in my community have to worry about the fire and the unpredictability of the fire, but they were going out time and again, after laying the lines, to find, unbelievably, that the water bladders, lines, and pumps put in place to fight the fires were stolen, damaged, slashed, or vandalized.

This is a very important bill, and I hope the government will approve it. I know that our hon. colleague has done considerable work on this and that a lot of thought has gone into it.

We are also hearing in British Columbia about thefts of naloxone and paramedic kits from the backs of paramedic ambulances and other firefighting equipment. Does our hon. colleague's bill also deal with theft from that firefighting equipment? It is firefighting equipment, as it is life and limb we are dealing with. Is he hearing about other fire equipment that has been stolen, and would it be covered by this bill?

• (1900)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, indeed, this question came up during the research on this bill. We were asked this by firefighters a couple of different times. What we have determined is that the definition of firefighting equipment would rely on the principles of statutory interpretation within Canadian law and that each case would likely have to be determined in the courts as to what constitutes firefighting equipment. The directive we received from legal counsel was that it would not be correct to try to identify every piece of firefighting equipment, simply because something could be identified or invented next week that may not be on the list and so would be excluded. It would be up to the courts to decide what constituted the definition of firefighting equipment.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent description. Perhaps for those on the other side, our hon. colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap is from British Columbia, as I am. With reference to our national firefighting, it is a little different in British Columbia, and I would think throughout other provinces. Our paramedics and EMTs are not only part of the British Columbia Ambulance Service, they are also firefighters. They are often the first on the scene in cases of overdoses and deaths.

Perhaps my hon. colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap could provide other examples of theft of firefighting equipment. He obviously has done a lot of research on this, and it is well thought out.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I did do a lot of research on the bill. There are many cases across Canada of theft of firefighting equipment or damage to it. In fact, less than two weeks ago I had fire chiefs from New Brunswick in my office. They were here on their lobby day on the Hill. We discussed their concerns about legislation and so on. When they had finished their portion, they added that my bill was perfect timing. They had a fire truck stolen in New Brunswick last week. They did manage to recover the truck, but the jaws of life were missing. These instances are happening all over the place.

When I was home in my riding last week, I met with firefighters on their Tuesday night practice night, which is common right across Canada. Tuesday night is volunteer firefighter practice night. When I was speaking with them, many of the members from my riding had actually been up to the Cariboo—Prince George riding on structural protection units. They were speaking of cases where the fire chief actually had to take the fire truck from the hall to his house at night to ensure it was not damaged or equipment was stolen. He could not even leave it locked in the fire hall because of the risk of theft.

This happens right across the country. It is not just an isolated incident. It is a greater threat than what we saw in B.C. this summer.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for all of his work on this private member's bill. The purpose of the bill is an important one: protecting our firefighters. They are truly our country's heroes.

[*English*]

At the same time, the government has a number of concerns, and I will outline those.

It is my pleasure to speak today to Bill C-365, an act to amend the Criminal Code for firefighting equipment. The bill proposes to make changes to the Criminal Code to denounce and deter the theft of or mischief against firefighting equipment. The bill appears to be in response to various reports of firefighting equipment being stolen and vandalized during, most recently, the wildfires in British Columbia in 2017, although I note that my colleague referred to other instances that had come to his attention.

Before I discuss some of the specific proposals of Bill C-365, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge all British Columbians

affected by the natural disaster of these fires. I can only imagine how difficult it has been for those people who were asked to evacuate their homes at a moment's notice, without knowing whether they would have anything left upon their return.

I would also like to acknowledge the brave efforts of firefighting crews that worked in extremely difficult conditions to try to bring those fires under control. Their work limited the destruction and devastation caused by this natural disaster.

[*Translation*]

All Canadians owe these brave women and men a debt of gratitude.

[*English*]

The 2017 wildfire season has been the most destructive on record. Last August, the B.C. Wildfire Service information officer reported an estimated 894,941 hectares had burned, surpassing a mark set in 1958, when 855,000 hectares of land had been destroyed.

It is equally important to acknowledge the devastating impacts that this natural disaster has had, especially on B.C. first nations communities. I am aware that our government is committed to continuing its support of British Columbia and B.C. first nations communities facing the immediate and long-term impacts on wildfires. I was pleased to hear about the creation of the ad hoc cabinet committee on federal recovery efforts for the 2017 BC wildfires by the Government of Canada. The committee was created to advise our government on its role in mitigation, recovery, and rebuilding efforts in response to the wildfires.

On September 5, 2017, the committee met with members of the B.C. government, first nations community leaders, and representatives from the Canadian Red Cross to discuss progress and ensure a coordinated response to the wildfires. I understand the work of this committee to be focused on helping the people of British Columbia with the immediate and long-term effects of these destructive wildfires.

Likewise, I was happy to learn, and all those affected by this natural disaster can be reassured, that our government will contribute up to \$38.6 million to the Canadian Red Cross, which is equivalent to the amount that the Canadian Red Cross is providing in support to British Columbia wildfire victims. These funds will be directed towards wildfire evacuees as they recover and re-establish their livelihoods.

Private Members' Business

I am proud that our government will continue to work in collaboration with Emergency Management British Columbia and on-reserve first nations communities to establish and develop recovery plans and reimburse eligible response and recovery costs.

