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CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST CODE

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 15(3) of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, it is my duty to lay upon the table the list of all sponsored travel by members of Parliament for the 2017 calendar year as well as a supplement from the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

* * *

[*English*]

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons entitled “Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada: A Collaborative Report from Auditors General”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

While I am on my feet, I move:

That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

•(1045)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 640*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones

Government Orders

Jordan	Jowhari
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schieffe	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
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Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bernier
Berthold	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brousseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Clarke	Cooper
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Donnelly
Dreeschen	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Egliniski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Geniis	Gill
Godin	Gourde
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kitchen	Kusie
Kwan	Lake

Laverdière	Leitch
Liepert	Lloyd
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Moore
Motz	Nantel
Nater	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Quach	Raitt
Ramsey	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Sansoucy
Saroya	Schmale
Shields	ShIPLEY
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Yurdiaga
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PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

FIREARMS ACT

BILL C-71—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the Bill; and

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

[Translation]

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

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister about Bill C-71.

Government Orders

The government has clearly stated that it will not reintroduce a gun registry in any way, shape, or form. In January, however, the Government of Quebec implemented a mandatory gun registry. All Quebecers must register all firearms, be they long guns or restricted weapons. Now that creates a problem: if someone from New Brunswick, Ontario, or elsewhere in Canada wants to sell a firearm to a Quebecer, or vice versa, the transaction has to be registered.

I would like to ask the minister if there were any discussions with Quebec about this. Was Bill C-71 designed to make it easier to record transactions in the Quebec registry?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we said in our election platform, and have said repeatedly since, that we would not return to any form of a federal long gun registry. That was the explicit promise, and that promise is being delivered exactly as we made it.

In relation to provincial governments, as the honourable gentleman knows, provinces have jurisdictions, which are their exclusive domain. The issue has been tested in the courts in the province of Quebec, and the legislative provisions Quebec has come forward with have been determined to be within the jurisdictional competence of the provincial Government of Quebec.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to talk about the time allocation motion before us today.

The firearms issue stirs up a lot of emotion, and with good reason. Actions taken by both the Liberal and Conservative governments have sown division. They have tried to judge Canadians based on their postal code or lifestyle. That is extremely problematic because when the goal is to ensure public safety and sound public policy, it is important to have a meaningful debate that welcomes appropriate questions and results in appropriate legislation. I have said a lot of nice things about the minister to the media, because I think this is a step in the right direction.

However, we have a great many questions. Our constituents are asking us questions. We want to raise their concerns during this process, during this debate in the House of Commons.

Why table a time allocation motion on such an important and often controversial issue? Why prevent us from asking these questions?

• (1050)

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I have a good deal of sympathy for the position that has just been taken by the representative of the New Democratic Party. In the proceedings thus far, the NDP has not had an opportunity to participate in the debate. The House will know that we have on two occasions attempted to bring Bill C-71 to the House of Commons, last Friday and again yesterday. On both occasions, the official opposition chose a different procedure and stymied the opening of a discussion on Bill C-71. There were two speeches, mine and the official representative of the Conservative Party, and then the Conservative Party moved to adjourn the debate before even giving the NDP an opportunity to be heard.

I understand that is not a fair situation with respect to the NDP. However, the honourable gentleman's grievance is not with the government. His grievance is with the official opposition, which is obviously not interested in having a serious discussion about this legislation. The better place for that discussion to be had would be in the standing committee, where the various parties can call forward witnesses, talk about the provisions of the act in detail, and bring forward whatever amendments they think are appropriate to improve the legislation.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, I get confused with the messaging coming out of the government, not just on firearms issues but yesterday it wanted debate and today it is going to cut it off. There is no consistency.

The minister keeps bringing up the point that he is not bringing back a registry when all points lead to it. Registrars look after registries. Is this registrar responsible for the menu up in the cafeteria or the parliamentary restaurant? What is his job if it is not to look after that registry? This is a backdoor registry; everything points to it. I would like to hear how the minister is going to explain that, because let us make it clear, registrars look after registries.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the reference to the official who is named in the legislation that the hon. gentleman has just made is one that goes back many years. In fact, the term “registrar” existed in the legislation all through the term of the Harper government, and it did not change that language.

The fact of the matter is that if the standing committee thinks it has a better title, such as CEO, director general, chief official, or whatever, we would certainly be prepared to entertain an amendment to change the title.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, through you, I want to express my absolute disappointment. As a person who represents a rural riding, I am doing my due diligence in talking to my constituents and gathering information. Having this debate shortened so dramatically leaves less time for us to have that robust discussion, send that information, and make sure that it is said in the House.

I really think it is important to point out that the Conservatives moved the motion to adjourn debate but the Liberals are the ones who voted to end the debate, so when we are talking about what happened here, I see two wrongs and they definitely do not make a right. Therefore, I would like the member to explain to my constituents why we are not being allowed to make sure their voices are heard in this place.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, beyond the two opportunities where we already tried to bring the bill to the floor of the House for debate, there will be one full day of debate assigned to this legislation. Therefore, there will be opportunity.

Government Orders

When examining the provisions of the legislation in detail, as we all know, the real spade work is done by the diligent members who serve on the public safety and national security committee of the House of Commons. That is where witnesses can be called, where the evidence can be examined in detail, and where amendments can be proposed.

I certainly encourage all members to participate in the upcoming debate in the House, and that the members of the standing committee do their due diligence to examine every single clause of the bill to make sure it is in the public interest.

• (1055)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, what we have seen is an appetite from Canadians as a whole, in all regions of the country, to see legislation brought forward that truly reflects what they expect the Government of Canada to do.

I am very much aware that the Conservatives brought the motion to adjourn the debate the other day. As the minister has pointed out, we are sympathetic to making sure the New Democrats will be afforded the opportunity to speak. My understanding is that the NDP, and members, will be afforded the opportunity to ask and participate in the debate, not only during their speaking time but also through questions and answers, as well as at committee, and so forth.

I wonder if my friend and colleague could provide comments on just how important it is, from a Canadian perspective, that we move forward on this very important piece of legislation.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, it is important for the House of Commons to not only debate matters but to also come to decision points, take votes, and make decisions.

The improvements in the legislation with respect to background checks, licence verifications, and business records, and the changes on classification and transportation authorizations all reflect what we promised Canadians during the course of the election campaign. The bill faithfully applies those election promises. All of it is in pursuit of three goals: public safety, assisting police in investigating crimes, and making sure that all of this is fair and reasonable in its application to all Canadians, including law-abiding firearms owners.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, Joe Jordan is a former Liberal MP. I remember reading a couple of weeks ago that he suggested that if the Liberals were to bring this bill in, they should pass it as quickly as possible, basically before Canadians are really aware of the contents and can step forward and oppose it. Therefore, it looks like members of the rural caucus from across the way have failed their constituents one more time.

I want to ask a specific question about reference numbers. There is a procedure that is being introduced to track firearms' sales across Canada. In order to obtain a reference number, businesses need to not only have the buyer's name but also the buyer's licence number, as well as the firearm's serial number. Therefore, we see all the foundations being put in place for a registry across Canada. However, we are told that private transactions would also require a reference number.

