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Friday, November 24, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, November 24, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1000)

[English]

CANNABIS ACT

The House resumed from November 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to advise you from the outset that I will be splitting my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

I rise to take the opportunity to speak today against Bill C-45, a rushed and ill-conceived piece of legislation, which many of my colleagues have already pointed out has many flaws. Please allow me to amplify their concerns and add mine.

First and foremost, what is the rush? What is the rush with one-step, full-scale legalization, without interim steps? What is so important about the arbitrary deadline of July 1, 2018?

Really, if we are looking to do something substantive in a rush, maybe the Liberals could listen to my NDP colleagues who have been calling, for a long time, to make sure that the records of people who have been found guilty and have a criminal record for simple possession would be eliminated, so they could get a good job. If the Liberals want to rush something, why do they not rush at that?

Why ignore police and medical professionals' advice and push ahead with Bill C-45? Why not allow police, provincial and municipal governments, as well as health officials to better prepare for the onslaught of issues this legalization will unleash?

Believe me, there will be an onslaught of issues. All members need to do is look at other jurisdictions that have legalized marijuana to find that there will be a slew of issues that the government will need to deal with.

To date, why has there been no public education of the risks of smoking marijuana? What we have heard most often about many of the risks of marijuana is that they are so much more detrimental to

our youth. No one should assume that some of us who are speaking against this, because we are parents and public figures, are trying to be condescending. None of us are trying to be patronizing. No one should assume that any of my colleagues or myself are trying to stereotype anyone either. We do not have some outdated notion of society.

What we are saying is that there is a massive number of risks that we are concerned about, and the government has not taken them into consideration. Data shows 30% to 40% of young people who use cannabis under the age of 25 will develop psychotic disorders, depression, and anxiety disorders. Let me repeat that, upward of one-third of people under 25 who use marijuana will develop psychotic disorders, depression, or anxiety disorders. That is far too many.

Where are the human rights champions over there who know already of the growing mental health epidemic with our youth, and who are not speaking up about the way drugs exacerbate those mental health issues? Where are they?

As a father of a daughter who suffered mental health issues to the point of taking her own life this past summer, I have seen first-hand the risks of drugs at an early age. My family and I have seen this path and what it leads to, the hurt and the pain, the suffering. We have felt the consequences most directly as many, too many, other families have.

Our heart aches thinking about what could have been, what should have been, had Lara not been exposed to drugs, on top of all the other demons she had to fight on a daily basis. It is tragic, and it is all too common.

That is why I am particularly concerned about the provisions in Bill C-45 when it comes to possession by children ages 12 to 17. As currently written, the bill allows children aged 12 to 17 to be in possession of five grams of pot. This is approximately five to 10 joints. What is positive about that, in any way, shape, or form? How is that good government? How is that having a concern about the safety and security of Canadians?

I am profoundly concerned. At 12, children cannot buy cigarettes, they cannot drink, they cannot drive, they cannot vote, they cannot enlist to fight for our country, but they can possess five to 10 joints. Really?

Government Orders

Medical professionals have told us that the number should be zero. In fact, they oppose Bill C-45 based on the harm it would do to our youth, and they are concerned about the young age at which it allows youth to possess pot, thereby condoning and encouraging it.

• (1005)

I do not accept the argument that, just because we pass legislation, we do not endorse something. Come on, that is always the case. Whenever we legislate, we are saying that we are doing it for the public good and are endorsing the behaviour.

How can I stand by as a parent who has lost a child to the struggle she had with many anxieties and depression, or as a member of Parliament whose primary concern is the safety of Canadians, and allow legislation that would exacerbate those depressions and anxiety in Canadian children as young as 12? How could I not speak out? It would be unconscionable.

I am not blind to the obvious. I know, and all members of the House know, that whether by peer pressure or otherwise, there are many teenagers who use marijuana; too many, and I wish it were far fewer. I wish they could see the damage they are doing to themselves. I wish they could have had a conversation with Lara in her later years. She would have counselled them otherwise. She would have warned them of the harm of smoking marijuana and the consequences on their cognitive abilities, how it amplifies any mental health issues, and how it is a slippery slope from one joint to a few joints to harder drugs, and on and on.

There are other reasons why Bill C-45 is flawed, not the least of which is that legalizing marijuana would not remedy the underground economy. We need only to look to tobacco. By some estimates, 40% of tobacco sold in Ontario is contraband. In fact, a study that came out last month by the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco found that one in three cigarettes sold in Ontario is contraband. Do members opposite honestly believe that it will be any different with pot, that it would be above board, and every single joint is taxed?

There was a similar experience with gambling, so we are not talking about something that does not have a track record in the past. After gambling was legalized, the stranglehold of organized crime continued in that business. It did not stop the gambling. In fact, by all measures, it increased it. In legalizing it, we inadvertently made matters worse for our young people. Studies indicate that up to 60% of children and adolescents engage in some form of gambling each week. This is because they are a generation that was exposed to legal gambling from a young age and it was not frowned upon, which is why the predominant concern about problem gambling is not primarily for adults but young people.

I heard some heckles about that, but we are not talking about somebody who is buying a lottery ticket. Are those members out to lunch? I am talking about someone who begins in gambling and then is trapped in gambling, and then that is a lifestyle. They can never ever enjoy their job or buy a house or anything, because they fritter away all their money on gambling. If that is what some members feel is okay for youth, then fine with that.

We must question the signals that we are sending to our teenagers. What precedent are we setting? Are we fully ready for all the social impacts that this will have on the years ahead?

My colleagues have raised a number of other points about Bill C-45, such as drug-impaired driving, the super-sized amount of pot one could grow at home, the lack of a public education program, and scientific evidence. However, the point I want to stress today and the question I want all members of the chamber to think through clearly is the exposure of marijuana to young children and adolescents. It is not too late to change it. It is not too late to stop it. It is not too late to vote no on Bill C-45.

In closing, I will ask again, as I did at the outset. Why ignore police and medical professionals in regard to Bill C-45? Do we really think that 12 to 18 year-olds having five or 10 joints in their bedroom is a wise thing to advocate? Why do we not have more public education right now? Why not allow police, provincial and municipal governments, and health officials to better prepare for the massive upfront cost? I say again, what is the rush? Officials are not ready. I implore members to listen to the experts, doctors, scientists, and law enforcement. I ask all members to vote against Bill C-45.

• (1010)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for what was clearly a very sincere speech. I think we all agree that we do not want marijuana in the hands of teenagers. However, right now it is not working. Right now, we know that it is easier for teenagers to get marijuana than it is for them to get alcohol or cigarettes. By doing this, we would actually make it harder to get and we would be keeping it out of the hands of young people, which is the reason for the bill. Also, we do not want our teenagers to be exposed to the criminal elements that would get them into harder drugs, with the profits going into some of these criminal organizations.

What we have right now is not working. What would my colleague propose to make sure that we really do keep drugs out of the hands of young people?

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, with all due respect and dignity toward my colleague, full legalization is not the way to keep drugs out of the hands of our youth nor do I think it is easier to find marijuana than it is alcohol or cigarettes. I already told the House that one-third of cigarettes that are sold in Ontario are contraband.

Government Orders

The very notion that Hells Angels and Satan's Choice are going to find something else because the government has their market is absolutely absurd. They are not going to leave this business. In fact, they will have a larger appetite now that the government has endorsed marijuana knowing that people who have never tried will now try it and they will be there with their supply ready to meet their needs.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. It was nice to hear him talk about the importance of decriminalization. That is one thing we agree on. However the Liberals continue to stubbornly oppose it, despite the fact that the task force on marijuana recommended decriminalization since the government intends to legalize cannabis nine months from now anyway.

The fact that young people are still being handed criminal records for the possession of marijuana is having a serious impact on their lives. It prevents them from buying homes and finding jobs, and it also makes it very difficult for them to travel. That record stays with them for the rest of their lives.

Why is the government refusing to decriminalize marijuana and thus give young people the opportunity to do these things? What is more, in the wake of the Jordan decision, we need to free up the court system.

For all these reasons, does my colleague not think that the government is on the wrong track in its refusal to decriminalize cannabis?

•(1015)

[English]

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to be in full agreement with my colleague. That is exactly what I was saying. Why not expedite the removal of a criminal record for those young people who were guilty of simple possession so that they no longer have to say they have a criminal record when filling out a job application? That would be a positive step. That would be peace, order, and good government, and that is what we are all about. Decriminalization should be used as a first step and the government should take some time then to monitor how that affects young people.

The government should also start an education program to tell young people that just because it removes a criminal record does not mean it is the right thing to do. We already know the risks for young people who already have mental health concerns. We know that marijuana exacerbates it, so why put it in their hands without any kind of education program whatsoever? Why give it to 12-year-olds, for goodness' sake? This is absolutely absurd.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the *Colorado Gazette* has just published an article. It has been five years since the state legalized the drug and it is hearing about odour complaints in residential neighbourhoods and an increased homeless rate. The number of drivers involved in fatal crashes who tested positive for marijuana has doubled, and in high school the drug violations have increased 71%.

With all of these results from Colorado five years out, why does the member think that the government is rushing ahead to legalize against the advice of provinces, police, and indigenous people?

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I will capitalize on one point. One of the experiences I had as a small business owner over two decades ago, and I hate to admit that here, I had a fleet of tow trucks in the Region of Peel and we did the police towing. At that time, with just alcohol, on Friday at 4 p.m. we knew there was going to be an onslaught of drunk drivers on the road. Now we are going to exacerbate that with drug impairment. It is not the right way to go.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his earnest and heartfelt speech. Our Liberal colleagues would do well to read and reread his words, because his speech was full of common sense and, above all, gave us many real reasons to truly protect Canadians from the coming scourge of marijuana legalization.

I must rise again today to speak against the Liberal government's marijuana legalization bill. Quebeckers can count on the 11 Conservative members from Quebec to represent them. We know that most Quebeckers are against the legalization of marijuana, as proposed by this government. The 11 members from Quebec unanimously agree that, on Monday, they will vote against legalization.

I am going to tell the House what my Quebec colleagues think of the bill that has been sloppily cobbled together by the Liberal government. On Monday, the Liberal bill to legalize marijuana as of July 1, 2018, will go through third reading. Because the government has made this issue its top priority since it was elected, the Liberals will ram this bill through despite all opposition.

The Prime Minister will thumb his nose at everyone who spoke out against this initiative. He will continue to ignore vigorous public opposition. He will turn a blind eye to the facts, the studies, the science, and what Canadian society wants. We have seen over and over again that the majority oppose this bill.

So far, numerous organizations, associations, federations, and institutions have expressed their disapproval of the Liberal government's initiative and its rush to get this done. People across Canada are obviously worried, and with good reason.

The Prime Minister could not care less about what experts, scientists, social workers, police forces, and society in general think, and he never has.

The provinces and municipalities will have to shoulder much of the responsibility for the consequences of marijuana legalization, but they were not adequately consulted. Recently, unable to keep up with the Prime Minister's frenzied, reckless pace, the Government of Quebec once again called on the government to postpone enacting the bill.

Government Orders

Earlier this week, first nations members also asked for a delay. The Prime Minister categorically refused. True to his arrogant form, he is even forcing a ridiculously unfair revenue-sharing scheme on the provinces and municipalities, even though marijuana legalization will end up costing them a bundle.

The Prime Minister wants to offload the hefty health care and security costs onto the provinces and municipalities, while pocketing most of the revenue from marijuana sales, no doubt to pay down the Liberal's huge budget deficit.

Let us talk about the facts. Numerous studies have shown the negative impacts of marijuana on the brain, especially for people under 25 and those most vulnerable. Research has also shown that legalizing the drug will not help eradicate organized crime, as the Liberal government claims.

Furthermore, we already have a problem with impaired driving on our roads, and this piece of legislation will only increase the risk of accidents, injuries, and deaths. Also, Canadian police officers do not have the necessary training or tools to detect impaired drivers, not to mention the lack of oversight of drug use in public places and workplaces, and the added pressure on our health care systems.

The Liberals' bill obviously does not pass the smell test, nor does it come close to passing the common sense test. Not only are the Liberals going against what Canadians want with this bill, but they are also putting Canada in a difficult position on the international stage.

In fact, three international treaties will be violated if the government goes ahead with the legalization of marijuana. Also, Canada will be the only country in the G20 and G7 to make this substance legal. No other government in the world has legalized marijuana so quickly.

• (1020)

No other government has imposed so few restrictions on the possession of plants in the home and no specific requirements regarding public safety. For those reasons, we, the members of the Quebec caucus of the Conservative Party of Canada, will stand up in the House of Commons on Monday and vote against this bill.

If those words sound familiar, it is only because I was just reading from the joint letter that we, the Quebec caucus members of the Conservative Party, signed and published today to express our position on this bill, which will unfortunately pass on Monday considering the power of the Liberal majority, despite everything that experts, the general public, and police forces are saying, and despite what common sense dictates.

The letter is signed by the member for Richmond—Arthabaska, our political lieutenant, the member for Beauce, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, the member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, the member for Beauport—Limoilou, the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, the member for Lévis—Lotbinière, the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, and the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

We on this side of the House have taken a clear stance. The government wants to move quickly on this without weighing all the facts. We believe that as of July 1, 2018, this bill will drastically change our society. This week we had the opportunity to meet with U.S. officials who are also very concerned about the impact that this bill will have at the border.

Our border with the United States is something we must take care of, something we must absolutely be concerned about. It is not complicated: we should ensure people are able to cross the border as easily as possible. The United States is our most important client. It is where Canadians go most often to relax. It is the place where we have the most ties, and it is our primary economic partner.

The United States is very worried about what is happening because their federal government considers using marijuana as a crime. Anyone who commits a crime outside the United States and admits it may be denied entry into the United States. That is what the Liberals are failing to tell Canadians.

Let us imagine that a person smokes marijuana, whether in their apartment or in a park, just before crossing the border. We know that the smell of marijuana really lingers and that it permeates just about everything near the person smoking it. When the canine units at the border sniff the scent of marijuana on this person, the U.S. customs officers may not find any drugs, but they will pull him or her aside to the dreaded car search area, where no one wants to go. They will search the entire car to locate the source of the scent, even if the individual does not have marijuana on their person.

Once the vehicle has been searched, they will question the driver. They will ask whether he or she has ever consumed marijuana, and I hope the driver will say no. Otherwise the Americans will have the right to turn that person back and ban him or her from the United States for a set period of time because they admitted to consuming marijuana, which is a federal offence in the United States. This is not something that the Liberal government is quick to point out to Canadians who are travelling to Florida, Arizona, or California, and it is also not something that they have settled with the Americans.

For that and other reasons, and especially because of the harm that this government is going to do to Canadian youth, I and my other 10 Quebec colleagues, will vote against Bill C-45 on Monday.

• (1025)

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend my colleague for taking the initiative, speaking on behalf of his Quebec colleagues, and sharing their position with the House.

I would like to ask him to elaborate on that position and explain why they decided to vote against taking control of this substance and thus vote in favour of organized crime, money laundering, and jeopardizing people's lives.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable on a point of order.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I would like the member opposite to withdraw his comments. I have never said anything here in the House about voting in favour of organized crime.

Government Orders

Mr. Michel Picard: Madam Speaker, my position is very simple. I believe that, if members vote against something, then they are voting in favour of the opposite thing.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I think this is getting into debate. The member for Mégantic—L'Érable has the right of reply to respond to the member for Montarville.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, we see how twisted the arguments are when it comes to marijuana. Everyone is saying that it is naive to think that organized crime will cease to exist when marijuana is legalized. Alcohol was in the hands of organized crime in the early 1930s. Does organized crime still exist? The member knows the answer to that.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am going to redirect the debate a little bit. If this bill is a major piece of legislation and represents the Liberals' number one priority, does my colleague not think that Canada should at least invest much more money than is currently on the table, given that legalization is just nine months away? The amount right now is about \$7 million a year. By way of comparison, Colorado alone invests \$40 million a year in marijuana legalization, as I have said many times.

If the goal is to protect youth and reduce cannabis consumption, does this not show a lack of vision? Does it not show a lack of the ambition needed to step up treatment and prevention efforts, give more resources to organizations on the ground, and make legalization safer from a public health standpoint?

• (1030)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are certainly ambitious, but what they are lacking is judgment. The fact is that, for a prevention program to be effective, it has to be in place long before a substance is legalized. Unfortunately, at this stage, the government is still accepting proposals for the implementation of prevention programs in January. By the time the programs are ready, school will be over and marijuana will be legal. That is the reality. The *Colorado Spring Gazette* reported the results of an investigation that found a 71% increase in drug offences in secondary schools since legalization. School suspensions went up by 45% because of drug-related offences among minors. That is the reality in Colorado five years after legalization. We do not even have a fraction of their prevention programs. Things will be worse here.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague realizes that those numbers went up because now the authorities can act, which they cannot do if the drug is illegal.

Furthermore, what was done in terms of prevention when alcohol and cigarettes came to market? Nothing.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, what a preposterous argument! When I asked high school students in my riding to raise their hands if they drink, every hand in the room went up. Yes, we need to fight, and we also need to work on preventing underage drinking. This government needs to take action, instead of giving kids another way to kill off brain cells. Why does it not put more money towards drug and alcohol prevention, to keep our youth out of temptation's way? That is the reality.

[English]

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise to continue third reading debate of Bill C-45, an act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other acts.

The Standing Committee on Health has now completed its review of the bill and has heard from over 100 witnesses. I want to sincerely thank the committee members for their valuable insight and thoughtful contributions to the development of the legislation, and a special thanks for their hard work.

A number of amendments were adopted by the committee and will now be considered by Parliament. Our government supports these amendments. They include eliminating the proposed 100-centimetre height limit for the cannabis cultivated at home and committing to the regulations of edibles within 12 months of the bill's coming into force.

Given the transformative nature of the proposed legislation, we also support the amendments made by the committee that will require a review of the law three years after it is brought into force.

Bill C-45 is grounded in the interest of public health and safety. It is worthy of adoption by the House.

Bill C-45 would legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis for Canadians over the age of 18. By legalizing, strictly regulating, and restricting access to cannabis, this law would take profits from the sales of cannabis out of the hands of criminals and organized crime and protect the public health through strict product requirements for safety and quality.