Prevention is also an important part of the equation. That is why our government has also committed to conducting a review of the response to these fires, in full partnership with the government of British Columbia and B.C first nations communities, to not only improve emergency management, but establish preventative measures that can be undertaken to better respond to future fires.

All of this context is important, as I understand that it is animated and informed, much of the reason for this private member's bill. Thus, let me return to the substance of Bill C-365 which, as my colleague pointed out, proposes three changes to the Criminal Code.

First, it would create a new indictable offence of theft of firefighting equipment that causes actual danger to life. The offence would be punishable by a proposed maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Second, the bill would require courts that sentence an offender for mischief to consider, as an "aggravating circumstance" at sentencing, that the property in relation to which the mischief occurred was firefighting equipment.

Last, the bill would require courts to give primary consideration to the sentencing objectives of denunciation and deterrence in all situations involving theft of firefighting equipment, that is, even in those thefts that do not require actual danger to life.

Under the law as it stands today, this conduct is already captured under offences of general application such as theft, mischief, mischief endangering life, and criminal negligence causing bodily harm or death. Similarly, the Criminal Code already provides general authority for sentencing courts to consider all relevant aggravating and mitigating factors relating to the gravity of the offence or the degree of responsibility of the offender.

Let me say that in my experience in criminal courts, the judiciary are very adept at listening to these aggravating factors as they are presented on a case-by-case basis. In those circumstances where the property involves theft of equipment that is used for the purposes of emergency response, that would almost certainly be considered as an aggravating factor that would have a negative impact on the length of the sentence.

The Minister of Justice's mandate letter requires her to conduct a review of our criminal justice system and sentencing reforms over the past decade. I, and many of my colleagues on this side, have spoken about the importance of the comprehensive criminal justice review that this government has committed to undertaking.

I know that this review is seeking to ensure that our laws increase community safety, address gaps in the law, and ensure that current provisions are aligned with the objectives of the criminal justice system. The mandate letter to the Minister of Justice requires that all legislative initiatives be informed by performance measurement evidence and feedback from Canadians and it directs the minister to ensure that resources are directed towards those initiatives that have the greatest positive impact on the lives of Canadians.

It is worth noting that often there is an inclination on the part of many, in response to a crisis or some immediate tragedy, to seek an immediate amendment to the Criminal Code in the belief, often sincerely held, that the criminalization of that conduct will prevent its recurrence. Sadly, a legislative solution may not always be the most effective means of ensuring that this conduct will not occur again.

• (1910)

[*Translation*]

Often the most effective solution to a problem is one that considers a more comprehensive response. I would invite all members of this House to consider the most effective way to redress this specific situation. I look forward to a thorough discussion and debate on the merits of this bill, including a discussion on performance measurement and the evidence available to support this legislative initiative.

[*English*]

In conclusion, I would like to thank the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for providing us the opportunity to consider this issue. The bill is a well-intentioned proposal targeting serious conduct that can endanger the lives of our communities and fire response personnel. However, I wonder whether the solution to the problem lies uniquely in legislative amendments or whether such conduct can be effectively addressed through other potential avenues.

I will be closely following this debate, and I look forward to hearing from other members on the potential impacts of this bill.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise and indicate from the outset that I oppose this bill for three main reasons that I would like to articulate.

First, the sentencing called for is excessive. Although the crime and its consequences are indeed serious, we reserve 25-year prison sentences for those convicted of first degree murder, not for theft of the kind referred to in this bill.

Second, the Criminal Code already addresses mischief that causes actual danger to life, where if this kind of claim is proven the result is already a life prison sentence.

Third, harsher penalties simply do not serve as a deterrent for those who may commit this type of crime. Instead of handing down harsher sentences, which ultimately will not reduce the instances of theft or vandalism, the NDP believes that resources should be focused on crime prevention to pre-emptively deal with the serious issue that this bill would purport to address.

I want to say at the outset that I agree entirely with the sponsor of this bill, the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap, that tampering with life-saving equipment is a very serious offence. Stealing or vandalizing that equipment can have far more severe consequences than simply stealing merchandise from a store would suggest. I understand my hon. colleague's point in highlighting the issue specific to this kind of theft or vandalism.

Private Members' Business

• (1915)

We are mindful of the examples in British Columbia this past season, where a water pump and hoses were stolen from the Harrop Creek wildfire, northeast of Nelson. It caused a serious impact on the effectiveness of firefighting activities, posing a safety risk not just to the first responders but to the general public at large.

There was another example of vandalism destroying communications equipment near Creston, B.C. There it was radio equipment that was destroyed in a radio communications tower. Once again, that crime put the safety of firefighting personnel at risk.

However, other measures can be taken to address the theft and vandalism of firefighting equipment. We support preventative measures that can be used to curtail this very disruptive, dangerous behaviour. Focusing on prevention allows us to minimize harm and reduce the burden on our crowded court system.

Instead of relying on punitive action to address crimes that have already been committed, the more effective remedy is to reduce those incidents in the first place. We believe in working with first responders to fix the problem with increased surveillance of vulnerable areas and educating the public, particularly young people, about the harmful repercussions of tampering with equipment.

Reducing the instances of criminal behaviour is a far more worthwhile endeavour than throwing the book at someone once a tragedy has already occurred. If I may be a little colloquial, focusing solely on punishment is a little like locking the barn door after the horse has already escaped.