At any point, will the process to obtain a reference number for a private transaction require the firearm to be identified in any way?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, just to be absolutely clear, I would like the hon. gentleman to ask that question once more, so I get the detail of what he is asking.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. That is not how it works. The minister can answer the question.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, to be very clear to the hon. gentleman, the answer is no. When a licence verification is under way the purpose of the verification is to ensure the licence is valid. There is no reference to any particular firearm.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Madam Speaker, I quote:

Clear ministerial accountability to Parliament is fundamental to responsible government, and requires that Ministers provide Parliament with the information it needs to fulfill its roles of legislating, approving the appropriation of funds and holding the government to account. The Prime Minister expects Ministers to demonstrate respect and support for the parliamentary process.

That was from the letter in "Open and Accountable Government" from the PM to his ministers.

What we have now is a bill that was tabled last week. We have had less than one hour of debate. Even the Conservatives when they were in a majority government never did time allocation with less than one day of debate.

We have not even had the chance to participate in the debate on an important piece of legislation. The government is showing complete disrespect for the House. I wonder how the minister can justify calling time allocation on such an important bill, with what the Prime Minister said in the mandate letters to his ministers. This is the 31st time they have done that in the House.

• (1100)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the facts of the matter are clear with respect to Bill C-71. We had it on the Order Paper for debate on Friday. That was totally pre-empted by the official opposition. We put it on the Order Paper again yesterday. We began the debate and the opposition moved to adjourn the debate.

Clearly, there was not a serious intent on the part of the official opposition to have a serious discussion at second reading on Bill C-71. We are prepared to provide one full further day to go through that process, but the process has been truncated and pre-empted thus far by the official opposition.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Madam Speaker, in concert with the tabling of Bill C-71, the Ontario Provincial Police, together with regional police forces, issued an amnesty, suggesting that firearms owners in Ontario hand in their firearms. Just as it was with the carbon tax, where the federal government imposed the tax and expected the provinces to do the dirty work and collect the taxes, is it not true the Liberals are doing the same thing with this gun registry act, that they are going to implement it but have the provinces enforce it and do what they ultimately want to do, which is to see no firearms in the hands of civilians?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, no.

Government Orders

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I am having a hard time when this argument keeps coming up. It is one thing to talk about the procedural shenanigans that are happening, but the issue here is that regardless of who proposed to adjourn the debate, the Liberals voted in favour of adjourning debate on the bill yesterday. Less than 24 hours ago, they were voting in favour of adjourning the debate, so I am having a hard time. Then they are heckling, but no, they do not heckle. They do not adjourn debate. They do not use time allocation. However, they do all these things anyway. That is the reality.

As my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé pointed out, we have had less than an hour. We have not even gotten to an NDP speaker yet. I spent the whole day waiting to speak to this bill yesterday. I did not get the opportunity. The bill did not come back. It is not here today. However, I am getting to speak on time allocation before I even get to speak to the bill as my party's critic. Could the minister tell me how that makes sense?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I hear the hon. gentleman's concern and I suggest he direct his angst to the official opposition. They moved the motion.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have to say how disappointed I am. The minister has been a parliamentarian for many years. This is not a minority Parliament where the government sometimes has to bend to the will of other parties. Every choice the government has made, it has made to diminish the voices of other parliamentarians and the people they represent. I will bet there are people in the gentleman's riding who take offence that we have to get answers to technical questions, like the ones other members have asked, about the registrar, about how the process is to go forward. The fact that we are asking technical questions proves that the government is not allowing a proper debate to go forward.

Will the minister please explain to the House what is so important and must be rushed that he cannot even allow members of Parliament to educate the committee that will be studying this bill as to what the concerns will be, or are the members on that committee so special and know everything about this bill that other members of Parliament can add nothing to it?

I would like to hear from the minister why he thinks his government can act in such a bulldozer fashion and not let voices such as those in my riding be heard properly.

• (1105)

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, on the issue of technical questions, indeed, there are many technical questions with respect to the administration of any particular piece of legislation. The place where one goes into the technical details is in the work of the standing committee. That is where one asks the precise, mechanical, administrative, technical questions and gets all of the detailed information.

In terms of the broad debate on second reading, the debate in principle, I would ask the hon. gentleman in return why his party moved to adjourn the debate yesterday. We were ready to go. Those members chose not to.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the minister's advice about where I should direct my frustrations.

I am going to come back to the first question I asked during this time allocation debate. This is an extremely sensitive subject. It is tremendously important that we be given the opportunity to pass appropriate legislation that respects all affected Canadians and communities. The minister himself has talked about the importance of having a common-sense bill, taking an approach that is respectful to everyone involved, and learning from past mistakes.

I will ask my question again. Since the minister is pushing for an approach that will not revive past feuds over firearms, why are we starting the process for this new bill with a time allocation motion? Does he not think this move runs totally counter to the very principles he claims to want to defend in his legislative approach?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, again, with respect to the representative from the NDP and the views he has just expressed, I share a good deal of sympathy for his perspective, but it was clear, on the record from Friday and yesterday, that every time Bill C-71 was going to appear on the Order Paper, the official opposition was going to pull some stunt to try to prevent the debate from proceeding. There is that clear indication from the official opposition. It is important for the affairs of the House to be organized in a timely way, and we are in the process of doing that through the motion presented by the government House leader.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, a few Canadians have been asking me why Conservatives are so intent on getting to the heart of the cover-up in the Atwal India affair. It is because each time we probe, the government puts more walls up blocking the votes and now limiting debate with time allocation. That only provides us with more incentive. Clearly the Liberals are so worried about Mr. Jean giving 15 minutes of testimony to a committee of parliamentarians that they are willing to disregard democracy to do it, but I am not going to let that affect the debate on this important bill and the government's attempt to, by stealth, introduce a gun registry.

My question relates to the minister's use of statistics. The CBC on the weekend highlighted how the minister is misleading Canadians by cherry-picking statistics. He has to use five years to benchmark violent crime in Canada, because a few years ago, the level was so low that by using that timeline it makes it look like there is more of a problem than there truly is. However, to pin the changes the Liberals would be making, he only uses a statistical window of one to two years to suggest that it is rural crime and gun thefts that are the problem, as opposed to illegally smuggled weapons at the border, which we know is truly the problem.

Government Orders

The irony is that we have been talking about rural crimes, especially in western Canada, for two years and the Liberals have ignored it. When will the minister admit to the House that the Liberals are cherry-picking statistics and unfairly informing Canadians about the risk all just to sneak in their gun registry once again?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I would never admit that, because it is not true.

The fact of the matter is that there has been a distinct increase in gun-related crime since 2013. Most crime statistics in Canada have been generally going down for the better part of two decades, and maybe even longer than that. However, in 2013, there was a sudden reversal of that trend.

In 2016, there were 2,500 criminal incidents involving firearms. That is up 30% since 2013. Gun homicides are up by two-thirds since 2013. Cases of intimate partner and gender-based violence involving firearms as reported to police are up by one-third since 2013. Gang-related homicides, a majority involving guns, are up by two-thirds. Break-ins involving the theft of guns are up by 56%. This is all since 2013.

I would ask the hon. gentleman how long we should wait: two more years, five more years, 10 more years? When would he find the statistics to be convincing?

• (1110)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, let us try this again.