Bill C-45 is grounded in protecting public health and would replace the current system, which clearly is not working.

[Translation]

Our bill focuses on protecting those whose cannabis consumption poses a greater risk to society: our young people.

Our bill includes tough new criminal sanctions for those who provide cannabis to young people or recruit them to commit a cannabis-related offence.

Our government intends to educate the public about the risks of using cannabis, so we are planning a major information and awareness campaign that will target teenagers and young adults first and foremost. That campaign will address a number of issues, including the risks of driving while under the influence of cannabis.

[English]

Bill C-45 is informed by the recommendations of the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation, which was led by the Hon. Anne McLellan. As well, on October 20, I met in Edmonton with health ministers from provinces and territories and we discussed the state of cannabis readiness.

Government Orders

I want to assure all of my colleagues that provincial and territorial governments will continue to play a crucial role in ensuring the health and safety of Canadians, especially young Canadians, when it comes to cannabis.

I would like to outline the bill's many strengths in greater detail.

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal substance in Canada. Some 21% of our youth and 30% of young adults have reported using cannabis within the last year. Scientific evidence shows that the risks from cannabis use are higher for youth than adults. It also shows that the younger people are when they start using cannabis and the more often they use it, the greater the risk to their health.

• (1035)

[*Translation*]

The facts are clear: a lot of young people have access to cannabis, even more than in other developed countries. That is why our government is proposing to view the issue through the lens of public health. This bears repeating. Our government is not coming out in favour of cannabis and neither is it trying to make it more accessible to youth. It is completely the opposite. Above all, our government is seeking to protect our youth through strict cannabis regulation. As I mentioned before, too many young people can already get cannabis more easily than cigarettes.

Speaking of cigarettes, let us look at the anti-smoking measures that have been taken over the last 30 years. The government has different means of controlling access to tobacco and discouraging its use, such as a regulatory framework, controlled advertising and promotion, taxation, as well as warning labels on the risks of smoking.

Over time, this approach helped curb tobacco use significantly. The percentage of young smokers dropped from 27% in 1985 to 10% in 2015.

That is one of the reasons we are looking closely at lessons learned from the fight against smoking as we prepare our approach to cannabis.

First of all, our bill prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from possessing cannabis. This was one of the task force's recommendations. This age limit will protect our teenagers, and we believe that setting it any higher would contribute to sustaining the black market. The bill does stipulate, however, that the provinces and territories are free to raise that age limit.

Secondly, the bill protects our young people by placing tough restrictions on advertising related to cannabis use. It prohibits any advertising that could make cannabis appealing to a young person. It also prohibits the use of any packaging or labelling that could be appealing to our youth.

Cannabis promotion will be limited to communicating information to consumers. Once again, this information must not be presented in any way that could draw the attention of young people. Obviously, these measures will help limit access to cannabis for young people and reduce the product's appeal for young people.

Nevertheless, we know that it is less likely that young people today believe that cannabis is a significant health risk. That is why

we will also be providing Canadians with information about cannabis, so they can talk to their children about the associated risks.

[*English*]

We must also educate and support adults in making informed and responsible choices that minimize the risks of using cannabis, including the dangers related to drug-impaired driving. That is why our government announced that we would invest \$46 million in public education and awareness, and surveillance, and that work has already begun.

Our government will continue to provide leadership, invest resources, and work collaboratively on public education with other levels of government and key partners across the country.

Bill C-45 would also establish a legal and quality-controlled supply of cannabis for sale to adults.

The legalization establishes a number of clear rules to protect consumers and set national standards and controls for cannabis products. Under the proposed legislation and its regulations, the federal government will establish industry-wide rules on the types of products that will be allowed for sale in Canada, including rules governing how they are to be produced, tested, labelled, packaged, and shipped.

We will build on Canada's existing regulations and system of licensed production of cannabis for medical purposes, which has been recognized as one of the best systems in the world.

Let me reassure my colleagues that we are also looking to others who have already done this, and we are working closely with them. We are having ongoing conversations with other jurisdictions, such as Colorado and Washington states, to learn from their experiences and build upon the lessons they have learned. We want to get this right.

Putting in place a sound, effective system of regulated access to cannabis will require co-operation and collaboration from jurisdictions.

Under the bill, the federal government would be responsible for establishing and maintaining a comprehensive and consistent national framework to regulate the production of cannabis. For their part, the provinces and territories could license and oversee the distribution and sale of cannabis. Together with municipalities, they could also tailor certain rules in their own jurisdictions and enforce them through a range of tools, such as tickets for example.

We have worked closely with our provincial and territorial counterparts to ensure their input has been heard and taken into account. Earlier this week, we published a detailed consultation paper on our proposed approach to regulating cannabis. Over 60 days, we will undertake in-depth discussions with the provinces and territories, indigenous representatives and stakeholders. We are also inviting Canadians to submit their feedback online until January 20, 2018, on everything from licensing of producers, to product standards, to packaging and labelling.

Government Orders

•(1040)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, the bill before the House today is designed to address the issues we are already dealing with. Our youth have access to cannabis. Our youth consume cannabis. Organized crime continues to profit from its unregulated sale.

Although we are proposing to legalize cannabis, we understand that its consumption, like that of alcohol or tobacco, should not be encouraged. That is why we are doing everything we can to protect our young people as we move forward with the legalization of cannabis.

Today, I am asking my colleagues to support Bill C-45 at third reading stage.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, as a new health minister, does it concern her that Canada's physicians, through the Canadian Medical Association, disagree with the Liberals' plan for marijuana legalization, in particular, using the age of 18 as their benchmark. This conflicts with the science on brain development and the impact of cannabis on the brain up until age 25.

Has the minister spoken to the CMA about its concerns? Does she see the adverse health impacts for young people up to age 25 as being a critical risk with cannabis? How does the bill address that risk?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, we have to recognize that the present approach on cannabis is not working and we are presenting a solution to an existing problem. We recognize that many of our Canadian youth already consume cannabis. They are obtaining the product illegally and the product is not regulated or controlled. Therefore, our approach is a public health approach. We truly want to ensure we legalize, strictly regulate, and restrict access to cannabis by our youth.

When it comes to the age of 18, we consulted broadly with the task force, and it made that recommendation. With respect to provinces and territories, we are all aware that if they choose to make the age higher than 18, it is absolutely their choice.

Again, I have to make it very clear. We are taking a public health approach with respect to Bill C-45. We want to protect the health and safety of our children. During this process, we certainly are not encouraging the use of cannabis. It is quite the contrary. We want to ensure we can limit access to it by youth.

•(1045)

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have not heard a positive word in my riding about the legislation.

The police force, the schools, the health providers, and young people in my riding see this as anything but positive for our culture and our young people. Young people knew this was coming from the moment the Liberals won the opportunity to govern. Whenever I was in a school, which was often, the first question they would ask me was what I thought about legalizing marijuana. Of course, I reversed the question back to them. Their response was “We don't want this.”

Science says that this will cause damage to the brains of young people up to the age of 25. Does the health minister not understand that she is encouraging a behaviour that is not positive for the very people for whom she is responsible? Is she prepared for what will come forward in the next three years and how in the world will the Liberals turn this around? I believe the only reason we are—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Sorry, we have to allow for other questions. I have allowed some flexibility as to the length of the questions.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, to the contrary, we are presenting a solution to an already existing problem in our country. We recognize that the rate of Canadians who consume cannabis is extremely high and we are absolutely taking a public health approach when it comes to this. We want to ensure we legalize, strictly regulate, and control access to cannabis, specifically to our youth.

We have brought forward Bill C-45 to address exactly that. We are not encouraging the use of cannabis by any means, but we are recognizing that the rate of consumption among Canadian youth is already very high and we are absolutely addressing that specific issue.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the minister mentioned how safety is of concern. In my riding, I have seen young people lose their lives in what was deemed a drug deal gone wrong.

Could the minister please address how we are going to keep young people safe?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, as indicated, we are absolutely providing a solution to an existing problem, because we recognize that many youth are consuming cannabis that is illegal, unregulated, and the list goes on.

Through Bill C-45, we have made significant investments with respect to education and awareness. We want to make sure we start that process before the bill receives royal assent, as well as afterward.

We are going to be starting a public education campaign, and have already done so, with examples like Drug Free Kids. We have been able to partner with them, and over 120,000 tools from Drug Free Kids have already been given to Canadians. That tool provides Canadians with information regarding the risks associated to cannabis. It will also provide parents, service providers, and mentors to children with the information they need to have that difficult conversation that will sometimes be needed with youth.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats support the legalization of cannabis, and we are supportive of Bill C-45. However, we expected the Liberal government to be respectful of the concerns of the provinces.

Government Orders

I would like to ask the Minister of Health a simple question. Why, on the very day that the provinces were asking for more time, would the Liberal government impose time allocation on Bill C-45? Why would the Liberal government be so disrespectful?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, since our party has formed government, we have been working with the provinces and territories in preparation of Bill C-45. We continue to have high level meetings with provinces, territories, and indigenous leaders every three weeks in order to properly prepare for the royal assent of this bill. This comes as no surprise to Canadians and to provinces and territories. We work in close collaboration with our provinces and territories and we will continue to do so, all the way through the process of this legalization.

• (1050)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am not sure who the hon. colleague is talking about, who they are working very closely with, because provincial organizations, provinces, municipal governments, as well as police authorities across our nation, are all asking for more time for this legislation to go through so they can prepare.

I also met with indigenous leaders from my area in northern British Columbia this past week, and they are all saying the same thing. We face an incredible amount of trouble with the timing of this bill. They are combatting drug use and trying to educate their youth against drug use. All of a sudden this bill is going to come in, which is being rushed through, and those services and tools are not being provided to help combat it.

Which indigenous communities is my colleague working with, and what is the plan for the government to go into these communities to try to combat the excessive drug use that this legislation will promote?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, once again, we have been committed to working closely with the provinces, territories, and indigenous leaders. As indicated, we have a committee that meets every three weeks with the provinces, territories, and indigenous leaders to make sure we are properly prepared for when this bill receives royal assent and we can move forward.

We are absolutely committed to working with our indigenous communities and, once again, we are working closely with them. We continue to have dedicated discussions to share information and understand the unique indigenous perspectives when it comes to this bill. Again, we have been working closely with them for the past two years, and we will continue to do so to ensure we can have timely passage of this bill.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to follow up on the question posed by my colleague from Courtenay—Alberni. The minister says she is talking with indigenous leaders and ministers of health and justice from across the country repeatedly. However, they are still very unhappy, as are police chiefs, about the lack of time to implement this extremely complicated move to legalize marijuana. This is a huge download on the provinces and territories.

How can the Minister of Health say she is consulting when she is still refusing to give provinces and territories more time and has shut down debate in this House? It is undemocratic and unfair.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor: Madam Speaker, I can absolutely confirm that we are consulting with provinces and territories and indigenous leaders. Just last month, I had my first provincial and territorial meetings that were held in Alberta, and also our indigenous leaders were there. We had a wholesome discussion with respect to the issue of this bill. With respect to the consultation approach, we are absolutely full out and doing that.

We have to recognize that the current approach to cannabis is not working, and that is why there is urgency in moving forward. We recognize that Canadian youth right now have access to cannabis, and we want to legalize, strictly regulate, and control access to ensure that our children will not have access to cannabis. That is exactly why we are moving forward with respect to this process.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member for Cariboo—Prince George about the heckling and the rules regarding heckling. There are other hecklers in the House, and it is starting to get a bit stronger. I would remind members that they are not to be heckling while someone else is speaking.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

I am pleased to rise today to once again speak to an issue that I, and many Canadians, care deeply about. I am thankful to be given the privilege to speak to Bill C-45 at third reading. This is a piece of legislation that addresses an issue very close to me. Today I am going to speak to why I oppose Bill C-45.

First and foremost, marijuana is a dangerous drug. The Liberal government should not push through this legislation. This is not what is right for Canadians. In theory, the purpose of this bill is to protect public health and public safety. In practice, Bill C-45 will not achieve this goal. One of the main concerns regarding this legislation is accessibility to drugs. Bill C-45 does not keep marijuana out of the hands of children. It allows it to be grown in households. If marijuana is in people's homes, what message is that sending to our kids? This legislation does not keep our children healthy and/or safe. I hear from concerned constituents almost every day who are confused about this legislation and are worried about what it means for their families. The Liberal government cannot recklessly continue to push through this legislation.

We know that marijuana is a dangerous drug. We know that it is damaging to the human body and addictive. We know it causes harmful effects on youth brain development and greater incidents of psychosis and schizophrenia. However, despite all of these side effects, the Liberal government is set to ensure that marijuana will be legal by July 1, 2018.

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

[English]

I oppose this legislation entirely. I choose to listen to the concerns raised by the scientists, doctors, and law enforcement officials. I want to advocate for the voices that are not being heard with respect to this legislation, those who say it is being rushed through without proper planning or consideration for the negative consequences of such complicated legislation.

The passing of Bill C-45 would lead to negative repercussions at the global level. I have spoken before to this concern, but it is an important one. If this legislation passes, Canada will be in violation of three international treaties. Therefore, how can Canada hold other countries to account on their treaty obligations when Canada does not honour its own?

There are various issues regarding this legislation, which has led me to conclude that it is thoughtless, irresponsible, and rushed. The only goal it has is to reach the arbitrary deadline of July 1, 2018. The Liberal government is not listening to the medical professionals. It is not listening to our police forces. It is not even listening to the concerned Canadians, who believe that this bill is fundamentally flawed and is being rushed through Parliament in order to meet this arbitrary and irresponsible deadline. For these reasons, and many more, I am entirely opposed to this legislation. The science is clear that marijuana is dangerous.

I want to touch further on the issues with respect to our children and families. The last thing we want is youth consumption to increase. We do not want our children to have increased risks of mental health disorders. We should be setting up our children to succeed. When it comes to youth, I know we all want to ensure they are safe, able to have a better life, and have more opportunities than we did. Bill C-45 will not help us achieve this goal for our children. Allowing easier access to drugs will not leave our children better off.

● (1055)

Currently, the bill recommends the age of 18 as the federal minimum. However, the provinces are being given the power to set a higher age. This is problematic. If we talk to our southern neighbours, the United States, the states of Washington and Colorado have legalized marijuana and set 21 as the minimum age. Ontario presently says it will set the minimum age at 19 and Alberta at 21. We know this is not safe. Countless medical professionals have testified that the brain continues to develop until the age of 25.

According to the Canadian Medical Association, increased use of marijuana before the age of 25 increases one's risk of developing mental disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety by up to 30% compared to those who have not used marijuana—

● (1100)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order.

I regret to interrupt the member. However, we have to move on from the questions and statements. The member will have approximately four minutes after question period when the orders are back before the House.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are not sheltered from the gale force demographic winds faced by Newfoundland and Labrador.

To save our ship, our government has partnered with the four Atlantic premiers on an Atlantic growth strategy based on five important pillars: skilled workforce and immigration; infrastructure; trade and investment; innovation; and clean growth and climate change.

The Atlantic growth strategy is working in St. John's East, including more infrastructure investment in the last two years than in the previous nine years combined; the Atlantic immigration pilot program and the start-up visa program for international entrepreneurs; \$2 billion over 11 years for trade in Atlantic Canada; and world-leading cold ocean research in partnership with the Ocean Frontier Institute.

We do not do this alone. This new collaborative approach relies on strategic partnerships, epitomized by PRNL and our ocean Super-cluster team. As we tackle these challenges, all Canadians can be confident that our government knows what is at stake and has all hands on deck.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, since the summertime, my office has been flooded continually with concerns regarding the government's marijuana legislation. Among their many concerns, my constituents are especially worried that the legislation would not keep marijuana out of the hands of our children, nor adequately address impaired driving.

If marijuana is grown in the home, there is little that parents can do to stop their kids, especially teenagers, from accessing it. Furthermore, landlords, real estate associations, and insurance companies are concerned about the home grow provisions because of the increased fire hazard and mold growth that comes with these kinds of operations.

Law enforcement has also asked the Liberal government to slow down, citing a lack of technology that can detect marijuana impairment at the roadside. The Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Psychiatric Association have said the government should slow down.

The Liberals are ignoring Canadians across the board in a race to meet their own arbitrary deadline. I urge the government to take a step back, listen to Canadians, and rethink this poorly constructed legislation.

*Statements by Members***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to attend the 8th Annual Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Women to Women Symposium.

The women there were true leaders in business and entrepreneurship, and it was wonderful to hear their shared experiences of breaking gender barriers. The keynote speaker was Deepa Mehta, a female film director, and the topic of discussion turned to discrimination, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence, topics explored in some of her films. It brought to mind that despite the many successes women are achieving in Canada, and the world, it is important to remember that there is still much to be done to ensure equality and safety for women and girls.

Tomorrow we begin 16 days of activism against gender-based violence with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. We must remember that gender-based violence disproportionately affects members of marginalized communities and LGBTQ2 individuals.

I urge us all to take action towards creating a world free from violence for all women and girls. We must leave no one behind.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, on any given night in Canada, more than 350 women and children fleeing domestic violence are turned away, because shelters are underfunded and bursting at the seams.

Imagine the strength it takes to flee abuse. Imagine the heartbreak of shelter workers having to tell women there is a six-month waiting list for counselling. It is unacceptable.

Violence against women costs Canada \$12 billion a year. One in four women will be victims in their lifetime. Indigenous and disabled women experience a much higher level of violence than anyone else in Canada.

We wear orange to honour the United Nations international day to end violence against women, and we give deepest thanks to shelter operators like Haven Society in Nanaimo. We will keep pressing the Liberal government to turn its feminist words into real action, and recommit that Canada's goal must be the eradication of violence against women. We will not stop until that is done.

* * *

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

REGIONAL MEDIA

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the determined men and women who invest in creating strong, dynamic communities are the ones who are building this country.

Recently, two businessmen, one of them being Mr. Renel Bouchard from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, acquired 21 regional media properties across Quebec, creating the largest private group of regional publications in the province.

Our regional newspapers are essential to the vitality and development of our communities. They are agents of freedom of expression, and they keep the public informed. A newspaper by the name of *Le Canada Français* has been playing that role in the riding of Saint-Jean for the past 157 years. It is the second-oldest French-language newspaper in North America.