Before I return to the matter of discussing our reasons for opposition, I would like to take a moment to make a very important clarification. Impeding first responders from doing their job is incredibly serious. It has costly consequences. I would not want to the hon. member to confuse our opposition to the bill with a lack of support for first responders and the incredibly difficult work they do. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Before I hear any rhetoric about being “tough on crime” or accusations of who is not “tough on crime”, we are committed to policies and practices that work, not to sound bites.

Again, we are not disputing the seriousness of the crime at issue. We are simply in disagreement on the best way to deal with the problem. We know that first responders are the first line of defence against disaster. Whether they are firefighters fighting wildfires burning out of control or paramedics waging a war in the opioid crisis, we are here to assist them and bring forward policies that will help make their lives easier.

In British Columbia this past summer, as the member pointed out, we had what Premier John Horgan called the worst wildfire season since the 1950s. These are costly disasters for the natural environment, the wildlife that depends on the environment, and of course human life, safety, and property. Families lose their homes and the tragedy is obvious for all to see.

These wildfires are costing us millions of dollars and are devastating. More than 870 fires sparked across B.C. since April 1, scorching 5,090 square kilometres, and \$211.7 million was spent

on fire suppression efforts. We in British Columbia are looking to the federal government to do its share to help with financial reparation.

I will return to the specific provisions of Bill C-365, first with respect to excessive sentencing for theft and an unnecessary amendment. I understand the incredible emotional and financial toll these disasters have taken on Canadians. However, I have practised and taught law and when dealing with criminal matters, we always have to be measured, well-reasoned, and proportionate in our response.

Amendments to the Criminal Code must be undertaken with clear heads and a commitment to determine the best course of action to correct the specific problem sought to be addressed. Section 334 of the Criminal Code already punishes theft, including imprisonment for a term of up to 10 years in certain contexts. With regard to theft, therefore, the code is clear. I do not think it is necessary to include firefighting equipment in the list of things to be stolen.

• (1920)

That leads to the second point, where I consider the amendment somewhat redundant. If there is a case where one can prove irrefutably that tampering resulted in danger to the life of another individual, we already have “Mischief” under section 430. Where damages occur to property, or the like, or there is interference with people in the lawful use of their property, there can again be serious consequences, including imprisonment for life. We already have the tools to do the job.

Finally, there is no consensus that harsher penalties will serve as effective deterrents to those who may commit crimes. I will quote from an article written by Professors Doob, Webster, and Gartner in 2014. They stated, “At this point, we think it is fair to say that we know of no reputable criminologist who has looked carefully at the overall body of research literature on 'deterrence through sentencing' who believes that crime rates will be reduced, through deterrence, by raising the severity of sentences handed down in criminal courts.”

An *Economist* article also cited a review by Steven Durlauf of the University of Wisconsin and Daniel Nagin at Carnegie Mellon University, who found little evidence that criminals responded to harsher sentencing, and much stronger evidence that increasing the certainty of punishment deterred crime. We heard that loud and clear in the testimony at committee on Bill C-46 with respect to driving under the influence of alcohol or cannabis. They said in the summary of their article that “This matters for policy, as it suggests that locking vast numbers of people in jail is not only expensive, but useless as a deterrent.” That is what the literature shows.

Private Members' Business

In conclusion, there are already measures in place in our Criminal Code to ensure that truly reckless, life-endangering mischief is handled in the appropriate way. We have to work collaboratively with first responders to ensure that the public is aware of the harmful results of tampering with firefighting equipment. Awareness campaigns have had a powerful influence on the scourge of drunk driving. They may well be relevant in this context as well.

While all forms of vandalism are certainly to be discouraged, there is a difference here that must be communicated. We have to work with our first responders. I think it would be far more productive, therefore, to discuss ways in which we could provide better support to them than simply creating another offence. Once the damage is done, it is done. There is no going back to undo the harm caused. If harsher sentences with regard to theft are there, these do not necessarily deter would-be criminals. These are not the most effective way of addressing a very significant concern raised by this bill.

Let us do the hard work of truly supporting our first responders and helping them implement measures that would reduce these incidents in the first place.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the wildfires in interior British Columbia were some of the most devastating wildfires ever seen in literally generations. It is our hope that the people who were affected by them are recovering.

I also want to acknowledge the first responders who did a magnificent job at containing, as much as they could and as best they could, the wildfires that took place.

It is on this premise that my hon. colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap has brought this private member's bill to the House. The interesting part about this is the support he has received from the various organizations that were, first and foremost, on the ground fighting those fires. They had to deal with equipment having been tampered with or stolen. They are the ones who are solidly in support of what my hon. colleague has brought forward.

In his speech, my colleague spoke about the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Volunteer Firefighters Association of BC, the Fire Prevention Officers Association of BC, and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs. These groups represent 3,500 fire stations in the country. They are solidly behind the legislation and the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code.

I bring a different perspective to this. As some members are aware, I spent over 30 years as a firefighter. I understand the life safety issues. I understand as well the importance of having proper functioning equipment available as a matter of safety. Therefore, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today and support what my hon. colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap has proposed.

Just for review and as a matter of background, my colleague has proposed amendments to the Criminal Code to establish specific penalties relating to the theft of firefighting equipment. The bill would also create an aggravating circumstance for sentencing for mischief involving firefighting equipment. Finally, the bill would establish sentencing objectives in relation to the theft of firefighting equipment.