The fact is that the government was elected two and a half years ago. As the minister has repeatedly stated, this legislation is nothing more than the Liberals respecting their campaign commitments, commitments that were made two and a half years ago. The Liberals have had two and a half years to table the legislation. The legislation was tabled on Tuesday.

The Liberals control the House agenda, despite the seeming frustration at the limited tools available to the opposition. At the end of the day, the motion to adjourn debate, whether that was presented rightly or wrongly notwithstanding, was voted in favour of by the very same Liberals.

The minister keeps saying that I should direct my frustration at the official opposition. I am asking him how he can believe that on an issue as fundamentally important to get right in respect of all communities and not go back to the wedge politics of the past, which he said he does not want to do, how on earth is it an appropriate approach to begin that debate and before even hearing from a critic of one of the three recognized parties, already be moving time allocation?

In what way does that ensure we are hearing the voices of all Canadians, so that we can get this right, as we want to do and as I imagine he wants to do, as well?

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, when Bill C-71 is called another time, my understanding, in terms of the rules of precedence, is the New Democrats will put forward the next speaker, and I will be very anxious to hear the NDP's views with respect to Bill C-71. That is how the resumed debate will begin.

The next important stage is obviously in the committee work. I am looking forward to the very good work that will be done by all members in the committee, dealing with technical and detailed questions. The hon. gentleman is a member of that committee, and I am sure he will present his views in a very able fashion.

Hon. Robert Nault (Kenora, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is clear that we have had three pieces of legislation relating to firearms since the early 1990s.

Bill C-17 under the Mulroney government brought in all the background checks, all the security checks on individuals. It is basically the same checks we still have today.

One of the key pieces of this legislation that I think is important to all Canadians, and one we see starting to unfold in the U.S., is the issue of background checks for mental issues and other issues around the individual. We all agree on the fact that that is a deficiency in the background checks that were made during the Mulroney years under Bill C-17. I think it would be useful for the minister to take some of the members who have not been around that long back to the days when all that came into play after the massacre of the 14 women at École Polytechnique. This was brought in by the Mulroney government. It is almost exactly the same as exists today.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, I have two points. I thank the hon. gentleman for putting this whole discussion in its historical context, which is important.

There are specific provisions in Bill C-71 that will enhance the background checks that are to be done. Currently the law says that when those checks are done, when someone is applying for a licence and seeking approval to purchase firearms, the look-back over the person's history in terms of criminal offences, violent behaviour, and other types of activity that would indicate the individual should perhaps not be in possession of firearms is mandatory for a five-year period.

What we are proposing to do is to eliminate that time frame, so that the look-back can be indefinite through the lifetime of the person. It is interesting to note that the original suggestion for that change came from James Moore, a former Conservative member of Parliament.

• (1115)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, Conservatives support protecting the safety and security of Canadians while also supporting the rights of law-abiding, innocent firearms owners.

This debate is really important to my constituency, which has faced escalating armed robberies of bars, hotels, and farm families right across Lakeland. Bill C-71 would do nothing to address the illegal gun trade by gangs or the illegal use of firearms. Bill C-71, just like always, would target law-abiding farmers, hunters, and sports shooters, who already comply with extensive rules, regulations, and paperwork.

Will the public safety minister advocate for stiffer penalties for criminals who use firearms and stop the revolving door in the legal system to stop repeat offenders? When it comes to a tougher crackdown on criminals who use guns, nobody wants that more than law-abiding, innocent firearms owners do.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Madam Speaker, the House could have a very useful discussion in terms of enhancing penalties for those who misuse firearms, and I would look forward to that discussion.

The hon. member should not discount the value of the enhanced background checks as was described very eloquently in the House on a previous occasion by James Moore or the improvements with respect to the licensing system or the business records, which the police, including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, say will be critically important to them in tracing guns that have been used in offences, in determining straw purchases, and in identifying activity that might engage gang activity. The accurate, consistent classification of firearms is important. The transportation authorization is also important.

I would also mention the \$100 million a year that we will be investing with the provinces to enhance activity at the local level against guns and gangs, including the integrated enforcement teams that have been very effective in the last number of years in cracking down on illegal gangs.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1155)

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 641)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
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Hutchings	Iacono
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Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCrimmon
McDonald	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
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Murray	Nassif
Nault	Ng
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Oliver	O'Regan
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Robillard	Rodriguez
Rogers	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
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* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON PRIME MINISTER'S TRIP TO INDIA—
SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on March 2, 2018, by the member for Durham concerning the information provided to members of the press in a media briefing.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Durham for having raised this matter, as well as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, and the member for Joliette for their comments.

[English]

The member for Durham put forward that the Minister of Public Safety had acknowledged that the Prime Minister's national security adviser provided members of the press with information that he was unwilling to share at the same time with members of Parliament, for reasons of confidentiality and security. The member argued that even if such reasoning were justified, such claims of confidentiality could not override the individual and collective rights of members to access that information, and, as such, accommodations to make the information available must be made.

[Translation]

The parliamentary secretary disagreed, arguing that, since there was no order of the House to divulge to members the sensitive information requested, the privileges of the member and the House could not have been interfered with and the Speaker has no authority to compel the government to release it. Furthermore, he contended that, as matters of privilege necessarily involve a proceeding of Parliament and do not pertain to the actions or inactions of a government department, this was simply a matter of debate.

[English]

On February 7, 2013, at page 13,868 of the *Debates*, my predecessor stated, in a ruling, “access to accurate and timely information is an essential cornerstone of our parliamentary system”. There is not only great truth but also great power in these few words, for they represent a right that is integral to the health of our democracy. They also explain, to some extent, why members take seriously the need to defend their right to access timely and accurate information in order to fulfill their parliamentary duties, particularly their role of holding the government to account.

In raising this issue, the member for Durham looked to a ruling by Speaker Milliken on April 27, 2010, for justification for his argument that the right of members to be provided with any and all information is absolute. However, a close reading of that ruling reveals that while it touched on the broader issue of access to information, the core issue was the right of the House to order the production of documents, confidential or not.

NAYS

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Albrecht
Anderson
Arnold
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bergen
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
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Caron
Chong
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Davies
Diotte
Dreeschen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Eglinski
Falk (Provencher)
Finley
Gallant
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hughes
Johns
Kelly
Kusie
Lake
Leitch
Lloyd
MacGregor
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McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
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Carrie
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Deltell
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Dubé
Dusseault
Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Genuis
Godin
Hoback
Jeneroux
Julian
Kitchen
Kwan
Laverdière
Liepert
Lobb
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Motz
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Poilievre
Ramsey
Rayes
Rempel
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sopuck
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Government Orders

• (1200)

[Translation]

Bourinot's *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, First Edition, states at page 281:

...it must be remembered that under all circumstances it is for the house to consider whether the reasons given for refusing the information are sufficient. The right of Parliament to obtain every possible information on public questions is undoubted...

Thus, should the House, by way of a formal motion, order the information from the government, it will be under an obligation to produce it.

[English]

However, what is equally true is that this absolute right of the House does not de facto extend to individual members' requests for information. This distinction is crucial to a clear understanding of the limits and obligations with respect to members' access to information and very much informs the merits of this case. Since the House has not ordered the government to produce the information in question, the government is currently under no formal obligation to provide it to the House. The same logic applies to the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Moreover, it means that I, as Speaker, do not have the authority to require the government to provide that information to the House.