Canada needs innovative entrepreneurs like Mr. Bouchard, people who believe that dynamic, informed, connected communities are crucial to building a strong country.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada 150 has been an opportunity to celebrate how far our great nation has come over the past century and a half.

In this sesquicentennial year, I set out to honour the many unsung heroes in Flamborough—Glanbrook, the community leaders, volunteers, and activists who have been a vital part of building a better Canada.

One hundred and fifty outstanding Canadians were honoured in Flamborough—Glanbrook and the greater Hamilton area during the award ceremonies that took place in October and November at Mount Hope, Binbrook, and Copetown.

While these unsung heroes never seek the limelight, there is no doubt to any of us that they are true nation builders. They included farmers, hockey coaches, Lions Club presidents, food drive volunteers, and the list goes on. It is profoundly humbling to see the incredible work of so many outstanding individuals. These nation builders are living examples of the very Canadian values of duty, honour, community, good-neighbourliness, and selfless commitment that we celebrate in Canada 150.

I wish to offer my congratulations and thanks to everyone in Flamborough—Glanbrook for their nominations and their dedication to the community and to all the nation builders.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HAMELIN BROTHERS

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Charles Hamelin won the gold medal in the men's 1500-metre at the short track speed skating World Cup event in Seoul, South Korea, on Saturday.

In Montarville, speed skating is in our blood. In fact, the town of Sainte Julie has named a third skating rink in honour of the short track royal family, Charles, François, and Yves. Through their example, discipline, and determination, the Hamelin family is a role model to an entire generation of Quebecers, especially the young athletes and trainers at the Les Fines Lames speed skating club.

Next February, the Hamelin brothers will head to PyeongChang for the 23rd Winter Olympic Games. I hope they will bring some medals home to Sainte Julie.

[*English*]

Go Team Canada.

* * *

TOBIAS ENVERGA

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of Senator Tobias Enverga, the first Filipino Canadian appointed to the Senate and the first elected to a position in the City of Toronto.

[*Translation*]

Before entering politics, Senator Enverga had a long and distinguished career as a project manager at the Bank of Montreal.

Even more remarkable was his devotion to charitable activities, both in Canada and in the Philippines. Senator Enverga epitomized the success of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada.

[*English*]

Upon being appointed to the other place, he continued his dedicated work at the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation by working tirelessly as an advocate for the Filipino-Canadian community.

In my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, with its considerable Filipino-Canadian population, Senator Enverga was deeply respected by our community.

I hope all members will join me in mourning the loss of a friend and colleague whose tireless advocacy work will serve as a continued inspiration for us all.

* * *

IRAN-IRAQ EARTHQUAKE

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week people along the Iraq-Iran border experienced devastation as a deadly earthquake struck the region. Iran claims that more than 1,000 people died and thousands more were injured. The majority of those affected are Kurds living south of the village of Halabja along the border and in Rojhilat, also known as Kermanshah in Iran.

The Kurds were already facing a humanitarian crisis, which now has intensified as a result of the earthquake. They are in dire need of basic life necessities such as water, food, medicine, clothing, and access to electricity, all of which they are being denied as a result of Iran's refusal to accept international assistance.

The need is immediate and visible online, with survivors posting videos of collapsed buildings and bodies in the streets. Rare street protests against the Iranian government have drawn attention to the slow response.

Canada must press Iran to stop discriminating against its own citizens and provide timely life-saving assistance in the face of disaster.

Statements by Members

We share in the grief of affected families and let us offer a helping hand in their time of need.

* * *

● (1110)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Madam Speaker, while Canadians have removed their poppies, we must always remember the sacrifices of our brave men and women.

Recently, I had the honour of travelling with my fellow colleagues to attend the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Passchendaele.

Witnessing how the people of France and Belgium remembered and honoured the sacrifices that our country made during the First World War, and standing on the hallowed ground where the Canadian Corps advanced across the valley, which was a treacherous morass, and captured and held the Passchendaele Ridge was a moving experience. It is one that I will continue to remember during my service for our brave men and women in my role on the veterans affairs committee.

As a physician, it was especially poignant to see the memorial of John McCrae, himself a physician, and read his immortal words *In Flanders Fields* that continue to impact us today.

I would like to thank Veterans Affairs Canada, the organizers of our delegation, the Anavets Assiniboia Unit #283, and the Charleswood Legion #100 for the articles given to the Ypres Historical Society, and the people of Ypres who welcomed our delegation with open arms.

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CANUCK PLACE

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canuck Place is British Columbia's recognized hospice for children. It has been devoted to the lives of children who live with life-limiting conditions and to supporting hundreds of families since 1995, believing that whether life is measured in weeks or months, all children deserve the opportunity to learn, develop, and grow.

Farther afield, the seven summits refers to the seven highest mountain peaks in the world on seven continents. To summit all seven is considered a mountaineering accomplishment, obviously. On November 3 this year, Liz Rose, of West Vancouver, became the youngest Canadian in history, at the age of 26, to summit all seven peaks in pursuit of her goal of raising \$200,000 for Canuck Place. Her perseverance represents the bravery of the children at Canuck Place. She carried their flag to the top, and they were with her.

On behalf of all members of Parliament, we are very grateful and very proud of Canuck Place and of Liz Rose and her family.

*Statements by Members***INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS**

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, in Lakeland, Frog Lake Energy Resources Corp. is first nations owned and operated. It has built homes and community centres and has increased education programs through responsible oil production.

This week, Mikisew Cree First Nation and Fort McKay First Nation reached a historic deal with Suncor that will provide revenues for each community for 25 years. However, the Liberals' anti-energy agenda is limiting prosperity for first nations. Now the first nations-led, \$16-billion Eagle Spirit pipeline is at risk. Thirty first nations across B.C. and Alberta support it, but the Liberals' tanker ban threatens it.

The Liberals killed northern gateway, which most first nations supported. First nations in the area actually oppose the tanker ban, but the Liberals never asked them. A former chief from B.C. says that the myth that more first nations oppose energy than actually do limits opportunities for communities and keeps people in poverty. A northern premier says that the Liberals' drilling ban took away hope for long-term healthy living.

The Liberals should support Métis and first nations that have developed resources responsibly for thousands of years.

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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, every year, we recognize 16 days of activism against gender-based violence to reflect on the impact of gender-based violence on individuals, families, and communities. Status of Women Canada will be joining the Canadian Football League at the Grey Cup this weekend to share the importance of taking action.

This year's theme is "My Actions Matter", and all Canadians can make a personal pledge to help end gender-based violence. They can take the pledge at women.gc.ca or at Lansdowne Park on game day, where I will proudly be wearing my double blue to support the Toronto Argonauts. Canadians across the country can show their support by joining the conversation online by using the hashtag #MYActionsMatter.

The Grey Cup remains Canada's most-watched sporting event, with 4.3 million Canadians watching last year. I would love to see this many and more Canadians stand up and pledge their support to end gender-based violence.

* * *

• (1115)

*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 25, people will be wearing orange to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. According to the United Nations, nearly one in five women between the ages of 15 and 49 has experienced physical or sexual abuse. In Canada, indigenous women are three times more likely to be abused than non-indigenous women. That is unacceptable.

We have witnessed a cultural shift in recent weeks in the wake of allegations of abuse against women. We need to continue in that direction and support the victims of assault. For the next two weeks, we need to continue talking about this issue, make sure women know where to get support if they are assaulted, and educate men and boys from a very young age so that violence against women becomes a thing of the past.

In Quebec, this is an opportunity to remember the shooting at École Polytechnique, wear a white ribbon, and commend the activism of local organizations like Accueil pour Elle, CALACS La Vigie, Centre D'Main de femmes, and Option ressource travail, which will be handing out free roses at the Collège de Valleyfield and in many grocery stores around the region.

* * *

LAVAL UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL TEAM

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, the 53rd edition of the Vanier Cup will be played tomorrow in Hamilton. I would like to tell the House today that Laval University's Rouge et Or will most likely win the Vanier Cup for the 10th time in the team's history. The Rouge et Or is an institution in Quebec City and instills fear in teams across the country. By way of proof, in its 22-year history, the team has played in the Vanier Cup championship 11 times, or one out of every two years. It has also taken home 14 Dunsmore Cups and won 140 games. The Rouge et Or usually welcomes 15,000 fans to its games, and 20 of the team's former players are currently part of the Canadian Football League. No one can top that. With the legendary Glen Constantin as coach and outstanding quarterback Hugo Richard ready to take the field, the team is all set for tomorrow's game.

I have heard, however, that the opposing team is just as tough. I am told that the Western Mustangs racked up 222 points in their past three games. That is not too shabby.

What is important is that tomorrow's game will be incredible because 96 young Canadians will give their all to determine Canada's best university.

Go Rouge et Or.

Oral Questions

[English]

ATTACK IN EGYPT

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today Canadians woke up to truly horrifying news from Egypt. A bomb and gun attack on a mosque in northern Sinai has left at least 180 people dead and dozens more injured. This callous and appalling attack took place just as prayers at the mosque were ending.

All members of the House can agree that worshippers should always feel safe to practise their religion. Nobody should fear for their lives. We offer our sincere condolences to those mourning the loss of family members and friends. We also send our wishes for a full recovery to those who were injured.

We want the people of Egypt to know that Canadians stand with them during this terrible time. Such violence can never be tolerated.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised in the last election that if they became the government, the rich would pay more. In fact, a financial report provided by the government for the 2016-17 tax year shows that the wealthiest Canadians paid \$1.2 billion less in income tax as a result of the measures the government instituted. In fact, it says that high-income individuals aimed to recognize income in the 2015 tax year, before the new 33% tax rate came into effect.

What kind of tax strategies did these wealthy Canadians use to declare that income a year earlier?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the tax strategy that we have put forward to reduce inequalities in this country and to make sure that the middle class has more money is to increase taxes on the wealthiest 1% and to lower them for nine million Canadians, a measure the Conservatives voted against. We came forward with the Canada child benefit that is lifting 300,000 kids out of poverty in this country, reducing child poverty by 40%, a measure they voted against.

What we have also done is look back at measures they put forward, such as doubling the TFSA limit and income splitting for families, which we know benefited the 5% or 10% of the wealthiest Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, on December 7, 2015, the markets learned that at the end of that year, the rate of taxation on the highest earners would go up to 33%. As a result, many started to sell their shares before the rate went up so that their capital gains would be realized before the change in the tax rate. As a result, in the week following that December 7 announcement, the stock market dropped by 5%.

Did the finance minister anticipate this reaction?

● (1120)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, we are working to make sure Canadian businesses have everything they need to succeed. We realize that Canadian business owners are crucial to our economic growth. That is why we announced that we will be cutting the small business tax rate from 10.5% to 9%.

That is also why we have worked with the Minister of Finance to make sure our economy grows, which is something the members opposite never managed to do in 10 years. We have the highest growth rate in the G7, and half a million jobs have been created. We are providing an environment that fosters the prosperity of business owners from coast to coast to coast. That is our priority on this side of the House.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the focus of many in the stock market was to sell their shares after the December 7 announcement this minister made in order to realize any capital gains in the 2015 year, before the tax rate went up. As a result, the stock market in Canada dropped 5% subsequent to the minister's announcement on December 7.

I ask again, did the finance minister anticipate that the markets would react in this way to his December 7 announcement?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what Canadians anticipated under the previous Conservative government was sluggish growth. The Conservatives had the worst growth and highest unemployment since World War II.

[English]

The 1% rate of growth in employment was the slowest job creation growth since World War II.

[Translation]

When our government came to office, we instituted policies like investing in infrastructure and supporting business owners to ensure growth for the country and to provide the right conditions for investment, entrepreneurship, and prosperity.

That is what we have been doing and what we will continue to do.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, in our political system the Minister of Finance is the most important person in cabinet, along with the Prime Minister, naturally. The Minister of Finance must be above all suspicion because he is very important and Canadians want to have faith in him.

Unfortunately, the current Minister of Finance is lacking on that account because we know that he is currently under investigation and that he was found guilty and paid a fine. He only takes action when cornered.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister of Finance finally tell Canadians the truth about his private numbered companies?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent is an experienced parliamentarian who knows that, in Parliament, we have institutions responsible for maintaining the integrity of Parliament.

The expectation is that ministers and all parliamentarians will work with the Ethics Commissioner by disclosing their assets to her so she can provide guidance as to how they can fully comply with the rules that govern us in the House.

That is what the Minister of Finance did upon arriving in Ottawa. He has always been and continues to be completely open with the Ethics Commissioner. He has always followed her recommendations and now he is doing even more.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the minister did indeed work closely with the Ethics Commissioner, why was he found guilty and why did he have to pay a fine? Why is he currently under investigation? Why did he decide to sell his shares two years after being appointed Minister of Finance?

I ask the member for Louis-Hébert again: when will the Minister of Finance finally tell Canadians the truth and disclose all of his assets? That is what Canadians want to know.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Finance has always told the Ethics Commissioner the truth. When the minister arrived in Ottawa, the Ethics Commissioner recommended that he put in place a conflict of interest screen, a measure that was good enough for the opposition ministers and the Conservative government ministers, when the Conservatives were in office. The Minister of Finance continues to work with the Ethics Commissioner to ensure compliance with all the rules, something that is expected of all ministers and all parliamentarians.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, officers of Parliament work on behalf of all members of Parliament, not just the government, and certainly not the Prime Minister's Office. However, six months after the Liberals' failed attempt to appoint a Liberal as language commissioner, they are reusing the exact same broken process.

The Liberals voted against the NDP proposal to fix this mess and are now sending us letters, with one single name on it, and calling it consultation. That is not consultation; that is a charade.

Will the Liberals stop doing this? Will they work with Parliament so we can hire the best watchdogs to work on behalf of all of us and on behalf of all Canadians?

• (1125)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our two official languages are at the heart of who

we are as Canadians. We are committed to finding the best person for the important position of official languages commissioner.

Our government promised Canadians a rigorous, open, and transparent merit-based process for public appointments, and we are keeping with that commitment. An announcement will be made in due course.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised an open and transparent process, but we got a closed and opaque one instead.

Five of the eight officer of Parliament positions are vacant. These positions are for watchdogs who serve all parliamentarians. We know nothing of the Liberals' plan or about the appointment process. Canadians are being kept in the dark. When we proposed a fair, open, and transparent appointment process, the Liberals voted us down.

Why did the Liberals break this promise?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we committed to Canadians, we have a process that is open, transparent, and merit-based. All available positions are online, and we always encourage Canadians to apply.

What is interesting is that we endeavour to always work with all members in this place. We know that Canadians have a place. We know that officers of Parliament are independent. We want to ensure we pick the best people. That is why we consider many different factors. I encourage Canadians to consider applying.

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, all I hear is blah, blah, blah. Nothing but words. Where is the action? This is deeply troubling.

Canadians are not taking this matter lightly. Jean-Pierre Kingsley, the former chief electoral officer, said today, and I quote:

This delay in making appointments is exasperating. It shows a lack of democratic conscience on the part of a government that I find unacceptable.

Do the Liberals grasp the impact of their broken promise on our democracy?

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will always endeavour to work in the best interests of all Canadians. That is why this government has taken historic levels of consultations. Every member of Parliament is here to represent the best interests of his or her constituents, and we appreciate hearing the diversity of those voices.

When it comes to our appointment process, it is an open, transparent, merit-based appointment process. Available positions are online, and I encourage Canadians to apply.

Oral Questions

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, let me get this. When the Liberals say their process is open, they mean closed. When they say it is transparent, they actually mean it is opaque. “Just trust us” does not cut it when it comes to the Liberals, because when they go it alone, we have noticed things tend to go badly. When they tried to appoint a Liberal partisan as language commissioner, it blew up. Their spectacularly bad and expensive MyDemocracy.ca fiasco and their \$5.5 million backyard rink come to mind.

The Ethics Commissioner is not only on her third extension under the government, she is also investigating the Prime Minister and the finance minister. I ask the Liberals to stop this mess, to work with all parties to do this right, not the mess they—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has been in this place much longer than I have. He knows we endeavour to always work with all members of Parliament. That is why any constructive feedback is always welcome.

We have introduced an open, transparent, merit-based process. We know that many Canadians have considered applying. However, it will take all members of Parliament wanting these institutions to be successful. Every member of Parliament will need to go above and beyond. All we hear from the opposition is criticism rather than constructive ideas to make the system better.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, it took two years for the finance minister to admit fault for his failure to disclose his directorship in the corporation that owns his French villa, and its value. The Ethics Commissioner has fined him. Yesterday, the Liberals spent the day trying to justify the illegal actions of the finance minister.

It is clear that Canadians have lost trust and faith in the finance minister's ability to do his job. Is justifying illegal activity and poor judgment the new standard of the Ottawa Liberals?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will tell members who had lost faith in the ability of anyone to do their job. Canadians had lost faith in the ability of the Conservatives to do their job when it came to managing the economy. That is why they voted them out. In fact, they were right, because they mismanaged the economy for 10 years.

Our finance minister has managed to create 500,000 jobs in the last two years, most of them full time, and has generated the best growth in the G7, meanwhile reducing inequalities. Those are all the things the Conservatives were never able to achieve.

• (1130)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, the only assets the finance minister grew were his own, and on a commission, too.

Uncovering the assets of the finance minister has been an ethics riddle that we have not been able to figure out, so riddle me this. “We're exempt from tax hikes of the everyday sort. You won't find us in a parliamentary disclosure report. What are we? Why, we're the finance minister's private holdings, of course.”

Will the finance minister help us solve this ethics riddle and tell us what is in those private holdings?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, we have institutions in this place that are there to safeguard the integrity of Parliament. We trust the Ethics Commissioner's ability and impartiality to do her job. That is why, when the finance minister arrived in Ottawa, he disclosed his assets to the Ethics Commissioner and worked with her to make sure all rules were followed. She recommended putting in place a conflict of interest screen, which she deemed to be the best measure of compliance possible. That has been in place since the very beginning. The finance minister will continue to work with the Ethics Commissioner.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, first and foremost, all members are expected to be fully transparent. Hiding behind the Ethics Commissioner in hopes of finding a way to play the system is not okay.