While the Criminal Code currently contains a maximum penalty of a life sentence for mischief causing actual danger to life, which could be applied to tampering or vandalizing firefighting equipment, it does not contain an offence for theft creating actual danger to life. The bill seeks to establish such an offence for theft of firefighting equipment that creates this danger of life. The bill also seeks to provide judges with greater flexibility and crown counsels with more tools when dealing with mischief or theft related to firefighting equipment causing actual danger to life.

I can speak to that issue specifically. In my time as a firefighter, I know all about the preparation it takes and the level of training involved in using the equipment that is available. If that equipment is not available to firefighters, if it has been tampered with or if it has been stolen, then what good is it to firefighting crews?

As the hon. member said, it was not just the interior wildfires of BC where firefighting equipment was stolen or tampered with. It happens right across the country in larger cities such as Toronto, Halifax, and Vancouver, where on a day in and day out basis firefighting crews deal with the theft of equipment. In some circumstances and based on what is happening at the scene and inattention of the crews, they may not necessarily know that equipment has been stolen until they get to the scene of a fire or until they get to the scene of a medical emergency, such as a car accident or a pedestrian having been struck. Then they are not able to deal with the situation because some of the equipment has been either tampered with or stolen.

● (1925)

If there is anything this piece of legislation does, it is that it would provide a deterrent to those who are thinking about tampering with or stealing firefighting equipment from those who protect us and those who need that equipment the most.

As I said earlier, the summer of 2017 was the worst wildfire season in British Columbia's recorded history. Many circumstances arose, and the hon. member from the NDP talked about some of those situations, where firefighting equipment was tampered with and stolen. That is when firefighters need the equipment the most. The bill's proposed three additions to the Criminal Code are related to this. The key aspect of the bill is that it deals with causing danger to life. Causing danger to life is not a new term within the Criminal Code, but this bill speaks specifically to the issues of tampering with or theft of firefighting equipment. As members have heard, subsection 430(2) of the Criminal Code prohibits mischief causing danger to life and prescribes a maximum life sentence for this new offence. Therefore, the new offence of theft of firefighting equipment causing actual danger to life would be consistent with the offence of mischief causing danger to life.

We have heard some of the arguments and counter-arguments that have been made about this and I find it surprising that there would not be broad-based support. We talked about not using the rhetoric of "tough on crime" and using it as a deterrent. If we cannot use this as a deterrent either for those B.C. wildfires or for municipal firefighters to protect our firefighters and therefore protect the people they would deal with in any lifesaving emergency, then I cannot understand whom we are trying to protect in that situation.

Private Members' Business

I know the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada spoke about the fact that the justice minister, per her mandate letter, is reviewing all aspects of the Criminal Code. What the hon. member for North Okanagan—Shuswap is asking for is a specific amendment to the Criminal Code based on what he has heard from those who are first and foremost affected by this situation. That is not only the firefighters who dealt with the situations in British Columbia, but also firefighters right across the country. Therefore, it is important to understand that we need to support those who support us with respect to emergency responders, and that is why I am asking for the support of my colleagues here in the House.

I also want to bring up an interesting discussion that I had recently. As most members of the House will know, the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs had a lobby day on Parliament Hill. Members of the association spoke about a situation that the government should be looking at with respect to heavy urban search and rescue teams. Like our American friends and firefighters from other countries, Canadian firefighters often go to the U.S. to assist with fire disasters and large and extreme forest fires. It is interesting that in spite of the fact that HUSAR teams are funded by the government, Canadian HUSAR teams are not qualified for the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group, which means that international deployment is good for international relations and international reciprocity. Canadian heavy urban search and rescue teams are looking for the same treatment as forest fire suppression teams and to be able to move across borders to assist and train. I know that people were on the Hill asking for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to build up HUSAR task forces qualified to deploy across not just provincial boundaries but also international boundaries.

As I said at the onset, the interesting part of this is that the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap says that there is broad-based support among the firefighting community for this type of amendment to the Criminal Code, not just to protect the fire chiefs' firefighters, the International Association of Fire Fighters, but also to make sure they are capable and have the ability to protect communities across this country.

● (1930)

It is for that reason that I am proud to stand today and support my hon. colleague for what I think is a bill that is needed and wanted by our firefighting community.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and address the House on a number of different types of issues that are brought forward. I understand and appreciate why the member has brought forward this legislation. During the press statement, the member said his objective was to try to fill a gap that he believes exists within the legislation. It is very admirable that the member looked at ways in which he might be able to assist.

I have had opportunities over the years to work very closely with first responders, and in particular, firefighters, not only here in Ottawa but also in my home province of Manitoba. Whether it is provincial legislation or federal initiatives that have been taken, there

is no doubt there are things government can do to try to make a difference.

I think of individuals like Alex Forrest, who has done a fantastic job of expressing the needs of firefighters. Often when we think of firefighters, we think of those who are being paid, but there is a significant contribution that individuals make as volunteer firefighters. I would like to start by acknowledging the efforts of firefighters for the fine work that they do, day in and day out, never knowing when they are going to be called out, but always being prepared to meet the call, whatever it might be.

We hear a lot about the significant forest fires in the province of British Columbia this past year. When we had our national caucus in Kelowna, a number of my colleagues talked a great deal about the forest fires in B.C. in terms of the impact not only in the local communities but far beyond. I think of northern Alberta where the entire community of Fort McMurray was literally destroyed and how the firefighters came to the plate not only at the time but also afterward. Throughout communities in British Columbia and Alberta, individuals come out in a very tangible way to repair the damage that has been caused by fire.