[Translation]

Given this, and having examined the facts, the Chair is unable to conclude that members were impeded in the discharge of their parliamentary functions. Accordingly, I cannot find a prima facie question of privilege in this case.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

* * *

FIREARMS ACT

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-71, An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see that Bill C-71 is before us again. I imagine the government felt somewhat embarrassed by how it managed this very important and sensitive file.

[English]

One thing that has become crystal clear over the last number of years when it comes to the issue of firearms in this country is that far too often, successive governments have played wedge politics with an issue that is fundamentally about respect for communities. It is about public safety, and more broadly speaking, about respect for all Canadians, including, of course, firearms owners.

When the Liberals come forward, as the minister has, with the intention of presenting legislation that seeks to provide, as he says, common-sense legislation, which is certainly, I would acknowledge, a step in the right direction, and then decide on time allocation before I, as the critic for one of the three recognized parties, have even had a chance to speak to the bill, it demonstrates, unfortunately, a lack of

seriousness with respect to what is a very serious issue that we, as parliamentarians, must get right.

[Translation]

After less than one hour of debate, the government allocated just one day of debate to this bill. The minister praised the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, saying that this committee has qualified members and that they could study the technical aspects of the bill. This is very flattering, since I am a member of this committee, but let's be serious. The vast majority of members in this House have concerns to share about this bill on behalf of their constituents.

The NDP recognizes that this bill is a step in the right direction, and we are generally in favour of it, but there are some questions we want to address in this debate, and this is not solely my responsibility, as critic. All members are responsible for raising questions. It is not just up to the members who sit on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to raise these concerns.

When the government moves a time allocation motion after so little time, it goes against the principles espoused by the Minister of Public Safety. As my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé mentioned in the debate on this motion, even the previous government, known for its record number of time allocation motions and gag orders, would not have done this.

• (1205)

[English]

Those principles come after excuse after excuse has been made. The Liberals have tried to blame the official opposition, saying that it moved a motion to adjourn debate yesterday. Notwithstanding whether one might or might not agree with the tactics being used in the House to make a point on certain issues the Liberals are running away from, the fact is that one party in the House voted in favour of adjourning debate on Bill C-71, and that was the Liberal Party. Despite the heckling, the Liberals perhaps should consult the *Journals* of yesterday's proceedings. They will see that they were the only ones in the House who voted to adjourn debate on the bill.

Moreover, last Friday members representing the Liberal Party made comments on panels, alluding to deaths in communities as reasons why we had not come to that debate, which is shameful. The Liberals have been in power for two and a half years and have not come forward with this legislation. Then they choose to blame everyone but themselves for the cavalier way in which the bill is coming through the House. That is extremely problematic. As I have said multiple times, and will continue to repeat both in the House and outside the House and at every opportunity I get, this issue should not be one in which we seek to create division and make it subject of procedural and partisan gain. It is one we have to get right.

Government Orders

I know the public safety minister has his heart in the right place on this. I would implore him to perhaps speak to his House leader to ensure his approach is the one being put forward, given the way the government runs the agenda in this place. We cannot afford to get this type of issue wrong. The New Democrats will work and strive in that regard, both here for the limited time we have, and in committee. I can commit that to Canadians without a shadow of a doubt.

[*Translation*]

Now that I have given an overview of the procedural issues and of how the file has been managed, I would like to focus on our concerns about Bill C-71.

Gun control is an emotional issue for many people, and with good reason. This is about showing respect for those who have had to deal with unimaginable tragedies. They see the bill as an opportunity to defend their community and neighbours and ensure that no one else has to endure such tragedies. There are also law-abiding citizens who hunt or practise shooting sports. We also want to show respect for them in the legislative measures put forward.

We therefore need to strike a balance between the two while protecting the public. That is the approach we need to take when we address these issues in the House. Instead, over the years, we have unfortunately seen more divisive approaches. Gun control has been used as a political fundraising tool, and some questionable action has been taken as gun control has been turned into a partisan issue.

For members of the NDP, one thing is clear. We want to keep the public safe while showing respect for every Canadian and community concerned by this issue.

I will, however, give the minister credit where credit is due since I think that this bill is a step in the right direction. It contains common-sense measures that we can support. I am thinking of the background checks in particular.

[*English*]

Currently, we only go up to five years for the retention and renewal of a licence. However, in a quick study of some of the jurisprudence, in some of the precedents that have been set by the courts, they have deemed it absolutely appropriate, legal, lawful, and respectful of charter rights to go all the way back in a lifetime examination for one's background check, whether it is criminal records or other pieces that are looked at as part of this process. Members on all sides have shown support for that. Both current and previous members from all parties have shown support for it. Essentially, when it comes to background checks, the bill would bring legislation in line with what is already appropriate practice, which has been deemed so by the courts. That is a reasonable measure to ensure we protect public safety.

The other element, one that has received a lot of attention and is a key piece of the bill, is records being kept by store owners who sell firearms to Canadians. On this, let me be clear. When it comes to maintaining those records, I agree with the minister that the vast majority of reputable businesses already do so. We are seeking to standardize the practice, because it will now become part of the law, and also protect that information from government and law enforcement unless law enforcement has a warrant obtained through the courts. That has been happening for a very long time in the U.S.

Therefore, I do not see it creating an additional burden on businesses.

However, following the minister's speech before the time allocation motion, I asked him what would be done with respect to consultation with business owners to ensure the standardization did not carry an unreasonable cost and that it was done in a way that was respectful of best practices. Business people know best at the end of the day. Unfortunately, while the minister acknowledged that work had to be done to have that standardization and that it would come from best practices, the details were rather sparse. Therefore, we will be looking at that to ensure the standardization of those practices do not create an additional burden on businesses. Of course some businesses may have to modify their current practices in order to be in line with what will be a legal and government-mandated process. We will keep an eye on that, particularly through the committee process.

I look forward to hearing those business people, who are the experts, bring forward their perspectives, and how to ensure the minister's consultation is done appropriately, in a way that will ease the burden on small businesses, which is already, in some regards, far too large. I say that going beyond the issue before us today.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

It is very important to emphasize the issue I raised a few minutes ago and that is obtaining a warrant.

At present, it is a standard practice for businesses to keep this data. After all, it is not unusual for them to keep records about large purchases. This is not just about firearms, and any responsible business owner already does this.

The important clarification made by the bill is that this information can only be obtained with a warrant, in the context of an open criminal investigation.

As I mentioned, we will ask questions so that the minister's consultations will ensure that the standardization of practices does not create an additional burden on businesses.

[*English*]

The other changes that would be brought in by this proposed legislation concern Bill C-42, which was brought forward in the previous Parliament under the Conservative government. It sought to give automatic licences for the transport, for any purpose, of restricted firearms. However, members of the law enforcement community saw that as problematic, because there would be all kinds of instances where it would be difficult for them to know whether individuals, who were stopped by roadside stops, had perhaps firearms in their vehicles, or an individual with unlawful intent, which is an important point to bring to this discussion.