It took two years, media reports, and a penalty for the finance minister to build an ethical wall that protects him from the prying eyes of 35 million Canadians. The wall protects him and his numbered companies, but it is riddled with conflict of interest holes.

Why is the Minister of Finance doing things that undermine Canadians' trust? When will he knock down that wall and be open and transparent about his numbered companies?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for years, we watched the Conservatives chip away at the institutions of Parliament, so I am not surprised in the least to hear the opposition member attack a measure that the Ethics Commissioner herself deemed the best possible way to comply with the guidelines. None of us should be surprised.

We on this side of the House believe in the institutions of Parliament and the Ethics Commissioner. The Minister of Finance has been working with her from day one, and he will continue to do so.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, this sounds like an episode of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*.

A rich businessman wonders how he can grow his fortune and realizes that requires amending some laws. Since the government does not want to do it, he runs for office and becomes the Liberal finance minister. He introduces Bill C-27, and lo and behold, it works and he rakes in the dough.

Oral Questions

Except, oops, the minister gets caught by the media, the Ethics Commissioner, and the opposition. He sells his shares, gets the profits, donates them to charity, and will get a generous tax refund.

The Minister of Finance has lost the trust of Canadians. When will he come down to earth and come clean on all of his financial affairs?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said many times, every member and every minister is expected to work with the Ethics Commissioner, the institution responsible for ensuring respect for the integrity of this place. The Minister of Finance did that. He said he would go even further and put all his assets in a blind trust and divest himself of his shares in Morneau Shepell, as my opposition colleague mentioned.

He continues to work for Canadians, as he has done brilliantly for the past two years, having produced phenomenal economic growth in Canada, reduced inequalities, and introduced the Canada child benefit, which is helping some 20,000 children in my colleague's riding.

While they focus on the Minister of Finance, we are focusing on Canadians.

[*English*]

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals keep blaming the Ethics Commissioner when they break the rules. They say she is there to safeguard the integrity of the House. However, I think Canadians send MPs here to always stand up for their best interests, trusting we all know how to follow the rules and that we are ethical.

Instead, the finance minister designed Bill C-27, which will enrich his billion dollar family business. He is now one of three Liberals, including the Prime Minister, under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner.

Do the Liberals actually know the difference between right and wrong?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the difference between right and wrong, I would ask that question of the 10 years of the Harper Conservatives when they doubled the TFSA limit that benefited the 3% wealthiest; when they scrapped our environmental protection laws in the country; when they disrespected institutions of this Parliament; and when they disrespected the Supreme Court? That is a question Canadians ask every day about the previous Harper Conservatives.

On this side, the finance minister, as well as our government, has worked in the best interests of Canadians, reducing taxes for nine million Canadians, reducing inequalities in the country, and we are proud of that record.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister claims the ethics screen and counsel by the Ethics Commissioner prevented him from breaking the rules, but obviously that is not true because the Ethics Commissioner fined the minister for breaking the rules.

The screen is supposed to block the minister from meetings or discussions that could be a conflict. Who did the minister pick to

administer the screen? His chief of staff, his most senior, closest and political assistant who is hired by the minister, reports to the minister, and can be fired by the minister.

Do the Liberals not even see the conflicts within their own conflicts?

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I said, I am not surprised that the Conservatives are questioning the judgment of the Ethics Commissioner, who is doing her work in a non-partisan and independent manner. She recommended that a conflict of interest screen be put in place as she believed that it was the best possible measure of compliance. This measure was good enough for the Conservative ministers at the time and the Ethics Commissioner believed it to be the best measure of compliance.

On this side of the House, we work with the Ethics Commissioner, we will always do so, and that is what the Minister of Finance did and will continue to do.

* * *

[*English*]

HOUSING

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Madam Speaker, no veteran should ever be homeless, yet thousands are currently at risk.

According to their new national housing strategy, the Liberals do not seem to think this problem deserves to be taken seriously. Their so-called strategy makes only passing reference to homeless veterans. Even worse, affordable housing is postponed until after 2019.

How many decades will it take before the government finally acts and addresses the needs of veterans? We are in the midst of a crisis. We need a homeless strategy now.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us compare what the NDP promised and what the Liberals are now delivering.

The NDP, in the last election, promised to repair 50,000 units of housing; we are going to do 300,000 units. On providing the operating agreements, the NDP was going to renew 365,000; we are doing 385,000 operating agreements. Let us talk about new housing. The NDP promised 10,000 units over four years; we are doing 100,000 over 10 years. When it comes to new subsidies, zero from the NDP; 300,000 from this party.

If the member is going to call something “timid”, I am going to call something “meek”. That was meek—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind the members to listen to the questions, so they will be able to decide what they want to ask on the next question. I ask that they, please, afford that respect to the people who are speaking.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

Oral Questions

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week the Prime Minister said, “one person on the streets in Canada is too many.” However, the government has announced it hopes to cut chronic homelessness in Canada by 50% within 10 years. What will the government do about the other 50% of people who will still be homeless in 10 years?

Will the government support my motion to create a plan to help all people experiencing homelessness, or are they satisfied leaving half the population out in the cold?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister was very clear that one homeless person was one homeless person too many. We have a strategy, a \$40 billion strategy over the next 10 years. It is going to reduce chronic homelessness, episodic homelessness, and the vulnerabilities that people find themselves in across the country.

The new Canada housing benefit will address 300,000 people and will prevent people from swelling the ranks of the homeless. We have a strategy, which we doubled in our first year, a \$2.2 billion strategy that is being reprofiled in consultation with people with lived experiences, community organizations, municipalities, and provinces and territories. We will attack this issue. If we can do better than half, we will do everything in our power to achieve that.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the media is saying that the Liberal Party's chief bagman is sheltering money in tax havens. The Liberal government continues to add to Canadians' tax burden while its powerful friends get a free ride in those tax havens.

In light of these new revelations, is the Prime Minister still happy with his situation? Is he still protecting his billionaire Liberal friend?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows, I will not comment on individual cases today, tomorrow, next year, or ever. The law prohibits me from doing so. I can assure my colleague that no one is interfering with the CRA's audits, and that will never happen as long as I am the Minister of National Revenue.

Let me be clear. No one is above the law, and as minister, I work every day to ensure that the law is enforced.

[English]

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party's chief fundraiser, Stephen Bronfman, denied links to offshore tax havens after 1998. However, documents show that Bronfman family companies were still owed millions from their trust in the Cayman Islands in 2005. The Prime Minister does not seem concerned that his friend has apparently misled him, and he certainly seems blind to the fact that his millionaire Liberal cronies have been cheating Canada. Is the Prime Minister still satisfied with his friend's version of the facts, despite very clear evidence to the contrary?

• (1140)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as my colleague knows, I will not comment on individual cases today, tomorrow, next week, next year, or ever. The law prohibits me from doing so. I can assure my colleague that no one is interfering with the CRA's cases or audits. As long as I am the Minister of National Revenue, the law will be enforced. Let me be clear. No one is above the law, and as minister, I work every day to enforce the law and to protect the Canadian tax system.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, the foreign affairs minister's August speech outlined Canada's progressive agenda for NAFTA, but now it seems Canada's agenda is leading to deadlock at the negotiation table. Even Ontario's premier is worried about the failure of NAFTA.

In response to the deadlock, Canada has quietly begun telling our stakeholders that all the Canadian proposals will be non-binding. Will the minister admit to the House that they have been telling NAFTA stakeholders that Canada's progressive priorities will not be binding on the United States or Mexico?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Madam Speaker, our negotiating position is clear, and we will defend and maintain the elements of NAFTA that Canadians know are central to our national interest. We are negotiating in good faith with our partners, but we cannot and will not accept proposals that put Canadian jobs at risk and do harm to our economy.

By the way, I would just like to add, in terms of jobs, our government has added half a million jobs in the last two years, and our GDP is the best of all the G7. We will always defend Canadians' national interests and Canadian values.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, I do not need to remind the House that the Castro family has murdered thousands of people. They have denied the Cuban people fundamental democratic rights and freedoms. They have persecuted gays and lesbians for their sexual orientation. Therefore, does the Prime Minister seriously believe he should team up with the Castros to negotiate on nuclear weapons with North Korea?

Oral Questions

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are certainly following the situation in North Korea and the provocative actions coming out of that region.

Let me be clear. The member opposite should know full well by now that our government sees human rights as foundational in all of our international engagements. We will ensure that we continue to espouse human rights in any and all relationships, including rule of law and pacifism around the world. We remain concerned with the situation in North Korea, and certainly our minister is monitoring that closely.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, for too long, administrative shortfalls have left shoreline communities struggling unaided to dispose of abandoned vessels.

In Beauharnois, many environmental concerns have been expressed about the *Kathryn Spirit*. We are talking about tens of tonnes of hazardous materials and contaminated water.

The Liberals' Bill C-64 fails to properly address the problem of vessels being left to rot for years in shoreline communities.

Will the Liberals finally work with these communities and with the NDP by debating Bill C-352 in order to fill the gaps in their own bill?

[English]

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that protecting our oceans is absolutely essential. That is why we introduced the oceans protection plan. As part of that oceans protection plan, we also introduced the wrecked, abandoned, or hazardous vessels act. This is a long-term, comprehensive, integrated plan to address the issue, and Canadians deserve no less.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, after the Liberals blocked my bill on abandoned vessels, I launched a historic appeal allowing MPs to decide themselves if it should be debated. It should, because it is built on solutions proposed by coastal communities, which will fill gaps in the government's Bill C-64. We have hundreds of signatures in support of my bill and this week the mayor of Ladysmith wrote directly to the Prime Minister urging him to allow debate.

Why is the government blocking my legislation? Why is it stifling coastal voices?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have already mentioned, Canadians expect a government to come out with legislation that is comprehensive, long term, integrated, multi-jurisdictional, and negotiated. That is exactly what we are doing. We look forward to the opportunity, the determination of the House next week. Have no doubt, we are serious about making this happen.

• (1145)

[Translation]

SPORTS

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's 105th Grey Cup will be played this weekend here in the national capital region. We will get to see Toronto take on Calgary in a game that will hopefully be as gripping as last year's.

[English]

Certainly several thousands of young people from across the country will watch it on TV and see some of the best athletes competing.

Could the Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities tell us about the inspiration these events provide to young people?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for 105 years CFL athletes have been inspiring our kids to participate in sports. Kids have dreamed of emulating their CFL heroes, from Jackie Parker to Jon Cornish, from Bruce Covernton to Ricky Ray, from Dave Sapunjis to S.J. Green. This is important, because we want kids to live active, healthy lives and to dream big and be proud of who they are.

I am proud of our CFL athletes, teams, and organizations but on Sunday, I will be cheering for my hometown Calgary Stampeders. Go Stamps Go.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday the minister said that the number of ISIS fighters in Canada that he has been citing is "essentially accurate". Well, being "essentially accurate" is not going to keep Canadians safe or bring justice to the victims of these criminals.

I will ask the minister once again. How can he claim to be surveilling all ISIS fighters in Canada if he is using two-year-old data, or is he claiming that no new terrorists have entered Canada in the last two years, or is he admitting that there are terrorists that he is no longer watching?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am interested in the hon. member's views but there are other views.

Last night in the media, security expert and former CSIS officer Phil Gersky said this, "The previous government had an abysmal record when it came to countering violent extremism and early detection. The Conservative government didn't care." Dr. Lorne Dawson from the University of Waterloo said, "The previous Conservative government had little or no interest in following up on this, so Canada is late." They also cut a billion dollars from the security services of Canada.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Again, I remind members that they should be listening to the question. They could end up losing a question if it is taking too much time. I would assume that in order to ask the next question, they would like to know what the answer was.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, here is the fact. It was our Conservative government that passed the laws that will allow these criminals to be punished. It is the \$300 million that we directed to counterterrorism that is helping law enforcement officials do their jobs today. By contrast, the Liberal government's response to these terrorists has been to weaken these laws, provide funding for integration support for these criminals, and hide their numbers from Canadians.

He is dancing. Why will the minister not tell Canadians how many ISIS fighters have returned to Canada in the last two years, and how many are under 24-hour surveillance?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the numbers have been published already.

Canada works constantly with all of our allies, the Five Eyes, G7, Interpol, and others to know as much as we possibly can about every threat.

Our Canadian agencies constantly assess and reassess all the data to be effective and current in keeping Canadians safe and they respond with a full suite of measures, investigations, surveillance, marshalling evidence, lifting passports, no-fly lists, threat reduction initiatives, and criminal proceedings wherever that is possible.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals claim to be following and watching terrorists. They also claim to support and respect the members of the Canadian Armed Forces, but the Liberals are cutting the pay of our brave soldiers who have served in some of the most dangerous missions in the world while at the same time pandering to Canadian ISIS terrorists by giving them taxpayer-funded reintegration programs.

Why are the Liberals choosing Canadian terrorists over the brave women and men who have fought against them?

• (1150)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada was present in the fight against Daesh. Working with the Iraqis, and primarily the Kurds, we helped recapture Mosul and restore peace and international stability in this region.

We are also maintaining a presence to ensure regional stability through various other actions.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague was not talking about the fight against ISIS. He was talking about how this government is treating our serving military members. Its treatment of them is callous. It is turning its

back on our veterans and even now threatening to cut the monthly allowance for injured soldiers.

The Liberals are proposing a state-funded program for radicalized terrorists, but they are not even providing a similar level of service to law-abiding Canadian citizens.

Why should terrorists who fought against our country be entitled to free reintegration services even as the Liberals abandon our own veterans and serving military members?

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I should set the record straight for my colleague opposite. It is not true that our soldiers have been subjected to pay cuts or lost income. We recently increased their pay by 6.34% and their allowances by 5.1%. We are giving injured soldiers a six-month grace period to help them get healthy again. We think that six-month grace period goes a long way toward smoothing the transition to normal pay levels.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week, the International Union for Conservation of Nature called Wood Buffalo National Park one of the most threatened world heritage sites in North America. They affirmed what UNESCO has already found. Canada's largest national park is threatened by federal government neglect and resource development.

UNESCO gave the government until February 2018 to respond to its report, but with the deadline approaching, Canadians have not heard anything. This is a black eye for Canada on the world stage. What will the government do to save this critically important park?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member opposite for his advocacy on parks and protected areas. We understand the importance of protecting Wood Buffalo National Park and we welcome the review by UNESCO. We are working very hard, including with the indigenous communities within the park, and we will continue to do so.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Revenue is shifting the blame onto the Conservatives for the abysmal report card her agency received from the Auditor General.

She claims that cuts to the number of agents are to blame. However, after two years, she has done nothing about it. When over half of all calls to the CRA are blocked and 30% of callers are getting the wrong information, it seems clear to me that in-person service needs to be restored in rural areas.

When will she face the facts and admit that nothing is more effective than in-person service?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we agree with all of the Auditor General's recommendations. The previous Conservative government decided to reduce services to Canadians by cutting funding for call centres. Under former minister Findlay, they reduced the number of agents in call centres, reduced business hours, and reduced service standards. Rather than cutting, we decided to reinvest \$50 million for the next four years. I am working to ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency treats Canadians as important clients and not just as taxpayers, as indicated in my mandate letter.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, we are standing two blocks away from the longest skating rink in the world. Four blocks away at City Hall there is a lovely outdoor facility, however, the government sees nothing wrong with spending \$5.6 million for a temporary rink on Parliament Hill. It works out to about 300 taxpayer dollars per spin. Now we hear it is going to be rebuilt in Ottawa. Will the minister at least commit to sending this rink to a community in the north where the season is long and the need is great?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, of course we are really delighted with this new project.

If my colleague had listened to what I have said in the past, this rink will be given to a community in need afterwards. Meanwhile, Canadians will have until February to enjoy the great Winterlude and also this important infrastructure.

I hope I will have the chance to go on the ice and enjoy ice-skating with her. This is a great way to celebrate Canada 150.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

● (1155)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I know it is Friday and the day is going to end pretty soon, but, again, I would ask people to restrain themselves just a little while longer.

The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, it has been two years since the minister gutted the First Nations Financial Transparency Act.

Now, Harrison Thunderchild has reluctantly taken his leadership in the community to court around their lack of disclosure. He told the *National Post*, "Every level of government has that expectation to be transparent and accountable. First Nations should not be any different..".

The minister promised a new system two years ago. When is she going to deliver?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I hope my colleague has recognized that we are on a journey of reconciliation.

Our renewed relationship with indigenous peoples is based on a recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. It is in that context that we are doing work to establish a new fiscal relationship with indigenous peoples. We are consulting in terms of how we can develop better systems of mutual accountability. I would be happy to hear any recommendations to that end.

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PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to the minister treating Canadians like important customers, the government has failed a hard-working public servant in my riding of Yorkton—Melville.

Last spring, out of the blue, Phoenix cut her pay by \$500 a month. What was she told when she called the pay centre helpline: "Your call is important to us. If you have received an overpayment, press 1. If you have a concern about your T4, press 2. For all other inquiries, press 3."

Can the minister please explain why "if we owe you money" was not priority number one?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the number one priority for me. Getting people paid on time and properly is indeed my primary focus.

We are taking steps that the previous government simply did not take. It was that irresponsibility that put us in this situation. We are improving our training. We are—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Again, I must ask people to restrain themselves just a bit longer. Allow the minister to finish her response.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough: Madam Speaker, we have put in place emergency pay services. We are working with every level within all of our departments.

Quite frankly, this will be solved for public servants by public servants.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, an estimated one in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in her lifetime. Gender-based violence has a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities. Recent high-profile events continue to shine a light on the immediate need for activism.

November 25 will mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and the first of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

Oral Questions

Can the minister inform this House how we can all get involved and show our support?

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville for his advocacy.

During the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, we reflect on the causes and costs of gender-based violence. This year's theme, "my actions matter", is a call to action to take concrete steps, to recognize, to call out, and to speak up against acts of gender-based violence.

We are proud to partner with the CFL to promote anti-violence measures at the 105th Grey Cup right here in Ottawa. I encourage everyone to join them and take a pledge to end gender-based violence.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals seem confused about how rules work. They seem to penalize those who follow them, and reward those who break them.