As a whole, people are very much aware. I have had the opportunity to see a prairie fire and how quickly it spreads with a marginal wind. It can be a very scary situation in rural communities where we try to do what we can with water bombers or individuals on the ground being cognizant of their environment and how quickly a gentle shift in wind can change the dynamic quite significantly. It is very dangerous, and we want to ensure that we have the best equipment for Canadians to fight fires, particularly in remote or rural communities or municipalities, no matter what size they might be.

When I look at the legislation, I can appreciate the message the member is trying to get across. The parliamentary secretary responded to the member's legislation after he introduced it, and in essence said this and I want to repeat it. When the member talked at the press conference, from what I understand, he talked about filling a gap.

● (1935)

It is important that we recognize that offences in general application, including theft, mischief, mischief endangering life, and criminal negligence causing death or bodily harm, could be used in the circumstances where firefighting equipment is stolen or vandalized. I do not think I am alone in making this suggestion. I do not think that there really is a gap, and do not necessarily concur with the member's comments that the proposed legislation is warranted, or at least in his explanation he was not able to convince me that it is warranted. However, I understand and appreciate just how important it is that firefighters have the necessary equipment to combat fires.

I will make a different suggestion to my colleagues across the way on this issue. I believe we can do more through education than we can through this type of legislation. This is an area I would love to see more discussion and debate on inside the chamber. The educational component is very important.

Adjournment Proceedings

I made reference to the spreading of a prairie fire. I think most Canadians would be quite surprised to learn how quickly a large area can be consumed by fire. We are not talking about hours, but in minutes acres of land with trees or prairie grass can be consumed. Also, many of these fires are not caused by natural disasters. They can occur from open-pit fires, for example. I do not believe that we do enough in terms of promoting and encouraging education on these types of things.

As much as I appreciate what the member across the way is advocating, I am not sure if in fact this is an area that really needs to see new legislation. At times the Conservative Party tends to want to sound tough on criminal activities, but if we take a look at the current criminal laws in place, I believe they suffice and do meet these needs.

The Prime Minister always talks about room to improve and that we can always do better. One area I would suggest that we could improve and do better on is providing more leadership on the issue of general awareness and public education, and getting the different stakeholders together in terms of what it is that we could be doing from a national perspective. I do not want to be critical of municipalities or other organizations that are out there, but I think that we need to see more of a coordinated approach in dealing with issues such as this through education, whether it is in our schools, public advertising through different budgetary allotments, municipal, provincial, or even national. This would go a lot further in protecting our firefighters and so forth.

One of the biggest initiatives that I want to make reference to is the creation of the fund for families of firefighters who fall in the line of duty, which the government recently initiated. It shows that the government is open and listening to what our firefighters have to say. Also, when I was in the Manitoba legislature, we looked at ways in which we could make changes to workers compensation to assist our firefighters.

I am very much open to ideas about how we can improve the environment in which our firefighters are called upon to serve. I respect the fine work they do day in and day out. I commend all of the firefighters who have been combatting fires in Alberta, or anywhere in Canada, and particularly in the province of British Columbia because of its difficulties this past year.

• (1940)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate the member for North Okanagan—Shuswap for this piece of legislation. As I listened to the debate tonight, I want to express how profoundly disappointed I am in the response from both the NDP and the Liberal members, who have indicated that they are not going to support this piece of legislation. When I first heard about what he was proposing, and I saw the bill tabled, having gone through the worst fire season in British Columbia, and having lived in the midst of it, I was very excited about what he was looking at doing. There are times in this House where we are very disappointed with what the other parties do and how they respond. Certainly, there is no question that this is one of those times.

We need to put this into a bit of perspective. I will focus predominantly on our volunteer fire departments, our first nations

fire departments, who work their hearts out to support communities. They fundraise for their equipment. They train every weekend or one evening a week, then are called to go to very difficult circumstances and can arrive there and find out that someone has stolen their hose or played with their regulator and has put their life in danger.

Just as we recognize that sometimes when things happen in, for example, a church situation there are aggravating circumstances, I would suggest, and I hope I will be able to articulate this more, that this is another example of a very important aggravating situation, and I really wish those parties would reconsider their position.

I look forward to having eight minutes later.

• (1945)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo will have eight minutes remaining in her time when the House next resumes debate on the question.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand again in the House to talk about the deep need for Canadian women and families to have access to affordable, universal child care in our country. Something most other OECD countries have, Canada still does not.

This is the argument. Families need universal, affordable, accessible, publicly-funded child care to get women into the workforce. Universal child care would create jobs and the fiscal surplus generated would mean no net cost to taxpayers. Child care workers need better wages to ensure their own economic security and also to encourage their retention in the field.

Again and again, we hear the cost to families of unaffordable child care. Women tend to earn less than their male counterparts because there is no pay equity legislation in Canada. The government has still not legislated it.

When there is a lack of access to affordable child care, it tends to be the woman who drops out of the workforce to look after kids. When she returns to the workforce, she tends to only have available to her part-time, precarious work. Women throughout the world, and in Canada as well, have an unfair share of unpaid labour.

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Not having access to unemployment insurance, or pension contributions or benefits because they are working part-time, means that many women end up behind, financially, and the lack of affordable child care is at the root of it. My sister and her husband had to leave Toronto because their child care costs were more than their rent. This is not sustainable for young families and it is not a good investment.