Government Orders

One of the issues is how to find the balance for lawful purposes and more routine purposes. The legislation opens the door to that. Therefore, automatic licences for transport would still be given, for example, for bringing the firearm from the location where the purchase took place to the location where the firearm would be stored. It would be the same for an individual going from the location where the firearm was stored to a shooting range. However, we have other questions over the consequences of some of the administrative burden.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

Guns shows are one example. In that context, people need to transport firearms. A number of people might want to obtain an authorization at the last minute.

The changes in this bill requiring that there be a process for obtaining such an authorization are quite appropriate. We now want to know how this will be administered.

In the technical briefing, the minister mentioned several options including an Internet portal. Naturally, any MP who does business with the federal government, for example when looking into matters for their constituents, knows that responses are not always timely. I am not referring only to matters related to firearms licences.

If an added burden is created, while entirely appropriate, it must be done as simply as possible and without creating too much bureaucracy that will make life difficult for anyone seeking to get such an authorization.

Of course, we recognize the relevance of the changes being made and the fact that this legislation repeals certain aspects of Bill C-52 regarding authorizations to transport restricted firearms in all circumstances. In the last Parliament, the NDP opposed Bill C-52, but the changes being made here are appropriate and will ensure public safety.

Another extremely important aspect of Bill C-71 is the issue of weapons classification. This issue has often been controversial, but the NDP's position has always been clear. We believe that the individuals best equipped to make those decisions are the men and women in uniform who keep our communities safe, in other words, the RCMP.

One of the changes made by the previous government gave cabinet the authority to reclassify restricted weapons. That was problematic, and brings me back to the point I made at the beginning of my speech. This issue is quite divisive and has too often been politicized. Previous governments have failed to respect the expertise of impartial individuals who make common sense decisions in the interest of public safety. That is why the NDP is pleased that the RCMP will finally be given the authority to classify firearms.

The bill does leave cabinet some power, so we will look at that in committee to make sure it does not open the door to policy decisions that could result in the kinds of situations that have come up before. It became apparent some time ago that politicians are not equipped to make those kinds of decisions and that if we wanted to ensure public safety in a way that was respectful of all Canadians and all communities, experts had to be the ones making those decisions.

The second part of the bill relates to the now-defunct Bill C-52, which this government introduced quite a few months ago. The government just added some elements that we support. It repeals the Conservative government's changes to access to information laws. The changes were made because the Information Commissioner took the previous government to court over access to information requests pertaining to the gun registry. When the registry was destroyed, the previous government began to destroy the data before the House of Commons and the Senate passed the bill.

Destruction of the data was found to be illegal. I do not want to get into the politics of the registry, but citizens did have the right to request access to that information. That led to legal action between the Information Commissioner and the government.

The government is now making these changes to the law that the Conservatives had put in place to legalize something that was illegal. By doing so, it is correcting the mistakes of the past to resolve this dispute.

There is also the fact that Quebec will be getting all of the former registry's records involving its population, the only data left from the registry. Quebec's National Assembly is entitled to continue the process as it sees fit and in accordance with the principle of asymmetrical federalism.

I would now like to return to the Supreme Court decision on this issue. The Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had the right to destroy the data but, in the spirit of co-operative federalism, it strongly urged the government to return the data to Quebec. This bill does just that, giving the National Assembly the power to do what it wants with the data, as is its right, of course.

I will close by saying that the NDP will always support a common-sense approach that respects all communities and all Canadians and guarantees public safety.

• (1220)

[*English*]

These issues are too important not to get right. They are too important to be lost in a partisan black hole.

We will continue to strive in that direction. That is always what our approach has been, and it is what it will continue to be. I look forward to doing that both here in the House and in committee, working with colleagues in all parties, including colleagues in my own caucus, hearing the comments from their constituents, to make sure that we get this right. This is a good first step. Let us keep going in this direction.

If the minister's heart is truly in the right place, I ask that he pass that message to his House leader to make sure we have the proper time to take the necessary steps to make sure that we are addressing any questions that have been raised by me and those that will inevitably be raised by other colleagues.

There are good things here, things that we support, and we just want to make sure that we get them right.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech. It is possible to have a debate on firearms without being painted as gun registry supporters.

I want to ask my colleague a question about Bill C-42, since he was here during the last parliamentary session. He mentioned that retailers will have to keep records. The official opposition, meanwhile, is attacking us by calling this a backdoor registry.

Why did they not ban this practice in Bill C-42 during the last session?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. I thank my colleague for his intervention.

Let us make one thing clear. The Conservatives keep raising certain issues, but we have to make a distinction between Bill C-71 before us today and the existing legislation. The reason something is still enshrined in legislation is that the change has not been made yet. If the previous government felt it was necessary to make a change, it had the chance to do so.

As my colleague mentioned, there were changes, in Bill C-42 for one, which were often problematic, and there were missed opportunities. I commend the government for trying to correct all that through Bill C-71.

What I appreciate about the government's approach, and that appreciation is contingent on the answers we will receive and the process in committee, is that the government understands that some things need to be corrected while others are fine and can be left alone. That is how to achieve the balance that ensures public safety and respect for all so as not to rehash past debates that were far too often partisan instead of being driven by the desire to create sound public policy.

I think that my colleague agrees with me on this. I hope that the government will continue on this path. We shall see.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that the Liberal government is trying to bring back the gun registry in this sneaky and indirect way. It says it is because it wants to eliminate problems with gangs and guns in big cities.

Could my colleague tell us how this bill is going to help address that, when the gangs do not adhere to the current laws?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question because it does allow me to get into that aspect, which I did not have a chance to raise in my speech.

The Conservatives have correctly raised the issue that this is far from sufficient. It is only one piece of the much larger puzzle of how we tackle the growing epidemic of gun violence. There are a few things we could do.

First of all, when we talk about counter-radicalization efforts, we often talk about it in the context of radicalized individuals committing acts of terrorism, but that also applies to dealing with gangs. Gangs, too often, are recruiting vulnerable young people. That is something that we need to stem the tide on.

Certainly, the government falls back on the money that is invested, but as with any investment made by a government, the devil will be in the details of how that money will be spent and what initiatives will be looked at. While the summit that took place here in Ottawa a few weeks ago was a welcome overture to that, it is definitely far from sufficient. That is one issue.

The other issue is tackling the issue of guns coming across the border from the U.S., which is a huge issue, and making sure CBSA has both the authority and the resources to tackle that and is able to collaborate with law enforcement. There is also the growing epidemic of domestic thefts of firearms, which is a problem, and a problem that both rural Canadians and law-abiding gun owners will look at as something they want the government to tackle as well.

There is a whole slew of issues here. I will just end with this. I think another thing that would be great to bring back, which unfortunately was a cut in the previous Parliament, is the police recruitment fund. It was a great fund that went to funding both provincial and municipal efforts. It was federal money that went to the provinces and municipalities to invest in police and policing. When that money was lost, we saw things like the Éclipse squad in Montreal being hurt by that. Their mandate, in large part, was to tackle gang recruitment and gang violence.

Those are the kinds of initiatives we can look at. Certainly more robust background checks like we see in this bill are helpful, but far from the end of that discussion. I welcome the Conservative members' contribution to the debate in that regard, because it is an important issue. This is certainly not the end of that discussion with this legislation.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised several extremely important points. People around the world these days know that gun control cannot be taken lightly. I am concerned that as a result of the petty politics in this place, the partisanship and time allocation motions, we will not have enough time to debate this bill properly and, consequently, it will have serious flaws because of the sloppy work.