Recently a constituent lost her landed immigrant card and needed to travel within a few days. She contacted the government for a replacement card, but was told that it would take at least a month to replace it and that there was no way to expedite the process. Meanwhile, those who are illegally crossing the border into Canada are getting expedited work permits.

Why are the Liberals punishing those who follow the rules, and rewarding those who do not?

• (1200)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there is a lot to that question.

If the hon. member across the way is talking about a specific case, he knows full well that I cannot comment on individual cases. If he is talking about asylum seekers at the border, we are currently putting on awareness activities in the United States to ensure that people know that Canadian laws must be respected.

If the hon. member across the way is talking about a specific case, I would be happy to discuss it with him.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government announced a national housing strategy that will be very transformative. By enshrining the right to housing for all Canadians into this strategy, the government is playing a key role in reducing homelessness and poverty.

[English]

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development share with this House how seniors like those in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore, who are

advocating for more affordable housing, will benefit from this new strategy?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can attest to witnessing first-hand the actions of the member from Mississauga—Lakeshore and his commitment to seniors and seniors housing. I attended a massive town hall with him as part of the consultations that led to the rollout of the national housing strategy.

Part of the strategy that spoke most strongly to the issue he has raised around seniors is the new Canada housing benefit. It will allow us to help seniors age in place, target them in particular for support, and make sure that their lives are conducted with dignity. It also builds on the CPP and GIS reforms that we have put in place. Seniors matter, housing matters, and that member's work on this has been absolutely fantastic.

* * *

SCIENCE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada's fundamental science review was delivered to the Liberal government over seven months ago. The Naylor report review outlines 35 recommendations. When asked about these by the science community, the science minister had no clear answer and simply said they are "working on it". It has been 229 days now, so just "working on it" will not cut it.

Can the science minister tell Canadians when these recommendations will be implemented?

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary for Science, Lib.): Madam Speaker, well after a decade of neglect, our government is working to restore Canadian science. We started by unmuzzling our scientists, and then made historic investments, including \$2 billion in research infrastructure and the largest investment in fundamental science in a decade.

Now we are taking action on fundamental science review recommendations and launching the Canada Research Coordinating Committee to improve coordination of the granting councils, and capping the tier 1 renewals for the Canada research chairs to ensure new opportunities for young researchers.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, flight attendants are worried about the decision to allow small knives on planes. They were clear with the Minister of Transport, expressing that "the changes go too far and put flight attendants and the public at risk".

Oral Questions

Since the ICAO has no requirement for standardizing high-risk items, why is it necessary to allow pocket knives on planes instead of keeping them in the baggage hold?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, dozens of other countries have implemented the same measures. Passenger safety is a serious matter for all of us. These measures have been implemented by France, Great Britain, Germany, New Zealand, Italy, Russia, Iceland, Ireland, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Greece, Belgium, and others. We are certain that safety—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Montcalm has the floor.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, 163 workers at the Davie shipyard lost their jobs yesterday because the government is not doing its job. Another 350 positions may be cut next week, one month before Christmas. The government is to blame because it continues to shortchange Quebec when awarding shipbuilding contracts.

Will the government finally take action and award Davie a second contract for a supply ship? Time is running out.

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is always concerned about the impact of job losses on workers and their families.

We recognize the excellent work of Davie employees. Over the past few weeks, our government has been in contact with Davie shipyard management, the unions, and the Province of Quebec.

The national shipbuilding strategy has set aside \$2 billion for small ship construction projects, which the Davie shipyard is eligible to participate in. Our government does not plan to purchase another interim supply ship at the end of the service contract with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. The hon. member for Montcalm.

* * *

●(1205)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government is concerned, but it is not doing anything.

The EI program is totally disconnected from the needs of seasonal workers. It is so disconnected that when things are going well and the unemployment rate drops, seasonal workers in the regions suffer even more.

The Prime Minister got elected on a promise to solve the EI problem. He solved the problem for oil workers in western Canada.

When will he keep the promise he made to Quebec's seasonal workers?

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and

Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I know that things can be difficult for seasonal workers.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to addressing this issue. We are in consultation right now with employers, with workers, with municipalities, and with jurisdictions that have coverage of the issue. We are consulting to make sure that a comprehensive response is possible.

Seasonal workers, and those who face difficulties, even as we create 500,000 jobs and face regional challenges, are front of mind of the government, and in particular the minister, who is addressing the issue with his counterparts in the province.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

While travelling my riding, constituents have expressed concern about carbon pricing and how it will increase our already high cost of living. The minister is aware that Nunavut is totally reliant on fossil fuels. Despite this, Nunavut's carbon footprint is only one-tenth of one per cent of Canada's carbon footprint.

The Government of Canada has committed to designing a solution that accounts for our unique nature when developing carbon pricing exemptions and regulations. My question is, are there specific exemptions and regulations being developed for Nunavut?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of Nunavummiuts. We know that northerners are on the front lines of climate change. I saw this directly when I was in the high Arctic this summer. I heard of Inuit hunters falling through the ice because they can no longer tell the thickness of the ice.

Our climate plan understands that we need to be working with northerners, that we need to develop unique situations. We are committed to working with our partners in the north on carbon pricing, and I am happy to say that we are sharing results of a study that we conducted right now—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. Unfortunately, the time is up.

The hon. member for Montcalm.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Thériault: Madam Speaker, I wish to seek consent for the following motion: That this House call upon the government to review its method for determining eligibility for employment insurance benefits in order to better meet the needs of seasonal workers, whose jobs are important for the economy of the various regions of Quebec.

Routine Proceedings

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. It relates to the comments made by the MP for Skeena—Bulkley Valley today, who reminded this House that the government is about to appoint an official languages commissioner. I would refer you to the point I raised on May 31 in this House, which was talked about again on June 6. I have yet to receive a decision from the Chair on that question of privilege with respect to contempt on the part of the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

In those references, we provided prima facie evidence of contempt, where the evidence of Madame Meilleur, who was considered for a time as a person for the official languages post, conflicted directly with the remarks of the Minister of Canadian Heritage in this place on May 31. On June 6, there was additional information for the Speaker to consider.

I would also say that there is news from November 17 that suggests that a senior advisor in the minister's office, who had also worked at Queen's Park in the Ontario legislature, with respect to Madame Meilleur and senior PMO officials, directly contradicts what the Minister of Canadian Heritage told this House with respect to the appointment of an official languages commissioner.

There is no timeline on when the Speaker needs to respond to a question of privilege or a point of order. However, in light of the fact this was raised in May, and we are likely days away from a new person being named as the official languages commissioner, it is an additional question of privilege for me as a member that my previous question of privilege be addressed before this new person is appointed. The minister's actions with respect to the appointment process, both originally and now, are suspect and in contempt of my privileges as a member. I would like that determination from the original May 31 question of privilege to be addressed before the government proceeds with its next appointment.

Therefore, I am asking you for that decision with respect to my May 31 point to be accelerated, so that the matter can be addressed in due course.

● (1210)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly appreciate the follow-up information the member has provided. At this point, I am not quite sure if it is actually a matter of privilege. However, I will certainly take the information back, and the Speaker will certainly come back before the House, if needed.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to add to the member's point. I will certainly be checking the blues. If it is true that there was a question of privilege raised on May 31 that has not been responded to, I would agree completely that we, as a House, need to receive the reply from you

prior to the appointment. At this critical point and in these critical weeks, we need to have that reply. I will be checking the blues, and I will reserve the possibility to come back and comment further, either later today or Monday.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I would ask that if you are going to consider any new information with respect to this matter that we be notified as well, and that we be able to respond in this place.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I appreciate the government House leader's intervention. The new information that has been provided is exactly what has been stated here. However, if there is anything additional, we will be sure to do that.

Again, I will take all of the comments under advisement, and the Speaker will get back to the House as soon as possible, if required.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

PETITIONS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a large petition containing 32,000 signatures to present to the House today. I wonder if it might be a record in this place for signatures. The Catholic Women's League spearheaded this petition.

The petitioners recognize that health care is changing and hospice and palliative care need to be an integral part of our system. These women have done extraordinary work in getting 32,000 signatures. I am pleased to present this petition today. They have raised a valid and important point that needs some consideration by the government.

LABOUR

Mr. David Lametti (LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am tabling today a petition signed by LaSalle Community Comprehensive High School students.

[Translation]

They are calling on Parliament to promote awareness of child labour in schools and enact legislation requiring Canada's large corporations to report on their efforts to monitor, combat, and prevent child labour.

[English]

This is a call to action which I and many Canadians support.

Government Orders

•(1215)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that when tabling petitions members are not to show support. The member basically tables the view of the petitioners.

TAXATION

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I bring forward a petition on behalf of thousands of hard-working Canadians who are concerned about the Liberal government's proposed changes to the tax plan and the use of private corporations proposal.

The petitioners call upon the government to completely abandon these proposed changes and to publicly commit to not raising taxes on dedicated small business owners who contribute economic value and growth to Canadians everywhere.

Small business owners work hard for their money and they should expect the government's support.

ABANDONED VESSELS

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise again in the House to present petitions signed by coastal people who are urging the House to adopt my Bill C-352, which would solve the problem of abandoned vessels. These signatories are from Port Saunders and Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and on the west coast, Nanaimo and Ladysmith.

The petitioners urge that the bill and its remedies for fixing vessel registration dealing with the backlog of abandoned vessels, and with recycling and green jobs all be advanced. All of these are pieces that would fill holes in the government's Bill C-64.

[*Translation*]

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, a pastor in my riding asked me to table a paper petition signed by many Canadians who are calling on the government to protect all religious leaders and the freedom to worship without interference. I think that is the government's intention, but just to be sure, I am pleased to present this petition today.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to remind members that they are simply to present their petitions without offering their opinions on them.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANNABIS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-45, An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Markham—Unionville had four minutes left before I interrupted him for question period. The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Madam Speaker, countless medical professionals have testified that the brain continues to develop until the age of 25. According to the Canadian Medical Association, increased use of marijuana before the age of 25 increases one's risk of developing mental disorders such as schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety by up to 30% compared to those who have not used marijuana under the age of 25.

The government cannot go through with this. Is this what we want for our children? I have said it before and will say it again. This is most certainly not what I want for my children. This is not what I want for my constituents and this is not what I want for Canadians.

For these reasons, the Canadian Medical Association and various other medical professionals recommended increasing the age a person can consume marijuana to 21 at the very least. As it stands, the government will fail our children if it goes through with this legislation. The government claims that this legislation will control the drug, but in reality it will allow its use to become out of control.

The vast majority of witnesses at the health committee spoke strongly against home grown marijuana in their testimony, including most medical groups and the police forces that appeared. Allowing home grown marijuana will most certainly not help us to regulate the industry. Further, police have said at the health committee that because they cannot see inside homes, they will be unable to enforce a plant per household quota. Even more concerning is that a large network of legal home grows could easily become an organized crime network, and this could happen next door to anyone.

Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. We are parliamentarians. We are representatives of our constituents and we need to ensure that all voices are heard. People are concerned about this drug. We as elected officials can and should provide guidance on this drug to reflect the views of all Canadians. When it comes to health and safety, Canadians deserve the best. This legislation is not what is best for Canadians.

There are only 218 days to go until the arbitrary date of July 1, 2018. Let me be clear: let us not rush through this legislation. We need to do what is right for Canadians. The provinces, the municipalities, and police forces are not ready to implement this legislation. I cannot support Bill C-45.

Government Orders

•(1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when the Conservatives stand up, they consistently talk about there being a problem if the bill passes, but they fail to recognize that the problem is there today. We have a serious problem with cannabis consumption by our youth. Their usage is recognized as among the highest in the world.

In my constituency and all constituencies there are criminal elements that go into our schools to sell marijuana to our children, to 12-, 14-, and 15-year olds. We finally have a government that has taken a proactive approach to deal with the issue. We have a government that made a commitment in the last election to do exactly what it is doing today. It is a part of the election platform. We are stepping forward and trying to resolve some very complicated issues.

Would the member across the way not recognize that the status quo just does not work? The numbers and what is happening to our young people in our schools today—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I do have to allow for other questions.

The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, there is a huge problem, but we are going to make it worse. This is the main concern of police officers and the Canadian Medical Association. Everyone spoke against it. For example, if marijuana plants are allowed to grow in homes and on every street corner, marijuana will be available. People could go to Shopper's Drug Mart and it would be available. This is making the overall situation worse. Yes, there is a problem, but the Liberals are making it worse down the road.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier this week, I had representatives of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities sit down and have a chat with me. One of their major concerns is the pace of the legalization of marijuana and how communities themselves have a lot of work to do to prepare. I wonder if the member could share with the House whether he shares those concerns and how the government needs to support communities in this process.

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, indeed, there is a problem. There are many problems. I was speaking to our local police chief. He was wondering when we are going to train our police officers. It costs \$10,000 to train one police officer. Where is the money going to come from? What happens when kids go to school stoned, having eaten the wrong brownies from the kitchen? All those questions and concerns are not being addressed. The whole process has not been well thought through by the Liberals.

There is no rush. I would ask them to please take their time. The arbitrary date of July 1, 2018, is simply unacceptable to us, and it is unacceptable to Canadians.

•(1225)

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have heard a lot of reasons why not to legalize marijuana. What is the rush? When I was door knocking back in 2015, we hit about 25,000 doors. I can count on two hands the

number of times I talked to people who said they were going to vote Liberal because they would legalize marijuana.

We have heard that doctors are against it. Police are against it. Firefighters are against it. Insurance people, etc., are against it. Does he have any idea why the Liberals would do this, when no one wanted it? What is the rush?

Mr. Bob Saroya: Madam Speaker, we did a round table in my riding, and 98% disagreed with the government. Ninety-eight per cent said that we are going to make the situation worse.

The one thing that crossed my mind is that the Liberal government is so broke that it is looking for a couple of bucks, another half-billion or billion dollars.

The Liberals are forgetting that there is a cost attached to this issue. More money will be needed for health care, policing, schooling, and everywhere else. There is a cost involved. Most of the provinces and municipalities are doing all the work. Meanwhile, the Liberal government is looking for more cash, because it is broke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for splitting his time with me.

The third reading stage is our last chance to thoroughly review the imminent tragedy that will forever stand as the legacy of the Liberal Party of Canada under the current Prime Minister. I am speaking, of course, of the legalization, or should I say normalization, of drug use in Canada.

This is all so sad. Not only will marijuana be normalized, but families will be rent apart, bonds will be broken, children will be cast into an abyss of darkness and misery, and parents, faced with this sad, new reality, will be left with nowhere to turn. That is what is going to happen in Canada, and it will forever be this Prime Minister's legacy.

At the end of my speech, I will cite facts to demonstrate that the picture I have just painted is not the product of an overactive imagination, but an actual fact that is being observed in other parts of the world at this very moment, and not far from here.

We are almost at the final step. Regrettably, marijuana could be become legal in roughly six months. Municipalities and provinces are grappling with the implementation of this policy and the raft of problems that come with it.

How much progress has my home province of Quebec made so far? Police officers are not ready. According to a recent article, the Fédération des policiers et policières municipaux du Québec is concerned about the shortage of evaluation officers in Quebec's municipal police forces. The president of the federation, Robin Côté, put it this way:

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.

What does that mean? It means major problems for police officers and major problems for drivers.

Government Orders

From the outset, the Government of Quebec has consistently maintained that it makes no sense to rush this. That is why the provincial government and the National Assembly are taking no chances and recently introduced a bill.

Is this a provincial matter? Having worked in provincial politics for seven years, I am often tempted to comment on provincial matters. Although I generally refrain from doing so, I do want to highlight one aspect of the bill that the provincial government introduced in the National Assembly of Quebec: thankfully, growing marijuana at home will be forbidden.

I am trying to remain polite, but if some people are irresponsible enough as to allow marijuana production in homes across Canada, thank goodness, at least there are some in Quebec who stood up and said that that is ridiculous and will be prohibiting it in Quebec.

I hope the Liberal government will not oppose that initiative taken by the National Assembly.

Quebec's minister responsible for rehabilitation, youth protection, public health, and healthy living, Lucie Charlebois, spoke last week about the motion that was passed unanimously in the National Assembly calling on the Liberal government to postpone the legalization of marijuana by at least one year. She said:

We will be voting in favour of the motion because we have said from the beginning that we thought the deadline was too short....As for the whole issue of enforcing the act, if we had one more year, we would definitely be able to do a better job.

Who else is saying the same thing? The new mayor of Montreal, Valérie Plante. I actually had the pleasure of meeting her yesterday, along with the leader of the official opposition, the leader of the Conservative Party, and future prime minister of Canada.

What did Mrs. Plante say? The mayor-elect of Montreal, Valérie Plante, feels that Montreal is not ready for cannabis legalization and would welcome more time.

Ultimately the municipalities will experience the positive effects, but also the negative effects. We have to think of zoning, school zones and parks.

While the Liberal government is in the process of normalizing marijuana use, the provinces and municipalities have to deal with the real problems stemming from this very bad policy.

• (1230)

This bill also illustrates how utterly hypocritical this government can be in some cases, especially this one. The government keeps saying that there is nothing more important than the first nations, that we must work together with them, that they have been mistreated for centuries and it is time to work together. We do not disagree with those statements. I will read from the mandate letter that the Prime Minister gave to every minister:

No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

“Respect”, “co-operation” and “partnership” are the words that the Prime Minister uses when he talks about first nations, but do the government's actions reflect those things? Is the government acting in a spirit of respect, co-operation, and partnership? Not at all, and I know what I am talking about because, for the past two years, I have

had the great privilege of representing the riding of Louis-Saint-Laurent, which is home to the Huron-Wendat community of Wendake. I am very proud to represent those people here in the House of Commons, as I did for seven years in the Quebec National Assembly. Wendake wants nothing to do with the legalization of marijuana. As Grand Chief Konrad Sioui said:

We have a zero-tolerance policy and we want our own economic development to reflect that....

We are extremely concerned because this is a real problem for first nations. It is important to acknowledge that.