Last month, the OECD was in Ottawa investigating Canada's commitment to its feminist agenda and its gender lens on policies and programs. The OECD had observed previously about Canada that affordability and quality in child care overall was still an issue "forcing many women to drop out of the labour market or reduce their working hours during childrearing years. This affects women's earnings levels: full-time employed women in Canada earn on average 19% less than men."

On Friday, I was at a launch of the State of the Child report, which is done every couple of years in Nanaimo. It was the greater Nanaimo early years partnership, and I really applaud its work. It hosted all government agencies at all levels of government. The report found that children in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith were living in poverty. The children were between the ages of zero and five. This has increased to 24% of the population. It is a terrible number and reflects a lack of access to government services and employment support in our community.

There is good news on the horizon. The IMF said that the Liberals could afford to spend \$8 billion a year on child care and the program would pay for itself. Why did the Liberals' 2016-17 budget not allocate money for new child care spaces? Increasing the Canada tax child benefit does not help if there are no places to spend that money.

• (1950)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for raising the important issue of child care in Canada in this House.

Family is the most important thing in life. We want our children to be happy and to have everything they need for a good start in life.

Children are Canada's future. We need to do everything we can to help them reach their full potential.

Sadly, only one in four children in Canada has access to quality child care. For many families, the lack of affordable, high-quality child care leads to tough choices.

Some parents are forced to sacrifice their career because they cannot afford child care. Others work multiple jobs to make ends meet.

No one should have to make tough choices like these. Child care should be inclusive.

What are we doing about this? Our government recognizes that high quality child care in the early years of a child's life is crucial to social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Last year, in budget 2016, our government invested \$500 million in early learning and child care, including \$100 million in early

learning and child care for indigenous children. That is only the beginning.

This year, in budget 2017, we are also proposing to invest another \$7 billion over 10 years to support flexible, affordable, high-quality child care and create spaces across the country. We will get there.

On June 12, federal, provincial, and territorial governments agreed on the creation of a multilateral early learning and child care framework. This framework sets out a long-term vision to ensure that all children can experience an enriching environment of quality learning and early child care.

Since then, three other provinces have entered into bilateral agreements, and in the coming weeks and months, we will continue to work with our provincial and territorial partners.

A total of \$1.2 billion will be allocated to address each jurisdiction's unique early learning and child care needs.

Together, we are going to develop action plans, monitor progress, and ensure that low- and middle-income families have improved access to child care.

What is more, we are in the process of developing a framework for early learning and child care with our indigenous partners, a framework that will reflect the unique cultural needs of first nations, Inuit, and Métis children across Canada.

We are working closely with the provinces and territories, stakeholders, and experts to improve data collection and the dissemination of key early learning and child care information.

We are investing \$95 million to close data gaps in order to better understand what child care looks like in Canada and track progress.

We are also investing \$100 million for innovation practices on early learning and child care so that we can find new ways of helping our children reach their full potential.

Together we will give every child in this country what they deserve: an equal opportunity to succeed.

• (1955)

[English]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, here is the difficulty. The government has announced that it is lifting 300,000 kids out of poverty but will not provide the numbers, so we cannot verify that number. It has increased the Canada child benefit. That is a nice thing, especially if it is paired with creating new child care spaces. Most western countries do this, but Canada, federally, still has not. The budget in 2016 and 2017 creates no new child care spaces.

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Child care advocates, such as the Canadian Child Care Federation, say that the extra money in the Canada child benefit will help families pay the bills, but with no new child care spaces, there is nowhere to spend that money on child care. It does not make child care any cheaper.

Morna Ballantyne, of the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, says, “All the evidence shows that cash payments to parents will not make child care services...more accessible and will not resolve the...crisis that is putting children, families and economic growth at risk”.

What will the government do to help families and working women now with affordable child care?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, all Canadian children are entitled to an equal opportunity to succeed, and we believe that quality early learning and child care services provide a solid foundation for their future success.

That is why the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour is working closely with the provinces and territories to offer early learning and child care systems that improve the lives of Canadian children and their families.

Three-year funding agreements with the provinces and territories have already been signed under the multilateral early learning and child care framework. By signing these agreements with the provinces and territories, we have taken historic measures to support Canadian families, with an emphasis on helping families who need child care the most.

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here it is, another night and again I am rising to address the issue of our fighter jet replacements here in Canada and how the Liberals have turned this whole fiasco into a circus.

I first raised the question we are dealing with tonight back on June 13. I was wondering about how the government was going to go out and sole-source 18 Super Hornets from Boeing when the government is in an argument with Boeing over the trade action it took against Bombardier.

We know it is very unlikely that the Liberal government is going to deal with Boeing now, and the minister has even called Boeing an untrusted partner.

Back in May I raised the question, and 13 former commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force said that instead of buying Super Hornets, just a small fleet of Super Hornets, from Boeing, which may take years to actually procure, if there was a so-called capability gap that the defence minister had imagined, the best way to address that need to increase the fleet from 77 legacy CF-18 Hornets is to go out and buy legacy F-18 Hornets from other countries, such as Australia.

Back on May 29, the minister said:

Yes, there were options for buying old ones. No, we do not want to buy used equipment; we want to invest in new planes.