Does my colleague believe that the lack of debate has consequences? If yes, what are they? What key aspects must not be forgotten in this bill?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question and comments. She has hit the nail on the head.

Background checks through an individual's lifetime instead of the past five years is a good initiative that is supported by many stakeholders across the political spectrum. In addition, repealing certain provisions brought forward in the last legislature concerning the transport of firearms is a step in the right direction.

Government Orders

Our questions are mainly about the cost of these measures. How will they be implemented? These are legitimate questions raised by the people we represent, on both sides of the debate. It is very important to mention this. The NDP's approach has always been to be respectful of everyone because we must protect public safety with as little partisanship as possible, even though that is the nature of this place.

As my colleague so rightly said, it is hard when the government moves a time allocation motion when there has been so little time for debate. Members must then ask technical questions during the debate on the time allocation motion because that is the only opportunity they have to do so.

I have complete faith in the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, of which I am a member, and I look forward to being fully involved in this work. However, at the end of the day, members have questions to ask on behalf of their constituents. This is a missed opportunity, because we do not want the issue to be politicized. We must succeed at the first attempt, insofar as possible. That is what the NDP is going to try to do with this government's bill.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we have in Bill C-71 is the fulfillment of a commitment the government made in the past election to bring forward reasonable and appropriate legislation dealing with a number of different issues related to safety. The Minister of Public Safety made an excellent presentation on why the legislation is good for Canada.

I believe the member across the way made reference to the NDP supporting the legislation. Perhaps he could expand on that, if in fact that is the case, and whether he has specific amendments he would like to see at committee stage.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We will support the bill at second reading, but we intend to ask questions and propose amendments in committee.

That being said, I cannot provide a detailed answer to his question at this time. This bill must still be thoroughly reviewed, and I have to consult my constituents and public safety authorities, as well as my colleagues, to find out their constituents' concerns. I have already had some excellent discussions with them to ensure that I raise the most important issues in the time that I have. Sometimes we do not have as much time as we would like, but that is the reality of our work—when the speaking time is not limited by the government, of course.

I thank my colleague for his speech and I would like to reiterate that we will support the bill at second reading. We will certainly discuss it. I hope that the minister will be open to amendments and to the work done by the committee. I will certainly not be shy about approaching him and his parliamentary secretary with suggestions, which we will also raise in committee.

[English]

Mr. Marco Mendicino (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege to speak on Bill C-71. At the outset, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

There is a great family establishment in my riding, which is in the middle of Toronto, called Playtime Bowl and Entertainment. It is a place where mothers and fathers can take their children and their loved ones to kick back at the end of a busy week, where they can distract themselves with a bit of close time with the ones they care for and work for every day. I take my girls there, like many families in my community do.

The reason I am referring to this establishment at the outset of my remarks is this. A little less than two weeks ago, on a weekend night, shots rang out. Shortly after those shots rang out, the lives of two people were lost. This is part of a disturbing trend we have seen not only in my community, in the city of Toronto, or in the GTA, but right across the country, and it is something all members should be fully grasped with.

In Toronto there were 61 homicides in 2017, many of which were associated with some form of gun violence. In 2018, 28 shooting incidents have already been reported. This number is up 55% from this point in time last year. I want to say that this is in spite of the great efforts of local police officers with the Toronto Police Service, and with many actors within law enforcement. The reality is that gun violence is all too common in many neighbourhoods, not only in Eglinton—Lawrence but right across the country.

One of the victims whose life was lost just outside of this family establishment had been at an IKEA earlier in the day shopping for a cradle in anticipation of starting a family. This person was described as caring and humble. That is one more life that has been snuffed out as a result of gun violence. It is for this reason that so many within the law enforcement, police, and victims communities have been calling for gun law reform for so long.

Bill C-71 is a response to those calls. It contains practical and balanced reforms, including mandatory life history background checks, strengthening controls for the transport of restricted and prohibited firearms, prohibiting certain firearms that meet the Criminal Code definition and limiting their circulation through grandfathering, applying a consistent approach to the classification of firearms, and cracking down on unlicensed access to firearms. Together, these reforms prioritize public safety while ensuring their practical and fair application to responsible firearms owners.

What Bill C-71 does not do in any way, shape, or form is bring back the federal long gun registry, nor does it add any unreasonable measures for law-abiding citizens. I want to make that abundantly clear. It is focused on preventing firearms from falling into the wrong hands and keeping our communities safer. That is what I would like to focus my time on today.

Government Orders

Overall, crime rates in this country are much lower than what they were decades ago. However, while we are seeing a general downward trend in crime, these statistics do not tell the whole story. There is no question that illegal guns are increasingly finding their way into the hands of criminals and gang members. Handgun thefts have recently jumped up by nearly 40%. Break-ins and illegal sales in Canada are only compounding the problem. Even more concerning, there were 223 firearm-related homicides in Canada in 2016, which is 44 more than the previous year. There were nearly 2,500 criminal incidents involving firearms in 2016, which is also a major jump, to the tune of a 30% increase since 2013.

• (1235)

While some of our largest cities are hardest hit by these statistics, this is not just an urban problem. Rural and indigenous communities are also affected. Not every crime can be prevented, but we can and we must take measures to reduce the risks.

The first set of proposals we have introduced would help to stop firearms from falling into the wrong hands. These measures would spell out quite clearly that if a person is planning on selling or giving a non-restricted firearm, it must be verified that the person acquiring it has a valid firearms licence. This occurs automatically for restricted and prohibited firearms and that validity must be confirmed with the RCMP. Currently, verifying licences for non-restricted firearms is voluntary. We are proposing to make it required by law.

Recent police-reported information would be taken into account. For example, an individual flagged for investigation by a chief firearms officer because of a charge of domestic violence could be prevented from lawfully acquiring a firearm until the investigation was complete and the licence was returned to valid.

Further, in determining eligibility, authorities would be required to consider a history of certain criminal activity or violent behaviour over the span of a lifetime, rather than just the past five years. What we are saying is simple. If a person is eligible to own a non-restricted firearm, let us take a few minutes to confirm it. A simple phone call, for example, to the RCMP, free of charge, would answer that question.

[*Translation*]

This is one of the practical proposals regarding the firearm licensing eligibility criteria. We must also improve how firearms themselves are dealt with.

The authorities have a process for tracking firearm-related crimes, which involves systematically tracking the history of a firearm that has been recovered or seized. The chain of custody starts when the firearm is manufactured or imported, and continues on to when it is sold or transferred, and even beyond that.

What is most worrisome is when the firearms fall into the wrong hands. This is why a rigorous, effective, and unrestricted firearm tracking system would be essential for this law to be enforced.

[*English*]

That is where a strengthened ability to trace non-restricted firearms effectively would be essential for law enforcement.

All of this is being proposed with privacy rights top of mind. In that respect, law enforcement would have no special powers here. They would need to continue to comply with existing laws. All of it is supported by applying a consistent approach to classification of firearms, and requirements for safe and legitimate transport. It is backed by over \$327 million of new federal funding to support initiatives aiming to reduce gun crime and criminal gang activities.