This is a real problem for first nations. It is not a Conservative or a Liberal saying this, it is the grand chief of a community. He is saying that drugs are a real problem for first nations. The government, however, is seeking to normalize drug use, a move that is strongly opposed by the first nations, particularly the Wendake community, which I represent.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Grand Chief Konrad Sioui. He is a great man who is not afraid of taking responsibility and who stood firm against the financial lure of the Liberal plan. On September 18, the newspaper *Le Soleil* reported, and I quote:

The Grand Chief of Wendake says he turned down an offer to partner with an Ontario medical marijuana company called DelShen, whose shareholders include Capital Media Group CEO Martin Cauchon [a former liberal justice minister], even though, as he says, “the money was tempting.”

Grand Chief Sioui stood to make millions of dollars for his community with the legalization of marijuana, but he said no because he felt it was not a good thing. That is the hallmark of a real leader: someone who is able to resist the deplorable commercialism that the government is trying to impose on Canadians.

Wendake is not the only holdout. A QMI article from November 24 quotes David Kistabish, chief of the Abitibiwinni nation, as saying, “We do not even allow alcohol to be sold in convenience stores, so we definitely will not be allowing this.”

Lac-Simon Chief Adrienne Jérôme also wants to keep marijuana out of her community, which is grappling with serious addiction issues. She said, “Even when pot is legal in Quebec, it will not be allowed in our community. We already have enough problems with substance abuse.”

What happened to all of the nice things the Prime Minister said about working in partnership with first nations, respecting them, collaborating with them? First nations do not want this, and we can all understand why.

The last thing I want to mention is that a recent article published in the United States commemorates, so to speak, the fifth anniversary of marijuana legalization in Colorado. What is the situation there now? Colorado has the highest level of homelessness, twice as many accidents involving drivers under the influence of marijuana, and a 71% increase in illegal consumption in schools. It now has the highest rates of marijuana consumption in the United States. That is what the Liberals want to do to Canada, and that is why we refuse to vote in favour of this bad bill.

Government Orders

●(1235)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a fairly simple question for my colleague across the way. Would it be the Conservative Party's intention to decriminalize cannabis, in terms of incorporating that as part of its election platform going into the next federal election?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I remind my colleague, all members in the House, and all of Canada that our party decided a year and a half ago to decriminalize marijuana, but not to legalize marijuana. This is where we stand. We will see how bad things will be in Canada in two years from now.

I can assure all Canadians that we will offer a real true solution to the problems created, hand by hand, by the Liberal government.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, who gave an excellent speech. I agree with him completely.

Now I would like to hear what he thinks of this rush to implement Bill C-45, which is supposed to protect our young people and eliminate organized crime. If you read every single clause of the bill, there is nothing to guarantee that those objectives can be achieved.

Is there another goal here? His colleague asked him a question about the 2019 election. What are the Liberals' personal interests in this and are they willing to sacrifice our young people to win the election in 2019?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier who is doing an excellent job here in the House of Commons and in his riding, which includes 50 municipalities and 100,000 people, who are very well represented.

It is sad, but yes, this raises some serious questions about the government's ambitions and its true objectives. This is not to mention the fact that a former justice minister and former leadership candidate is a shareholder in a company that will make money off the legalization of marijuana. The problem is that legalizing marijuana is going to normalize its use.

I would remind the House that kids as young as 12 will be allowed to walk around with joints in their pockets and that will be legal. Unfortunately, this normalizing process will mean that the dirty business of using the drug for the first time will be fully and completely sanctioned by the Liberal government and the current Prime Minister. Those poor kids will then get hooked on the drug and soon move on to much harder drugs, which is what has happened in Colorado in the past five years.

●(1240)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives and the Hells Angels will have the same drug policy when it comes to cannabis. Let us think about it. They want to decriminalize it, but not legalize it. That means we cannot regulate it. If we do not regulate it, I am sure the Hells Angels would love that.

Does the Conservative Party recognize that decriminalizing marijuana will ultimately be to the benefit of criminals in Canada?

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, no, and I will explain why. This is a very serious issue. We as a party decided to decriminalize it because we did not want to hurt people their whole life for a bad mistake made when they were young. This was supported by 4,000 members from coast to coast in Vancouver a year and a half ago. We also want to give judges the chance to judge other serious issues, instead of putting hundreds and hundreds of people inside the courtroom, when there are other criminal issues to address.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Montarville.

Listening to my colleagues across the way reminds me of the importance of starting off by reminding all of us in this place of the importance of this debate to Canadians. I think the question every Canadian has on his or her mind, when we talk to people as members of Parliament, is, "Why would the Government of Canada legalize cannabis?"

Let us start by answering that question, because the Conservatives are having a difficult time relating to the reason why society, its values, and its norms change. Most of us know that 21% of youth and 30% of young adults reported using cannabis this year. Let us put it another way. I have been reading a study over the last few days. It has said that even if we go as low as 12.5% of Canadians aged 15 or older, 3.4 million Canadians have reported smoking cannabis on a regular basis or have been using it in one form or another.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. For the benefit of those currently in the House sitting through the debate and listening intently to it, could you advise us how much more time is allotted for this debate and how much time has transpired in the debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mel Arnold): The member for Kenora has eight minutes and 38 seconds remaining, but there will be further debate through the day today, until the end of government orders.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, the question is how much time has transpired in this debate and how much more time would be allotted for this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Mel Arnold): The debate will carry on until 1:15 p.m. today, and then the question will be put.

●(1245)

Hon. Robert Nault: Mr. Speaker, I want to start again by informing the House that this is an extremely important debate as it relates to Canadian values and the direction that governments move to reflect those values.

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I will give early statistics of why the present system has failed us miserably. The use of cannabis in Canada has been illegal for decades, even though many Canadians are not respecting or following that law. I want to also remind the House and Canadians that Statistics Canada has indicated that over 699,000 Canadians have a criminal record as a result of convictions on charges of cannabis possession. When we look at the statistics, the convictions, and the continued use, it shows very clearly that Canada has failed in its relationship with its constituents when it comes to the use of cannabis.

Why are we legalizing cannabis? Very clearly the approach we have been using has not worked for Canadians, is not going to work for Canadians, and it is a drug that is easily accessible to young people across this nation.

I have had the great privilege of living in northern Ontario, in British Columbia in the Okanagan Valley, and in Calgary, Alberta. Over the last 10 years, my children were in elementary, high school, and are now in university. Because of that, I have had the opportunity to speak to them and some of their friends about what is going on as it relates to this subject matter. It is clear and true when people say that it is easier to get cannabis on the streets than it is to buy a bottle of beer. It is true in B.C., in northern Ontario, and in Calgary where I live. People can walk down the streets in Ottawa and they would find the same situation.

We can do as the Conservatives are doing in the House and pretend nothing is wrong, or we can work very hard to change our approach. The work of the House is to put in place a very robust regulatory structure that controls the use of cannabis.

The public expectations are that we will put in legislation that protects our children and youth. This does not seem like an area which we have spent a lot of time positioning ourselves as a society. If what I hear from youth is true, that they can go into the playground of high schools and someone will sell them cannabis, then we have not done a very good job at protecting the interests of young people.

By restricting access, banning products, and packaging that may be appealing to children, we can keep cannabis out of the hands of our youth. Of course, it will be a difficult job, as it is with alcohol and tobacco, but society has a responsibility to do everything in its power to ensure we do this.

What are the government's expectations? A number of members have been focusing their attention on that today. It is not just one government at play here. There are a number of governments and their expectations obviously are different. The expectation of the federal government is to put in good legislation to meet the needs of our young people and to establish a regulatory structure to allow us to commit resources that will make a difference.

• (1250)

Then there is the expectation that the provincial government will put in place the kind of regulatory structure to make it safe and explainable to Canadians, and in this case to Ontarians in the province where I live. This would include how to purchase, what the packaging would look like, what the cost would be, and where to go to purchase legal cannabis.

Then there is the need for the legislation to reflect the role of those governments, and I include first nation governments. I have the honour and distinction of representing most first nations in Ontario. Those 42 first nations have an interest in having regulations and structures which might be somewhat different than what might be the case in non-native communities and municipalities around the country.

We expect tough laws on the sale, purchase, and criminal activities around cannabis. That will further protect youth. Penalties for promoting cannabis use and products to youth will be very strict, and that is the right way to approach this whole process.

I was asked by a reporter in my riding the other day why the penalties were so severe, penalties of up to 14 years in jail for selling to youth or for using a youth to commit a cannabis-related offence. The answer is simple. We want to signal to Canadians that we are serious about controlling and managing the sale of cannabis.

It is not a simple matter of suggesting that society has evolved to the point where we expect our youth to be using cannabis. Our role and our expectations as government is to do a much better job than we have done in the past, because the numbers show the failure of society to protect our youth with respect to the use of cannabis.

I commend the government for its tough approach on dealing with the sale of cannabis. I also commend the government for taking on a project that we all know has a lot of people for and against it.

If we look at the number of states, countries, and other jurisdictions that are now moving in the direction Canada is taking today, it shows they all agree that the cannabis issue is not going to go away and we are not reflecting the needs of our society.

I have a study of some 18 states that have decriminalized the use of marijuana. Dozens of states have legalized medical marijuana. Now many states have fully legalized marijuana. This suggests that the path we are taking is the path many others are taking. I commend the government for doing that work in the House today.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know my friend and colleague from Kenora as a very reasonable and fair person.

Earlier I brought up my concern about the government moving toward putting time allocation on the bill. The same day it announced that was the day the provinces asked for more time. We need to have a greater discussion on the issues they have outlined.

We are seeing a record number of vacancies in the courts and charges for violent crimes are being stayed. Why does the government continue to use judicial resources to go after people for simple possession of a substance that it has tabled legislation to legalize? Where is the fairness?

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, those of us who spend a lot of time in Parliament know that the question the member has asked refers to how people feel about the structure for making laws in this place. We cannot assume a law is a law until it is passed. If we were to do that, the justice system and our colleagues in the police forces could prejudge the decisions of Parliament before they were made.

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My only advice for my colleague is to be patient. We will see how this evolves as we go forward and see what approach the government believes is best to deal with people who already have a criminal record, to deal with people who are frustrated with police officers because they believe them to be a little too active on cannabis.

Our government should take the time to ensure we get this right. I expect that is exactly what we will do. It may not sound or seem like we are doing that in the House today, but all of the work that has been done over the last couple of years will come to fruition if we are patient enough to ensure we get this right for Canadians and for our young people.

• (1255)

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Madam Speaker, we know that there is an issue with youth smoking marijuana in our country. We hear again and again from the government that the solution to this is to allow children from 12 to 17 to legally have up to seven joints. We hear that the solution to youth using marijuana is to allow families to grow seven pot plants of unlimited height in every single household and apartment in the country. I am curious. How in the world is making it more available to youth going to reduce youth marijuana use?

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, I have to say to the member, it is not very useful to put facts on the floor of the House of Commons that are not true, because we are not putting marijuana in the hands of 12-year-olds or 17-year-olds.

The fact remains, we have to start with the real issue at hand. I strongly urge the member to come with me to any high school. I will show him who is selling drugs to the kids. Even the police know that this is what is going on, simply because it is so widespread it is almost impossible to control the way the member is suggesting.

I would say to the member and his party to get with the program with young people, and we will make a difference in what we are trying to accomplish on their behalf.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, earlier this week, I voted to remove from Bill C-45 the provision in clause 9 that would penalize someone who, for example, passes a joint, at a party, to someone who turns out to be under the age of 19. Right now, in the legislation, it is a 14-year penalty for what is called non-commercial cannabis trafficking.

Does the member share my concern that people in the public may not be aware that this is a severe penalty for something that could well be an accident and that, given that the government has closed down debate, this cannot be fully aired?

Hon. Robert Nault: Madam Speaker, I do not believe anyone in the House agrees with the member that it is the intention of that clause or the legislation to put an individual at a house party in jail for 14 years for unfortunately passing a joint off to someone who is younger than anticipated. That is not the way any legislation works.

I ask the member to reconsider making those kinds of comments in public, when in fact, that is not the way the law will read.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the expressions “hit a wall” and “hit bottom” best describe the current

situation with cannabis and its status as an illegal substance. Nothing, including the status quo, will improve the situation.

Firstly, we are not condoning the use of this product. Personally, I am against using cannabis. However, I have the privilege of leading consultations in Quebec on legalizing a product that does not concern me in the least, since I do not use it, but that causes problems for me. This may be an extremely difficult decision, but it is necessary. We have to show the public that we take this issue seriously and ensure through our colleagues' efforts that the way in which marijuana is legalized is reassuring to the public, better contains the problem, and better manages the future with regard to cannabis use.

The consultations generally focused on these same problems, and people's concerns were heard loud and clear. In addition to listening to them, we asked people to continue to bring forward their concerns on the issue, because together we can monitor and follow the trend for consumption of the product in order to achieve the intended result. What was illegal for those under 18 before legalization will continue to be illegal afterwards. What was harmful to health will not suddenly become a healthy habit after the product is legalized. Fortunately, the file is in the hands of the Minister of Health, who will ensure that this product is controlled to avoid problems we currently experience when people use products purchased on the black market. They have no idea of what they are consuming.

In view of the current problems with public health and organized crime stemming from the sale of cannabis, a government's failure to act would be tantamount to an offence, a reflection of its lack of responsibility. Maintaining the status quo will only ensure the worst results, the worst consequences, and a loss of control, which we must mitigate as much as possible.

Let us be realistic. In my previous life, I had the opportunity to work on cases involving organized crime. We are not deluding ourselves. We know that organized crime also deals in legal substances, substances that can legally be sold, and that it will not completely disappear when this bill is passed. Getting around the law is what organized crime does, and it is the job of our police forces, intelligence agencies, and government bodies to ensure that the activities of these criminal organizations are thwarted as much as possible.

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Fortunately, the legalization of such a substance will ensure that law enforcement can focus its efforts on what matters most, for example, the unacceptable presence of organized crime in schoolyards. All a person has to do is ask a child under the age of 18 for some cannabis to understand that this is real problem. During the consultations, young people told us that it would only take them about 15 minutes to get some. That is scary. This drug is so accessible that we need to focus our efforts where they will count the most.

● (1300)

Naturally, legalizing cannabis does not just mean making the product accessible and legal. Although it is true that this will improve the situation, relieving some of the pressure on the justice system remains a secondary objective. It is very clear that the primary objective has to do with health. People are putting their lives at risk by taking a product whose ingredients they know nothing about. This is a situation that needs to be fixed.

The approach to organized crime is also clear. Organized crime is making significant profits that fuel money laundering and are also used to fund other types of criminal activity.

We need tools to curb this type of activity as much as possible and clean up the culture associated with this product. It is true that we have heard that taking illegal drugs is cool and gives the user a certain status and cachet among peers. We must discourage this kind of misinformed thought process. Changing the culture will require clear and unequivocal government involvement in education, training, and prevention.

It is too bad that some members of the party opposite say that we are doing nothing about prevention until after marijuana is legalized. The consultations that I attended and had the pleasure of leading tell a different story. Community intervention groups have already been clearly identified and are doing tremendous work.

Unfortunately, Canada has the highest percentage of cannabis users in the world, simply because the product is illegal. Furthermore, it is estimated that 30% of Canadians aged 18 to 25 use cannabis. In some regions, including the northern suburbs of Montreal, Quebec's health department puts that figure at over 40%. We are the champions of using an illegal product. There are many competitions that I want to win, but this is not one of them.

The supposed deterrent messages about prison sentences have failed, and maintaining the status quo would be inconceivable. The government is therefore seeking both to legalize the product and to allocate the necessary funds and resources for training and prevention.

Prevention is already happening, and we will step up our efforts because that is what we, as a reasonable government making an admittedly extremely difficult decision, committed to doing. This is a monumental challenge related to an extremely sensitive issue, but this decision had to be made. There will never be a perfect time when we can say that all of the elements are in place and we can go ahead with legalization. In fact, we are way behind.

The government's decision will have serious consequences, but it will truly be good for our communities. The government will oversee the process and will be able to anticipate outcomes. Unlike the

members opposite, I will make no predictions based on speculation or clairvoyance, but I will say that based on our objectives, we can expect results similar to the experiences and best practices of other countries that have gone down this path and succeeded in reducing marijuana consumption.

● (1305)

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his presentation.

How can he say that the use of marijuana is a problem that affects our young people because they can access it in 15 minutes, and then turn around and say that the distribution points will increase, so young people will be able to get it at the local pharmacy? There is an inconsistency here.

Why does this government not pass laws and make investments that will eliminate organized crime and encourage young people to play sports, participate in arts and culture activities, or at the very least get involved in the many organizations in our ridings?

Mr. Michel Picard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this important question. Unfortunately, his reasoning is faulty. The fact that legal distribution centres will be open does not necessarily mean that people will consume more marijuana. They already consume more than anywhere else in the world.

The bill clearly makes it illegal to sell cannabis to young people, to use young people to purchase cannabis, and to sell cannabis through young people. What was illegal will remain illegal. It is false to state that young people have greater access to a product once it becomes legal. They cannot purchase alcohol or cigarettes, even though there is no shortage of distribution points. Reality shows that we are on the right track.

● (1310)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I raised this earlier to both the health minister and the member for Kenora, that the government brought in time allocation on the same day that the provinces raised concerns about them not being prepared to take this on.

This member's own province has raised concerns about the timeline that is being imposed on them. The member for Kenora is saying, "Trust us. Trust us. We are going to get it right." Trust is not built by ending debate, by taking away the opportunity to have a conversation and get it right. That is not how trust is built.

Could the member speak to us about why the government is putting through time allocation and limiting debate on an issue when his own province has raised concerns that they are being rushed to prepare to take this on?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard: Madam Speaker, I think that the time allocation motion is being misconstrued.

Everyone was well aware of our intentions even before we took office. As soon as we were elected, we put all of our cards on the table and everyone knew that we were going to legalize marijuana.

We held consultations, and since we are talking about my province, I will mention that I even had the pleasure of discussing the timeframe with the provincial minister, who confirmed that the Quebec health department was in touch with Health Canada on a weekly basis.

I know that other provinces are already ready and that licences have already been issued. When we took office, people made the necessary preparations, as we have; we will be ready.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to advise the hon. member for Edmonton Manning that I am going to have to interrupt him. Unfortunately, he only has a few minutes.

The hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, thank you for being so generous and giving me two minutes to speak to such an important bill today. I have heard a lot on it before, and my observation with respect to this is that the government has created a monster and a problem that, as a business case, takes with it all of the risks.