Lo and behold, the minister has actually gone and tasked members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and those in the government in charge of procurement to go and evaluate those used legacy Hornets, those F-18s that are down in Australia.

It is interesting to note that the Australian auditor general did a report on the legacy F-18 Hornets. Right now Australia plans to roll down those planes, and withdraw them from service in 2020, because they are buying new F-35s. If anyone is confused, the Australians had also bought 24 new Super Hornets. In 2010, Australia bought brand new Super Hornets, the F-18s, and are going to use them until 2025.

Our fighter jets, our legacy fleet of CF-18s, are only tasked to fly until 2025. Time is crunching down on us here. We are now looking at less than eight years—it is seven and a half years—to replace our entire fleet. Buying those Super Hornets is not possible.

The problem is that these legacy Hornets coming from Australia, that the auditor general has said would be retired in 2020, three years from now, have significant aged-aircraft issues, which are resulting in maintenance durations and costs becoming less predictable. All but nine of the aircraft have experienced structural fatigue above that expected for the airframe hours that have already been flown. That fatigue count is higher than that of even the legacy Hornets here in Canada and those in the U.S. navy.

Why would we want to buy these old, worn-out, stressed-out, beat-up legacy Hornets from Australia? Why does the government not get on with the fact that we need to have an open and fair competition right now to replace our CF-18s, and let everybody compete so we can get the new aircraft on time, in the best interests of our taxpayers, our aerospace industry, and the safety of our pilots?

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and for his interest in National Defence matters.

In the new defence policy released on June 7, the government reiterated its commitment to providing the Royal Canadian Air Force with the equipment it needs to conduct its operations.

The policy clearly states our intention to procure 88 next-generation fighter jets to replace the aging CF-18 fleet. We need 88 fighter jets, but we know that our air force currently does not have 88 fighter jets, which is why we need an interim fleet.

We will hold an open and transparent competition for the permanent replacement of the CF-18s.

A fleet of modern fighter jets is essential for defending Canada and North America and for contributing to international peace and stability. We agreed to acquire an interim fleet until a permanent replacement is in place to ensure that we have 88 fighter jets to help us meet our obligations.

We had serious discussions with the U.S. government for the purchase of 18 Super Hornet fighters from Boeing, as my colleague mentioned. However, our government strongly disagrees with the decision of the U.S. Department of Commerce to impose countervailing duties on Bombardier's C Series aircraft at Boeing's request.

Our government stands up for the interests of the Canadian aerospace industry and its workers.

Naturally, we have ended our relationship with Boeing, a company that has gone after our industry and wants to put thousands, if not tens of thousands, of Canadians out of work.

Our government will remain actively involved in the investigations taking place in the United States, including at the United States International Trade Commission, and we will defend the interests of Bombardier, the Canadian aerospace industry, and our aerospace workers.

I am sure my colleague opposite would agree that this is a very unfortunate situation. In the meantime, we are continuing our efforts to procure a fleet of 88 next-generation fighter jets.

We will launch an open and transparent competition for the permanent replacement for our fighter fleet during this term. The replacement fleet for the CF-18 fighter jets must be versatile, resilient, and interoperable with our allies and partners in Norad and NATO.

Preliminary consultations with potential suppliers are under way, and we hope to release the bid documentation within this term. We are not going to cut any corners in this process. We want to be sure to engage suppliers.

In the meantime, we are taking steps to ensure that Canada remains a reliable partner that our Norad and NATO allies can count on.

First, we are investing in our existing CF-18 fleet. We are going to make sure it continues to operate effectively and reliably until the new fighter fleet arrives.

Second, we are also exploring the acquisition of interim fighter aircraft to supplement our current fleet. Buying F-18s from the Royal Australian Air Force is one of the options on the table.

The actions we have taken will help us determine the best way to supplement the CF-18 fleet so that the Royal Canadian Air Force can fully meet our Norad and NATO obligations simultaneously until the new permanent fleet is fully operational.

● (2005)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence that experts are saying that the government is definitely on the wrong path and has been misleading Canadians on the capability gap.

As a matter of fact, there is an organization under National Defence called Defence Research and Development Canada. It is a research division of National Defence. It wrote, back in 2014, that there was no need to pursue a bridging option. It went on to say, "The costs involved with bridging options make them unsuitable for

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filling capability gaps in the short term. Any short term investment results in disproportionately high costs during the bridging period."

Lieutenant-General Ken Pennie, former chief of the air staff, said back in the fall that this is a politically motivated decision and that he certainly would never recommend that.

Again, politics are completely obscuring the ability of the Royal Canadian Air Force to get the right plane at the right dollar and in the right amount of time, because we know that the current fleet of CF-18s can only fly until 2025. Going beyond that is really going to undermine the ability of Canada to be a trusted partner.

If the government was so concerned about fulfilling our obligations to NORAD, NATO, and our own national security, it would get on with an open and fair competition immediately.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, Canada's new defence policy is a forward-looking plan that includes key investments in Canadian Armed Forces equipment.

We plan to replace the Royal Canadian Air Force's CF-18s with 88 advanced fighter aircraft. The competition to permanently replace the Royal Canadian Air Force fighter fleet will be open and transparent and will happen within this term.

We will continue to explore the purchase of fighter aircraft to enable the Royal Canadian Air Force to fully meet our Norad and NATO obligations simultaneously until the new permanent fleet is fully operational.