The government understands that changing the law is only one piece of the puzzle. Efforts like capacity-building, education, outreach, research, and importantly, more front-line police officers are being dedicated through this new federal funding. We believe in effective measures that strengthen public safety, while remaining fair and manageable for law-abiding owners and businesses. Firearm-related violence has not been the norm in Canada. We intend to keep it that way. That is why I am proud to be standing behind Bill C-71 and this legislation today.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would just encourage all members to think about the innocent lives that have been lost, to remember that in the course of debating this bill what we are trying to do is not only to pay homage to those lives which have been lost needlessly and senselessly as a result of gun violence, but also to prevent the next unnecessary loss. This bill would do that. It would do so in a way by striking a balance between having sensible laws while at the same time respecting responsible gun ownership.

• (1240)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but think this is just an attempt to change the channel by the government. We will not even be allowed one full day of debate on a bill that was just introduced last week.

The public is barely starting to find out about this and realizing that the government is creating a gun registry again. The parliamentary secretary claims not, but how else can the bill refer to a registrar and that transfer authorizations need to be obtained from the registrar? That transfer authorization would have a number attached to it. A record of all the transactions and sales by firearms businesses would need to be kept for 20 years and be available on demand.

How can the parliamentary secretary claim that this is not just a renewed gun registry?

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I can claim that because the provisions which are being put forward in this legislation are entirely sensible. They are practical and they are balanced. They call for a number of things, such as enhanced background checks.

Government Orders

I would ask the member to find me one member in the chamber who does not believe that in so many other areas and aspects of life where we require some due diligence before giving people access to cars or to any other aspect of life in a similar way we would not require the same kind of due diligence, in fact enhanced due diligence, when it comes to giving access to firearms, which presents some risk. Those are the types of practical measures which I would think would be embraced by all members in the chamber.

When it comes to the type of dilatory tactics that we have seen, it is a bit rich coming from members on the other side who used time allocation in ways never seen before in the history of this chamber. We will take no lectures from the Conservative opposition when it comes to debates in the chamber.

• (1245)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I go on to the next question, I just want to remind hon. members that the rules in the chamber are that one side asks a question, the other side answers, and we try to hear both sides. I am not sure that what we are hearing now is actually shouting, but it is heckling going back and forth and it is getting a little bit out of hand.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence has highlighted exactly what this legislation is about. It is about a sensible approach to making sure that responsible gun owners can continue to participate in the activities that they do and at the same time make it safer for Canadians, and in particular as I see it, younger Canadians.

This legislation would strengthen the process by which somebody can obtain a firearm. Currently, the CFO, the chief firearms officer, can only look back five years into somebody's history when making a determination as to whether or not the person can own a firearm.

The member has had a lot of experience in his previous career, and I am wondering if he could comment as to how this legislation could transform the way we genuinely look at somebody's history and whether he thinks it is a good idea that we look even further back than just five years.

Mr. Marco Mendicino: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for all of his work on this file.

Having had the benefit of playing a role within the criminal justice system, I am familiar with the fact that there is an increasing amount of gun violence. As I described in my remarks, that is not an issue which just impacts big cities. It is an issue which we are seeing start to increase in trend in rural areas as well.

It only makes sense that we provide the tools that are necessary to law enforcement and to those who are looking to sell firearms to individuals, that we provide the mechanisms they need to do the due diligence to ensure that we are not providing access to any firearm to any individual who may pose a heightened risk. This is common sense. This is sensible.

I look to my friends across the aisle and I put the challenge to them to tell me why we would only want to look back five years when we know that individuals who are engaged in organized crime often have a history which reaches beyond that temporal limit. I put that question back to them.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to take part in this debate today.

Canadians must see their government take a stand, as communities across the country are suffering the consequences of gun-related crimes and violence.

We are not talking about making sweeping changes or imposing unreasonable measures on responsible gun owners. I would not support such measures, and that is not what we are doing. We are also not talking about restoring old measures, like the long gun registry.

Our Prime Minister made this very clear when he spoke in Hawkesbury, in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. On the contrary, we are talking about taking an objective look at the problems, facts, and evidence, to fix shortcomings and to develop a practical approach to combatting gun violence.

Bill C-71 builds on the government's commitment to take a responsible approach to prioritizing public safety, while being practical and fair to firearms owners. This is a direct response to a growing problem.

Statistics Canada published a report entitled "Homicide in Canada, 2016", which paints a clear picture of the situation. The data for 2016, the most recent year for which we have data about the situation, are alarming. According to the report, for the third consecutive year, there was an increase in both the number and rate of firearm-related homicides.

The report states that, in 2016, there were 223 firearm-related homicides in Canada, which is 44 more than in 2015. The data also show that there were 2,465 firearm-related criminal offences in 2016, which is 30% more than in 2013.

These numbers speak to the tragic trend playing out in our streets and communities. The reason for this trend is clear: the wrong people are getting their hands on weapons, sometimes by breaking and entering or cross-border smuggling, sometimes through illegal sales by licensed owners or arms trafficking by organized crime. These circumstances increase the number of handguns on our streets and the amount of gun violence in our otherwise peaceful communities.

We can reverse this trend by making sure that guns do not fall into the wrong hands by improving the effectiveness of background checks and the firearms licensing system.

Bill C-71 includes, among other things, practical proposals and a more rigorous background check process for issuing licences.

Government Orders

Under this bill, verifying gun licences will be mandatory for the sale of non-restricted firearms. Anyone who wants to purchase or receive that kind of firearm, from either a business or individual, will have to demonstrate that they have a valid licence. What is the point of having a licence if the holder cannot prove that it is valid? In addition, the business or individual will be required to verify the validity of the licence with the RCMP. At present, the verification process is optional when transferring non-restricted firearms. The government does not track those sales. This bill addresses that gap.

As for strengthening the background check process, the authorities who determine eligibility will have to take into account certain information reported by police services, as well as other factors related to the individual's entire life, rather than only the previous five years.

Furthermore, if an individual has been convicted of a violent offence involving firearms or drugs, if he or she has been treated for mental illness involving violent tendencies, or if he or she has a history of violent behaviour, authorities will be obligated to take that into account as part of the overall history.

What is more, all licence holders are currently subject to continuous eligibility screening. That means that when the chief firearms officer is informed of certain interactions with police, he could suspend the licence pending further investigation in order to determine whether the person is still eligible to be a licence holder. This is one of the reasonable changes that can be implemented to ensure that firearms do not end up in the wrong hands.

Whenever we see the devastation that results from gun violence, we often ask why the person was armed and how this could have been allowed. The answer can be complicated.

• (1250)

It may be that the individual never turned in their firearm after being required to do so, or that a person without a licence bought a gun on the black market or brought a gun into the country illegally. Often what happens is that straw purchasers acquire guns legally and then transfer or resell them illegally. Enhancing gun traceability mechanisms would be a practical way of better monitoring where guns end up when this happens.

That is why this bill will require firearms businesses to keep transfer and inventory records on non-restricted firearms. Although this is common practice in the industry, we want to make it mandatory today. This will be a clear rule for all new entrants interested in selling firearms. By making this practice mandatory, we will be giving police an important tool for identifying suspects in gun-related offences, which will support criminal investigations. The government will not own the records and will not force retailers to provide this information without a warrant. If the police wants any of the information for its investigations, it will have to follow the normal Criminal Code procedure for obtaining personal information. These records will have to be kept by firearms businesses, not the government, for at least 20 years.