Funnily enough, the government is congratulating itself over the good results that this bill will generate while disregarding the opinions of the people, the parents, the municipalities, the police forces, all the stakeholders across the country, the public opinions from the consultations that had not been properly done, and not allowing the bill to go to committee to be studied properly. All of that has not been taken into consideration whatsoever by the government on such an important bill.

Therefore, the only sign that this is an important bill is that we see the government trying to thank itself for how good a job it has done. However, it should at least pay attention to the public and make sure that people understand it. It should make sure that people are asked questions and that it hears their concerns. There are a large number of problems and concerns out there that people are talking about, to which the government has unfortunately turned a deaf ear.

If we were to list the number of issues and concerns, instead of two minutes, we would need hours to express ourselves properly, to ensure that what Canadians will get out of this bill is not something as harmful, as unfair, and as much of a risk as it presently is for families and people. Therefore, if I have 20 seconds, I would like to list the following problems: impaired driving; easy and direct pot access for children and youth; health impacts on brain development to youth under 25 years of age; health impacts to heavy users, such as addiction; keeping drugs away from children and youth, especially home-grown plants and edibles; and, workplace health and safety.

These are major problems. I hope the government will come to the realization that it should give this time. Otherwise, we are looking at a disaster.

• (1315)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I greatly apologize. I wish I could give the member more time.

It being 1:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, November 21, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put

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forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): All those in favour of the amendment 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, November 27, 2017, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvas the House you would find unanimous support to see the clock at 1:30 p.m. so we can begin private members' hour.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Do members agree that we should see the clock at 1:30 p.m.?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP) moved:

That a special committee be appointed to conduct hearings on the matter of homelessness and to propose a national plan to prevent and end homelessness; that this Committee consist of ten members of which six shall be from the government party, three from the Official Opposition, and one from the New Democratic Party, provided that the Chair is from the government party; that in addition to the Chair, there be one Vice-Chair from each of the recognized opposition parties; that the Committee have all the powers of a standing committee as provided in the Standing Orders; that the members to serve on the said Committee be appointed by the Whip of each party by depositing with the Clerk of the House a list of his or her party's members of the Committee no later than a week after the adoption of the said motion; that the quorum of the Committee be as provided for in Standing Order 118, provided that at least one member of each recognized party be present; that membership substitutions be permitted from time to time, if required, in the manner provided for in Standing Order 114(2); and that the Committee report to the House no later than 12 months after the adoption of this motion.

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She said: Madam Speaker, if I could be so bold as to state, I think I know what some members might be thinking in the chamber about my private member's motion that would create a special committee to develop a national plan to end and prevent homelessness. I think some are thinking, "Oh, no, not another committee". To that I would say that this special committee and its mandate would be different. I can imagine the response to that might be, "But that is what they all say".

This time it is going to be different. Let me lay out my case for my private member's motion to create a national plan to end and prevent homelessness. It is not just another committee to engage in busy work. Instead, it is an opportunity for parliamentarians from all political parties to roll up their sleeves, to work in partnership with government and communities, to create a road map to end homelessness, not to manage or reduce it, but to end it.

If the bias against committees were not enough to contend with, I am speaking on homelessness immediately on the heels of the government's important announcement of a national housing strategy. I know it is hard to see the newsworthiness of a plan. However, a national plan to end and prevent homelessness is the next critical step to the strategies, targets, and principles of the national housing strategy.

Prior to this first hour of debate on my motion, I reached out to my fellow parliamentarians, and met one on one with many of my colleagues, both in opposition and from the government side. I found more agreement and commonality than disagreement and partisanship. I did not hear any disagreement that we are in a crisis.

According to recent data from CMHC, 1.7 million Canadians are paying more than one-third of their income for housing, with 400,000 of them paying more than 50% of their income on housing that is either substandard, not in good repair, even unsafe, or does not meet their needs. For many Canadians, that means living in overcrowded homes or apartments. No one that I spoke to denied the unacceptable reality we find ourselves in when it comes to housing and homelessness in this country.

Further, I did not meet a parliamentarian who thought the current emergency response to the crisis made any sense, whether it be the toll it takes on people's lives, or the wasted resources and escalation of high-cost emergency services, like emergency room visits, ambulances, and police calls.

Many of the parliamentarians I spoke to were well aware of the statistics. The annual cost of institutional responses to each person for hospitals and jails was \$66,000 to \$120,000, and for emergency shelters, \$13,000 to \$42,000, versus the cost of affordable housing of \$5,000 to \$8,000, or \$13,000 to \$18,000 for supportive or transitional housing. However, these statistics do not take into account the human and social costs. I found parliamentarians were on the same page that homelessness is cheaper to fix than to ignore.

It was a pleasure to speak with the MP from Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner who sat on Medicine Hat's committee that led to their plan to end homelessness. Of course, Medicine Hat was the first city in Canada to end homelessness. In 2014, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador announced its plan to end homelessness. It set goals and benchmarks that made sense to its

communities. In 2015, the City of Guelph, Ontario announced its plan to end homelessness. There are many more.

MPs of all political stripes represent communities that have tackled and transformed our response to homelessness from the ground up, and those responses have achieved astounding results. Communities like Hamilton, Lethbridge, Calgary, to name a few, have created plans, brought people around a common table, rolled up their sleeves and said that they can do this. They can end homelessness in their community.

● (1320)

I have had my own experience of the power of a plan to transform a community's response, or lack of response, to homelessness. As the CEO of the United Way, I was part of a leadership team of business people, labour groups, city officials, indigenous government leaders, and folks with the lived experience of homelessness who drafted our community's first plan to end homelessness.

In 2006-07 in Saskatoon, we experienced an economic boom, like many communities in Alberta. With the economic boom came a skyrocketing housing crisis. This saw people with full-time, good-paying jobs in Saskatoon unable to afford rent and living in emergency shelters. We had students living in cars, because of the high cost of housing, so they could afford their tuition.

This new reality of homelessness galvanized our community. From CEOs to labour leaders, to our then police chief, we could no longer turn a blind eye or hope that someone would do something. That is when we turned to our neighbours in Alberta and learned about the remarkable work that cities, community organizations, and two provincial governments were doing with plans to end homelessness. It was a game-changer for us.

Where our provincial government feared to tread, we, on the other hand, rolled up our sleeves and invested in housing homeless people based on the housing first model, a pillar of plans to end homelessness in Alberta. The program was called "journey home". In its first year people helped by journey home saw an 82% drop in the use of high-cost emergency services, like ambulance, police responses, emergency-room visits, and hospitalization. The return on investment was for every dollar invested, \$2 was saved. One participant in the program had been homeless for 17 years. The average length of homelessness for participants was three to five years. One person said that housing first saved their life.

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Results like we have seen in Saskatoon are occurring in cities and communities across the country, from small cities to large urban centres. The players around the table may be different, but what they all have in common is a plan, a road map that holds them to account, to timelines and outcomes, and a goal to end homelessness in their community.

My motion is about building on that success, building on what works, and rolling it up to a national level. When I was visiting with my colleagues, I was pleasantly surprised by the non-partisan tone to our conversation. That is not to say I was not grilled, in a very nice way, as to how my motion would make a difference, but the conversations were excellent.

I think I can say that the majority of parliamentarians I spoke with realize the need for the federal government to step back in to addressing housing and homelessness, and they saw the federal government's national homelessness initiative, started in 1999 under a Liberal government, and the subsequently renamed homelessness partnering strategy in 2006, under a Conservative government, as important federal government initiatives that have made a positive difference for communities tackling and addressing homelessness.

Many also cited the ground-breaking work of the Mental Health Commission's project at home/chez soi as greatly advancing our understanding of housing first, and the project's positive impact on those who are homeless, most marginalized, and most vulnerable to great suffering.

I think parliamentarians can work better together. I believe Canadians expect that, and believe that collaboration between parliamentarians is possible and needed, if we are to address the defining issues of our time, like the crisis of homelessness.

I am presenting a motion on homelessness the week the government released their first ever national housing strategy. I commend it for that. This is good news. There is still a lot of work to do and much of the detail yet to be determined. It is still somewhat, I feel, a work in progress. For example, the work of reimagining the homelessness partnering strategy is still ongoing, and I believe will be released in the spring of 2018.

• (1325)

I would like to make two comments on the national housing strategy. First, I would like to see a more aggressive goal on homelessness. I would like to see the government make a commitment to end homelessness. All the elements are there within the plan, almost, to do this. I believe that parliamentarians working on a special committee to create a national plan to end and prevent homelessness could do just that. The special committee could connect the dots, build on the work being done by the government on the homelessness partnering strategy, work with experts and communities, and bring us to a plan and a goal to end homelessness.

Second, I, and I believe many others, would have liked to see the strategy funded at the front end versus being back loaded. In other words, have the big investment come early and not so much stretched over many years, and certainly not past the next general election.

I point to the example of my own community. The United Way stepped in early with funds to help our community realize sooner

rather than later the difference a plan and housing first could make in addressing homelessness. This allowed other funders and governments to step in after success was demonstrated. I can see the federal government doing a similar strategy.

I was glad to see the government identifying data as a key pillar of the strategy. Better data will be key to being able to not only understand the scope and size of the problem we are trying to address but to adequately measure progress and to hold multiple partners, including provinces and territories, to account for investments.

We now estimate that a minimum of 235,000 people will experience homelessness in any given year in Canada, and every night, there are 35,000 homeless people in Canada. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and we do not have to reinvent the wheel. Communities right across Canada, with elected officials of all political stripes, are addressing the issue head on with local plans to end homelessness. We need to build on this work, and we can.

Communities want to see a national plan they can see themselves being a part of, one that delineates exactly how the federal government can be a real and valued partner at their community plan tables.

My Motion No. 147, calling for a special committee to create a national plan to end and prevent homelessness, is a way forward, in tandem with the national housing strategy.

I want to see, and I believe Canadians want to see, parliamentarians roll up their sleeves, put partisanship aside, and in partnership with communities, experts, other governments, and those with the lived experience, put the details on a national plan to end and prevent homelessness.

Our goal must be to end homelessness. It is possible, and it is probable.

Is it possible that communities across Canada and North America have it wrong? Do plans to end homelessness not really work? Is it not possible to end homelessness? Could all these communities be flying in the wrong direction? I do not think so. It is possible. Anything is possible, but it is most likely not probable.

When John F. Kennedy told his fellow Americans that they would put a man on the moon, he did not know if it was probable. When he was making that statement, he knew it was possible, and he wanted others to believe in that possibility, so the NASA nerds got to work, and the possible became probable, and of course, ultimately, the reality.

We have what we need to end homelessness. We have a homelessness equivalent of the NASA nerds. We have a federal government that is giving us an indication that it is possible. We need a special committee to bring all that together to build on what is working and to go where we have not gone before. We can make the possible probable and end homelessness in Canada.

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• (1330)

Mr. Nick Whalen (St. John's East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saskatoon West for her very interesting motion. Now that the federal government has announced its national homelessness strategy that will involve many partners in all walks of life and be transformative for the nation, it is important that we make sure that the \$40 billion we committed to this project will be well spent. The plan itself devotes \$241 million toward housing research and innovation, but I also believe it is important for the House and members to consider ways that we can continually do better in our housing strategy.

Thus, when I look at the existing list of standing committees, I see the human resources, public accounts, and justice committees all being involved. I also see the status of women committee being involved, because it is important. How does the member see the committee she proposes as playing a unique role in making sure that we get the housing strategy right?

• (1335)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, that certainly was part of the conversations I had with parliamentarians about the best way forward. The reason I proposed a special committee is that it could really focus on a specific government strategy that parliamentarians have not usually been involved in.

The other key piece is that there is a time limit for special committees. What I heard from people is that we are in a crisis and they want to get moving quickly. The structure of a special committee, although it may not be perfect, felt to me and the others I talked to as a way we could really focus and do something different.

The first scope for the committee is to look forward. It is to start from here and go somewhere else, as opposed to traditional committees looking back or evaluating something the government has done.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, in Nanaimo, the riding that I serve, the face of homelessness has shifted quite a bit over the last nine months. The workers at Samaritan House, a homeless shelter for women only, say that 50% of their clients are now over the age of 50. That has really taken us aback. Those women could be our mothers or our grandmothers. In fact, it could be me. These are women who worked their whole lives in a professional capacity, but because of very poor tenant protection legislation in British Columbia and high housing prices, the spillover from Vancouver has hit Nanaimo hard and people are getting evicted.

Is the member also observing this changing demographic, and how might the committee discuss this?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, what the member describes as happening in her community is indeed one of the changing faces of homelessness. Although the statistics tell us that the overall number of people living in shelters has fallen in the last 10 years, those shelters are more often at 90% of capacity now. Those using shelters are a different group of people now, including more people over the age of 50 and more families. In many communities the largest demographic using shelters is indigenous people.

This is the kind of thing that a plan can take into account. Communities are dealing with these issues. The data and the research will be important so that the strategies fit with the changing face of homelessness across Canada and within communities.

Mrs. Bernadette Jordan (South Shore—St. Margarets, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to rise today to be part of the discussion on Motion No. 147.

I also want to thank the member for Saskatoon West for bringing this vital issue of combatting homelessness to the attention of the House, as it is an issue that we all hear about in ridings right across this country.

I also want to take this opportunity to look back at what our government has been doing over the past two years to prevent and reduce homelessness in Canada and to look forward at what we will be doing in the future.

In particular, I want to talk today about the national housing strategy that our government unveiled earlier this week. Bringing the NHS to life has been a priority for this government for the past 18 months. We launched a national conversation on housing in June 2016, followed by a very successful meeting of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for housing. Led by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our "Let's Talk Housing" consultations unfolded over four months.

Some key themes emerged during this time. We heard that Canadians and housing stakeholders believe that a national housing strategy should encompass the entire housing continuum while prioritizing those in greatest need.

We heard that there was a need to better integrate housing with other support services vulnerable people may need. Housing providers needed better access to capital to facilitate the development of more affordable housing, and there was strong preference for policies that enabled local communities to drive solutions to housing problems. Of particular relevance to today's debate, we heard that Canadians wanted a national housing strategy that truly addressed homelessness in Canada.

Similar themes emerged in the consultations carried out by our advisory committee on homelessness. Chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development this advisory committee brought together housing and homelessness experts, local and regional service providers, and individuals with a lived experience of homelessness. Selected from hundreds of nominations, the 13 members of this advisory committee represent Canada's regional, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

The advisory committee held a series of regional round tables across the country with stakeholders, service providers, and indigenous partners, in which they explored in greater depth the ideas and the recommendations we heard throughout the national housing strategy engagement process. They also undertook targeted engagement with homelessness experts and with communities and other stakeholders from across Canada. I am pleased to say that several members of Parliament attended these round tables and saw first-hand the work being done by this exceptional group of people.

Private Members' Business

I will also note that the advisory committee's work was augmented by an online feedback tool hosted by Employment and Social Development Canada, which was available from July 17 to September 15, 2017.

I am sure I speak for everyone in the House when I say that I am looking forward to the committee's "What We Heard" report, which is expected to be publicly released in spring 2018.

Even without that report I can say that the people who participated in our consultations did not just identify problems, they also identified opportunities for innovation and proposed solutions that focus on measurable outcomes. All of this information and insight was invaluable as our government sought to create a national housing strategy that signalled a meaningful re-engagement by the federal government in housing.

Make no mistake. If ever there was a time for meaningful re-engagement, it is now. For too many Canadian families, a decent home is simply not affordable. Across Canada, 1.7 million families are in housing need, living in homes that are inadequate or unaffordable. Another 25,000 Canadians are chronically homeless.

On top of this, many groups, including seniors, indigenous peoples, women fleeing domestic violence, people with disabilities, refugees, veterans, and those with mental health and addiction challenges continue to face significant barriers in accessing and maintaining affordable housing.

Even before the national housing strategy, our government had signalled that we understood the need for an active federal government in addressing housing needs across Canada. That is why we made unprecedented housing investments in budgets 2016 and 2017.

The national housing strategy, however, takes our commitment even further. It is an ambitious \$40-billion plan to help ensure that Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. It is a key element of our government's plan to help grow and strengthen the middle class, promote inclusive growth for Canadians, and lift more Canadians out of poverty.

● (1340)

It includes clear goals, such as removing 530,000 Canadian families from housing need, and reducing chronic and episodic homelessness by half over the next decade. It will meet the needs of vulnerable populations and will be central to our effort to ensure that all Canadians have the safe and affordable housing they need and deserve.

What does the national housing strategy mean for Canada's homeless? For starters, we will be investing \$2.2 billion over 10 years to tackle homelessness through a redesigned and expanded federal homelessness program. Thanks to this investment, we will reduce chronic homelessness by 50%. Just as importantly, we will empower local communities to deliver a combination of housing programs and responsive and preventive measures.

Our redesigned homelessness program will launch on April 1, 2019, following the conclusion of the current homelessness partnering strategy, and it will be based on the work currently being done by the advisory committee on homelessness.

Our government also recognizes that homelessness is not an issue that exists in isolation. If we want to help vulnerable populations, we need to think of housing in a more holistic way. That is precisely what the NHS does, with complementary initiatives that reaffirm and redesign the federal response to homelessness. This includes a program like the Canada housing benefit, a jointly funded \$4 billion program that will provide affordability support directly to families and individuals in housing need, including people currently living in social housing, people on social housing wait lists, and people housed in the private market but struggling to make ends meet.

We anticipate that after it launches in 2020, the Canada housing benefit will deliver an average of \$2,500 per year to each recipient household, and will support at least 300,000 households across the country. It also includes the \$15.9 billion federally managed national housing co-investment fund. This fund will ensure that existing rental housing is not lost to disrepair, and will help to develop new, high-performing affordable housing integrated with supports and services.

The national housing co-investment fund is expected to create or repair up to 300,000 new or existing housing units, and also support more shelter spaces for survivors of family violence, transitional and supportive housing, new and renewed affordable and community housing, and ways of making home ownership more affordable.

The national housing strategy marks the beginning of a new era for housing in Canada. Our government is making historic investments in housing and planning for transformational change because we understand the value of home. Safe, affordable housing is a launch pad for better socio-economic outcomes for our citizens, a more inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to be well and to succeed, a stronger economy, and a cleaner environment.