We are determined to make sure the Canadian Armed Forces are well equipped and well trained to keep us strong and secure at home and fully engaged in the world.

ETHICS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again this evening and for the past several months, I have been asking the same question and I keep having to come back because I never get any real answers.

Obviously, we are talking about the Minister of Finance's ethics. When it comes to ethics, a number of things come to mind. For me, there are things that come to mind from way back when.

In the past, the Liberals had us used to a level of ethics that I would describe as questionable. They were on the opposition benches for 10 years and, unfortunately, they did not learn a single thing the whole time they were in the penalty box, as we say in hockey.

The Minister of Finance's mistakes keep piling up. His first mistake was to tell everyone here in the House, the media, and the people in his party that he had put his assets in a blind trust. We just found out today from the Auditor General that that was not true. The media had previously reported that as well.

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When he was caught red-handed after countless questions from all the opposition parties, it was easy to see that he realized that he was caught. That is when he went to see the Ethics Commissioner. He paid a ridiculous amount for getting caught.

Members opposite are still trying to get us to believe their story, which I find deplorable. It is far less serious to admit one's mistakes than to keep saying that they did the right thing even after that turned out to be completely false.

The Auditor General told us so today. The media exposed it. The Minister of Finance paid a fine, so it would seem that his ethics remain questionable and are increasingly being called into question. I find that unfortunate because it is the first time in Canada's history that a prime minister and his finance minister are both under investigation.

What is it going to take for members of the Liberal Party to acknowledge their mistakes? Are they really waiting for those of us on this side of the House to get fed up and ask for an inquiry?

● (2010)

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague; I hold her in high esteem and very much enjoy working with her even though we are on opposite sides of the House.

She is right when she says that the question she has asked today has been asked many times in the House. I have answered it many times during question period, so she will not be surprised if my answer is no different than the 15 other answers I gave them this afternoon.

The Minister of Finance arrived in Ottawa after leaving the private sector to serve the public, at great cost and sacrifice to his family. When the opposition makes assumptions and false allegations, it does nothing to encourage people to leave the private sector to serve the public as the minister did. Incidentally, the minister has served Canadians by achieving remarkable results for the Canadian economy. We have the best economic growth in the G7, half a million jobs have been created since we took office, and the unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 12 years. The previous government had the worst record for job creation and economic growth since the Second World War.

Ms. Sylvie Boucher: That is completely untrue.

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is true. I invite the member to look at the numbers, which speak for themselves.

With regard to her question, when the Minister of Finance arrived in Ottawa, he did what is expected of all ministers, all parliamentary secretaries, and all members. He went to see an independent and impartial institution, the Ethics Commissioner. He presented his situation to her and followed her recommendations. The Ethics Commissioner has been very clear about that. She recommended that he put in place a conflict of interest screen. That measure was good enough for the member's former colleague, Denis Lebel, and for the member for Milton. The minister put that screen in place from the get-go, and it is still in place today. The Ethics Commissioner herself said that this was the best measure of compliance to ensure that the

minister followed the rules that govern us here in the House, and that is what he did.

The member talked about blind trusts and the \$200 fine in the same breath without explaining what really happened. What everyone needs to know is that the minister has always declared all of his assets to the Ethics Commissioner. That includes the property in France to which the member referred that led to the \$200 fine. Because of an administrative error, the corporation that owned the property was not properly declared. The property itself was known to the Ethics Commissioner, along with all the rest of the minister's assets, because he did what we are all expected to do, which is work transparently with the commissioner.

It is also worth pointing out that, to avoid further distraction, the minister announced that he would place all of his assets in a blind trust and divest all of his shares in Morneau Shepell, which he did. He even said he would give any profit on those shares since the election to charities in the Toronto region. That is what the minister did and, I should point out, that is what he has been doing for years, because he and his family are leading philanthropists. That is what he did to avoid distraction and concentrate on the work he is doing for the Canadian economy and Canadians. His two-year record is much better than that of the previous government, which did a poor job of managing the economy for 10 years.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, we are talking about ethics. We are talking about the Minister of Finance's ethics. Frankly, I could not care less what the Liberals have done for the middle class because that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about the Minister of Finance's ethics.

To go a bit further, let us not forget that we are no longer in power. It is the Liberals who are in power, and they are the ones who have to be squeaky clean. When they were sitting on this side of the House, they were the ones who made ministers lose their jobs over a matter of \$16. We have yet to make any allegations. We have questioned the Minister of Finance many times about his ethics, but no one here has made any allegations against him whatsoever.

If the hon. member wants to get into what it means to make allegations, let us talk about it. There were allegations in the context of the Gomery commission. That is not what we are talking about, but if he wants to take this further, that is where we will take this. If the Liberals want to wait for the opposition MPs to get sick of nonsense answers and start calling for an inquiry, I will be the first to call for one.

● (2015)

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my colleague, whom I hold in great esteem, I did not even talk about the middle class in my previous four-minute answer. I talked about the Minister of Finance's economic record and about the Ethics Commissioner, who is tasked with protecting the integrity of Parliament. We respect this wholly impartial and independent institution.

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The Minister of Finance has been working with the Ethics Commissioner since he first came to Ottawa, and he will continue to do so as long as he is a member of Parliament, just like all other members. Determinations are to be made by the commissioner, not by the opposition or government. It is up to the commissioner to make sure every member follows the best course and meets the highest standards of integrity.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:17 p.m.)

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