For the NHS to be successful, we will need the collaboration and commitment of more partners than ever before, in a coherent, integrated, and whole-of-government approach. We will be working with the provinces and territories, with municipalities, with the private and not-for-profit sectors, and with everyone who shares our goal of creating a new generation of housing in Canada.

While much, if not all, of what Motion No. 147 is calling for has already been done by our government, we are nevertheless pleased when our colleagues, across all party lines, embrace our shared priorities. I would encourage the member for Saskatoon West, as well as all members from all parties and all parts of the country, to become part of the government's nation-wide efforts to ensure that all Canadians have the safe and affordable housing they need and deserve.

Private Members' Business

•(1345)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to start by commending the member for bringing forward this motion. It is a well-thought-out motion, and it is something that I know she has worked tirelessly on. It is an honour to stand and support the motion.

I also want to quickly talk about how her motion is being debated just a few days after the Liberals announced their big exciting housing strategy, which will not actually see money flow until 2020. This poor member has worked hard and tirelessly on this motion and has brought it forward, and now suddenly, it has been scooped by the government. Could the Liberals have waited perhaps a week, a few more days, to let the member debate this in the House? Unfortunately, this is what they have decided to do.

This is not the first time, though. They have done it before. There was the motion on abandoned vessels, also brought forward by the NDP. Again, it was scooped by the government. Unfortunately, we are standing here and debating a motion that could have made history for the member and her riding. However, because of the government, this is the process that is happening.

My opinion is that what the government is doing with the homelessness issue is actually inflaming the issue. We have a government that has raised taxes, cut jobs, and now left a lot of people jobless in my province of Alberta especially. The unemployment rate was 7.8% in July 2017. That means that 7.8% of our population is jobless. If we go back to 2014, prior to when the government came in, and prior to when the NDP government came in provincially in Alberta as well, it was 5.4%. It has essentially skyrocketed.

We can sit here and argue that we need more homelessness strategies. We need more strategies in general bureaucracy. However, what we need in Alberta are jobs. We need to put people back to work and allow them to use their skills and take the risks in entrepreneurship that they are so good at in Alberta. However, it is unfortunate that the government has killed a lot of that entrepreneurship. We are seeing higher rates of homelessness.

We had 14,000 jobs lost in July alone in Alberta. Liberals stand and say that we have the highest GDP in the world, but look at what is happening in Alberta. We cannot ignore what is happening in Alberta. I would be remiss if I did not highlight that.

In Edmonton, we have had some tremendous success over the last number of years, particularly with an organization called Homeward Trust. I will quickly read what it does and what the organization focuses on:

...coordinates the Homeless Count as part of our work supporting Edmonton's Ten-year Plan to End Homelessness. Approximately 300 volunteers and 40 organizations participate in counting at different locations across the city.

Edmonton's Homeless Count serves two important functions: it provides a current snapshot of our overall homeless population, and it shows us how this population changes over time. Ultimately, this informs solutions to support the goal of ending homelessness in our community.

This year in particular, the process of the homeless count was enhanced even more by doing three things that I think are worth highlighting. For the first time, most volunteers went through our city and collected survey data electronically using tablets or smart

phones rather than by completing paper surveys. Edmonton was the only city in Alberta to use electronic data collection for the 2016 homeless count.

This was also Edmonton's first year conducting the street count at night, from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. Unlike most Alberta cities, Edmonton continued to conduct a day count. Finally, this year's homeless count included a focus on parkland, with the help of approximately 25 park rangers, street outreach team members, and river operations employees.

We are also rather proud that Homeward Trust also runs an initiative at our Shaw Conference Centre where they bring in a number of homeless individuals and offer them haircuts and dental appointments. Goodwill Industries offers clothing as well. These are all services offered by the community.

•(1350)

We saw in the homeless count this year in Edmonton that 74% are male, 1,205 men; 408 female; and 11 transgender. Out of our indigenous communities, we saw 316 first nations, 140 Métis, 15 Inuit, 32 non-status, and 15 non-specified members. However, some of the most troubling numbers we see in homelessness particular to Edmonton are with our youth population. This year alone in the homeless count, we saw 148 individuals who were age 17 or under. The highest numbers are in the ages between 31 and 44. However, about half of that number fall under the age of 17.

The answer to a lot of this is to ensure we have policies and governments in place that are creating jobs and focusing on initiatives that will help support these youth and communities. Unfortunately, we are not seeing a lot of that from the government, other than a big announcement that has no money flowing until the year 2022.

I received a fantastic letter from one of my constituents, Ms. Jean Ashmore. She wrote about the need to look at homelessness and poverty within our communities. She even calls it a public health emergency. I will quote from her letter, which states:

The longer people are homeless, the worse their health becomes. Homelessness causes premature death, poor health and is a burden on our health-care system. A recent report from British Columbia suggested life expectancy for people experiencing homelessness in that province is half that of other British Columbians.

We are very supportive of the initiative that the member brought forward. We would love to see it come to fruition. However, it does not seem that it will because of some of the announcements made by the government across the way.

As a result of many of the government's policies, Canadians now pay more for a lot of things. They pay more for gas, home heating, hydro, housing, sports, arts programs for children, and personal savings. These are a number of things that could help to go toward assisting the homeless in our country, as the motion would have done. However, we see that this is something the Liberals choose to deserve credit for, instead of the hard-working member on this side of the House.

Private Members' Business

•(1355)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleagues on all their hard work to spark a debate on homelessness and give a voice to the most vulnerable in our society who really need our support.

For too long now, for the past 25 years in fact, we have been simply putting off the important conversation we need to have about this problem, which is symptomatic of all the ills of our society. Homelessness tends to affect people who are already struggling, unwell, or in distress, but through a reversal of fortune it can affect any one of us.

I therefore support Motion No. 147 from my colleague from Saskatoon West, which proposes creating a special committee to conduct hearings on homelessness and to propose a national plan to prevent and end homelessness. Its objective is ambitious, certainly, but it is nevertheless realistic, because we know that local communities, in Alberta for example, have already taken up the challenge and are working hard to meet it.

The national housing strategy tells us that the government is ready to tackle homelessness across Canada. Unfortunately, 90% of the funding announced will not be delivered until after 2019. What is the government going to do to help homeless people over the next two years? No one knows.

No single solution is going to end homelessness across the country. At the local level, plans to achieve that goal will vary from one region to the next. The government needs to act and show genuine political will to follow the recommendations of local groups to put an end to the scourge of homelessness. That is why the federal government needs to clearly define its role in its own national plan. Accordingly, creating a committee to study these matters seems entirely appropriate.

Indeed, homelessness is a manifestation of many of society's ills. Homelessness can be temporary or chronic. According to a report by Homeless Hub, the first homelessness experience occurs before the age of 16 in 40.1% of cases. That is a very young age to end up on the street. In Canada, 20% of homeless people are between the ages of 13 and 24. They are particularly vulnerable since they are often the product of broken homes, and public institutions, their schools included, have given up on them.

People do not choose to become homeless. Losing one's job or home, separation or divorce, bereavement, incarceration and disease are all conducive to isolation, alienation and distress, all of which potentially lead to homelessness. Living on the street turns people into targets for sexual, mental and physical violence. It means not having access to hot meals or proper hygiene, and possibly having to live with addictions. For all those reasons, getting out of homelessness can be an impossible task in the eyes of these young people.

Furthermore, women are often invisible to those seeking to help them. Violence and invisibility are intrinsic characteristics homelessness among women. Violence often occurs before and after becoming homeless and it places women in an extremely vulnerable position. Indeed, while some factors contributing to homelessness are the same for women and men, women often have a long history

of being submitted to violence, from sexual assault to psychological, physical and domestic violence. To avoid becoming homeless, some women use survival strategies such as prostitution, theft, going from one shelter to another or from a friend or acquaintance's place to another. They become less visible and the risk for their health, security and integrity increases. They sink even deeper into isolation.

This hidden homelessness masks the magnitude of the problem among women, even though this problem is growing across the country. In fact, homelessness among women is a tangible phenomenon in my riding of Salaberry—Suroît. Fortunately, organizations such as Justice alternative, Les ateliers Cré-Action du Suroît et L'antichambre 12-17 offer services for young women grappling with delinquency, vulnerability, or homelessness.

What is more, homelessness has skyrocketed among our indigenous sisters for the past several years in Canada. In their case, homelessness must be considered by taking into account the effects of colonization on Inuit, first nations and Metis communities. According to Amnesty International, indigenous women are the most vulnerable group in the country. They are seven times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-indigenous women. Also, according to the Table des groupes de femmes de Montréal, indigenous women make very little use of resources that are not specifically intended for them.

•(1400)

Resources must be tailored to the particular needs of these women. This is something we have reiterated several times in the House, but unfortunately nothing has changed in regard to the well-being of all these women.

Homelessness costs \$7 billion a year, which is the equivalent of one and a half Champlain bridges. The cost is enormous for rural and local communities. My riding of Salaberry—Suroît is barely one and a half hours' drive from Montreal, but it is in the Bermuda Triangle as far as public money is concerned. Being close to Montreal and to the U.S. border, my riding and neighbouring ridings receive many homeless people. Unfortunately, community organizations are desperately short of funding.

Montreal and its inner suburbs receive most of the funding, whereas Montérégie-Ouest is close to the city but does not get any of the money intended for Montreal. At the same time, it is not far enough to get its own funding.

That is why I have a profound respect for organizations in my riding who work very hard with little means. Pacte de rue receives many people in distress, but does not have enough room, and the same is true of L'antichambre 12-17. Housing committees have repeatedly requested better support and affordable housing. Unfortunately, governments rarely listen.

Private Members' Business

I should point out that an estimated 235,000 people at least experience homelessness in any given year in Canada. Ignoring homelessness rather than solving the problem is costing the Canadian economy dearly. Homelessness actually costs the public treasury nearly \$4.5 billion per year. Let me quickly compare that to how much it would cost to help homeless people. A hospital bed currently costs close to \$11,000 per month. A housing subsidy, in contrast, costs \$700 per month, and social housing just \$200 per month. I think the math on that is pretty straightforward. Solving homelessness costs a lot less.

The country needs a plan. A special committee would be able to investigate, deliberate, and decide what constitutes success. Once it has done that, it can set relevant targets and benchmarks and assess them. A committee would bring many different voices to the table and, I hope, result in consensus on how to proceed.

The government boasts about being transparent and open to new ideas and about improving its relationship with Parliament. Canadians expect all members of the House to work together. Motion No. 147 is my colleague from Saskatoon West's way of reaching out. Will cabinet accept? Will this be a free vote for Liberal MPs?

The federal government must allow parliamentarians to talk to the communities, the front line workers, not-for-profit agencies, academics, indigenous groups, and young people in order to develop a plan, pool resources, and ensure accountability.

In closing, the role of Parliament is to listen to citizens, experts, and agencies and to make progress on issues that have been put on the back burner. It is imperative to help the homeless, who are often young and mostly women, to overcome their personal demons. We have to find lasting solutions to reintegrate them into our society in an honourable fashion. It is our duty as elected members to do that. The very basis of our mandate is to represent the public.

We are all equally responsible for dealing with this issue whether we are ministers, parliamentary secretaries, or MPs. We are all citizens and we all have homelessness problems in every one of our ridings. Every riding office is affected.

I hope that every member of the House will reach out to the hon. member for Saskatoon West and become actively involved in forming a special committee that can focus exclusively on homelessness to find solutions and develop a specific plan to address homelessness in Canada. I hope that we can all reach out to indigenous peoples as well, so that we might have solutions for the entire population and all peoples of Canada.

• (1405)

Ms. Emmanuella Lambropoulos (Saint-Laurent, Lib.): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Motion No. 147, which was moved by my colleague from Saskatoon West.

The motivation behind this motion is to reduce or, if possible, end homelessness. We must applaud this motion.

However, I would like to point out that Motion No. 147 calls for a new series of consultations. More specifically, Motion No. 147 calls

for the appointment of a special parliamentary committee to hold hearings on the matter of homelessness.

Our government recognizes that homelessness is a reality for too many Canadians and a challenge for all Canadian communities. That is why we have undertaken significant outreach and consultation efforts to guide the development of strategies for preventing and reducing homelessness. Over the past two years, we have consulted the Canadian public, stakeholders, and partners to support the national housing strategy, the renewal of the homelessness partnering strategy, and the poverty reduction strategy.

If I may, I would like to go over what we have accomplished so far.

I am proud to say that on, November 22, we announced the launch of the national housing strategy. This strategy will create opportunities for collaboration and promote innovation through increased partnerships between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, community housing organizations, non-profit organizations, the co-operative sector and the private sector and will bring about real change for Canadians.

A national dialogue on housing was launched in late June 2016 after a fruitful meeting of federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for housing. Led by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the "Let's Talk Housing" consultations spanned four months.

Throughout 2016, as part of the national conversation on housing, we engaged with Canadians, major stakeholders and provincial and territorial authorities to get their input.

More than 6,300 Canadians took the time to fill out the survey on the national housing strategy. Over 130 ideas were submitted through the group sharing platform and more than 475 proposals were submitted online by individuals and organizations, including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the National Housing Collaborative.

Events included the following: bilateral meetings with provinces and territories; a three-day national round table with experts consisting of 18 meetings on a variety of subjects, including an entire day of discussions on homelessness; a national meeting with stakeholders from across the housing spectrum, from homelessness to the housing market, aimed at validating the input received; meetings with national indigenous organizations on housing and homelessness; additional round tables with experts held across Canada; 21 focus groups involving marginalized populations, including people who had experienced homelessness, low-income families, indigenous people living off reserve, seniors, people with disabilities and newcomers.

These events generated a series of recommendations on strengthening the federal government's response to homelessness. For example, participants recommended that the homelessness partnering strategy be renewed and expanded, and that the "housing first" approach of the program be more flexible and adaptive.

In short, the message was clear. Canadians want improved housing conditions, especially for those who need it most.

The homelessness partnering strategy was also part of the consultations. Budget 2017 includes a total investment of \$2.1 billion under the national housing strategy to increase funding for the homelessness partnering strategy. We have also committed to work with stakeholders, provinces and territories, and indigenous organizations to revamp the program to better reduce and prevent homelessness.

●(1410)

To that end, we created the Advisory Committee on Homelessness, chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development for Housing and Urban Affairs. It includes members who are not from government and who have in-depth knowledge of homelessness issues.

To support the committee's work, Employment and Social Development Canada held online consultations from July 17 to September 15, 2017. The committee also held a series of regional round tables across the country with stakeholders, service providers, and indigenous partners. Many members of Parliament also took part in these round tables.

The feedback received by committee members during the consultations will inform the options they will submit on the renewal of the homelessness partnering strategy. A report on the feedback received is expected to be released in the spring of 2018.

We all know that poverty and homelessness are closely intertwined, as the one can often lead to the other. Let us talk about poverty reduction. Again, everyone in the House already knows that we are developing a poverty reduction strategy. We have made major public engagement efforts on this file. From February to September 2017, we held Canada-wide consultations to discuss key issues related to poverty.

Online consultations and round tables were also held with indigenous groups, businesses, community organizations, academic experts, and Canadians who have lived in poverty. The relationship between homelessness, affordable housing, and poverty came up many times.

We also completed the tackling poverty together project, which involved conducting case studies in six communities across Canada that had expressed interest in poverty reduction.

This project highlighted the local benefits of federal poverty reduction programs, based on citizens' opinions, especially people who have lived in poverty. The report on the tackling poverty together project was released on September 18 during the national poverty conference.

As if that were not enough, our government created a ministerial advisory committee on poverty that includes leaders, academic experts, and practitioners working in the field of poverty reduction, as well as individuals who have experienced poverty first-hand. In addition, the two-day national poverty conference brought together academics, stakeholders, researchers, front-line service providers, individuals who have lived in poverty, and members of the advisory committee on poverty.

The goal of the conference was to discuss the feedback received from Canadians during the consultation process. On top of all that,

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there is also the ongoing study on poverty reduction measures, including housing and homelessness initiatives, being conducted by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Our wide-ranging engagement activities with Canadians will guide the development of a poverty reduction strategy that will align with and support existing provincial and municipal poverty reduction strategies. It will also support the renewal and expansion of the homelessness partnering strategy.

As I said at the outset, we should applaud the motivation behind Motion No. 147. Obviously, ending homelessness is a priority for all parties.

I thank the hon. member for Saskatoon West for her commitment to this important issue.

●(1415)

[*English*]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am so proud to stand in the House today to speak to Motion No. 147. I am very grateful to the member for Saskatoon West for putting this forward.

At the end of the day, we know that even with a national housing strategy, dealing with homelessness must be the ultimate goal. We heard very clearly that up to 50% of the people who were homeless right now or were at risk of homelessness would not even be dealt with through the national housing strategy.

It is imperative that we take very seriously the need to address the issues of homelessness. Bringing together a committee to talk about these issues, to create a plan around these issues is so important.

I fundamentally believe that the right to housing is a human right. I was devastated when I put forward a bill in the House and the government did not support it.

If we are to ensure that people have homes, we have to recognize the dehumanizing impacts on people when they have nowhere to live, when they have no safe space to put things that are precious to them, when they have no place to be safe, to be warm, to know they have somewhere to sleep. It is shameful that we do not recognize that human right. I certainly hope that in this process the government reconsiders that and ensures we move forward in that direction.

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, homelessness in small rural ridings still has a huge impact. Some people think this is really an urban issue. Unfortunately, and sadly, it is not. I think about the community of Campbell River and an organization called Grassroots Kind Hearts Society. It has no physical place to be. People are cooking food and preparing food outside for those who are homeless.

I know people may think Vancouver Island is always warm, but our winters are definitely not warm. We have a lot of rain and coldness. These people come out every day to help, and I want to recognize all of those amazing volunteers.

Private Members' Business

I also want to recognize the Powell River Community Resource Centre. It does so much in our communities to support homeless people and tries to find them homes. So many volunteers are doing the hard work. It is imperative that the government support them. The way to do that is to have a committee in which we recognize these issues.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member will have seven and a half minutes the next time this issue comes before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:18 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:18 p.m.)

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