In 2016, 31% of the guns recovered after gun homicides were firearms that did not require registration, a category that includes long guns, shotguns, and hunting rifles. This is a good example of the current situation. Guns are ending up in the wrong hands, which

is why we are taking concrete action on licence verification and guns traceability.

All this is reinforced by the proposal in Bill C-71 to standardize the classification of firearms and strengthen requirements for the safe and legitimate transportation of firearms. The Government of Canada's number one responsibility is to keep Canadians safe. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has clearly demonstrated his commitment to stamping out gun crime and gang activity. In fact, he recently announced a federal investment of more than \$327 million over five years and \$100 million per year after that to address this priority.

Thus, the proposed combination of pragmatic reforms that are the direct result of our 2015 campaign promise will further support this priority objective. It seeks to reverse the rising gun violence in our country and we are certain that it will have real and lasting impacts. These are practical, targeted, and well-thought-out measures which, as a whole, will enhance the safety of our communities. In making these changes, we have ensured that our efforts are fair, effective, practical, and safe. We believe the bill achieves that objective. The funding for our police forces and Bill C-71 are tools to combat violence.

As a rural MP, I am proud to support this bill, which does not entail a test, application, or additional costs, and does not impact our farmers and hunters. That is why I am supporting this bill.

• (1255)

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech in the House of Commons today in this key debate.

[*English*]

This is an essential debate, because the government is rushing Bill C-71 without the proper ability for people to ask questions. Why did the minister, yesterday, in refuting allegations about this being a backdoor registry, suggest that the only record required would be for owners of stores, who would keep a record of the name and the PAL, the possession acquisition licence? He neglected to say the make, the model, the type, the serial number, and a range of other issues. Was that omission a way to discount our suggestion that this is a backdoor registry? It seems that by omitting the types of information contained in the Liberals' old long-gun registry, the minister is trying to deflect our claim that this is indeed the reintroduction of the long-gun registry by stealth. I know that in that member's riding, which is not far from here, a lot of people have concerns about the return of the long-gun registry.

Government Orders

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that the Prime Minister was in my riding and reiterated the fact that we were not reintroducing the long-gun registry. I would also remind him that the Conservatives presented a motion to adjourn the debate on Bill C-71 yesterday.

The member was in cabinet in the previous government. Through Bill C-42, the Conservatives did not introduce any motion or any law to ban the practice of the Canadian Tires or Cabela's of the world of refusing to get details from gun owners. Why did they not do that back then? When the retailers have to call the RCMP or the chief firearms officer, they will not ask for any details about which guns people bought.

I would remind him that the only gun registry in this House is the Conservative Party's. They ask for names, for emails, and for donations to the cause. It is the only party that is making a gun registry about law-abiding citizens.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already seen that Quebec has a firearms registry. The government says time and time again that it will not introduce a long-gun registry because it already has one for restricted and prohibited firearms. When the Liberals say that they will not introduce one, are they not really just leaving it to the provinces to construct one themselves?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, no.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am seeing the Liberals' fascination with guns. They are always attacking guns, and they never seem to recognize that it is not the gun that is the problem, it is the person behind the gun.

As I look at this legislation, I wonder what is being done about rural crime and things that affect people on a day-to-day basis. If I saw something in this bill that actually addressed rural crime, I would say that maybe there was something here, but there is not. The Liberals keep going after something simple like the mechanism, not the problem. What are they going to do to change that?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the member is asking about gang violence in our cities and communities, because I would remind him that on November 17, the Minister of Public Safety introduced \$327 million to fight exactly that. While opposition members delayed debate in Parliament last week, all the members on the other side of the House voted against those measures. I hope they will be honest with their constituents and tell them that.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in debate on Bill C-71. I feel particularly lucky, because the government is once again limiting debate on matters before Parliament, something the deputy House leader of the Liberal Party suggested it would never do when it was in opposition. However, we now have had well over two dozen opportunities for time allocation and omnibus legislation, particularly in implementing budgets, something he called an assault on democracy in the past.

What I find so interesting is that the hashtag used by Liberal MPs during the election was #RealChange, and what we see is a real change from what they promised. A lot of them in ridings like Peterborough, Northumberland—Peterborough South, Bay of Quinte, Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Kenora, and Glengarry

—Prescott—Russell, where the previous speaker is from, have told their constituents that they opposed the previous Liberal majority government's targeting of law-abiding gun owners in the form of a long-gun registry, which was premised on fighting crime but was fighting crime by attacking the rights of law-abiding citizens, many of whom are among the most law-abiding citizens in the country. Statistics can prove that. There are responsibilities that come with possessing the right to have a firearm. These are already among the most law-abiding citizens, or they do not get that right.

I should say that I am going to divide my time with the capable MP for Lakeland.

Once again, we have the same approach. All those MPs are now quite worried about keeping their promises to their constituents. They are quite worried, because they see the same approach the Liberal government, under Jean Chrétien and Allan Rock, took to firearms regulation.

The Minister of Public Safety, his parliamentary secretary, and a number of other MPs hosted a summit on guns and gangs. They made a lot of news about that, but in Bill C-71, there is nothing to tackle gang-related crime. There is nothing to tackle illegally smuggled weapons at the U.S. border. In the Conservative government, we armed the CBSA and gave it additional resources to make sure that illegal weapons could be caught coming into the country, which is the problem.

Not only do we not have that, there is no reference in this bill to increasing penalties for the use of guns in violent crime or gang-related organized crime. None of that is there. Just like Chrétien and Allan Rock, the Liberals talk about the need for legislation because of crime and then go after law-abiding sport shooters and hunters in rural Canada from aboriginal communities. These are the people who would have to suffer the consequences of Bill C-71 and the backdoor registry, which I will speak about in a moment.

Even on the weekend, we heard the Minister of Public Safety try to evade questions from CBC Radio on *The House*. I invite people to listen to that. He used a five-year period when talking about gun violence. He did that because 2013 was the lowest year in modern records for violent crime involving guns in Canada. He used that as a starting point to try to show dramatic increases in crime. Seconds later, the minister had to acknowledge that the Liberals only use a one- to two-year time frame to suggest that this bill is needed because guns are coming from robberies in rural areas or robberies from stores.

Government Orders

The Liberals are saying that the problem is domestic. They are saying that the problem is not the illegal smuggling of weapons from the United States, which I would suggest to this House is the problem with guns and organized crime. They are not using a possession and acquisition licence when running guns from the United States. The minister uses a one- to two-year timeline to suggest that there is a real problem with thefts of firearms from stores and rural properties.

● (1300)

What is terribly ironic in that for two years members of the Conservative caucus have been demanding a response from the government with respect to rural crime, because we have seen a large increase. Not only has there been no response, no additional RCMP resources, and no strategy, but now the government is blaming crime rates in rural Canada and using it as a justification to bring in a backdoor gun registry.

If the government is trying to not cherry pick statistics, why a five-year window for gun violence statistics as a justification for Bill C-71 and a one to two-year window to suggest the problem is domestic based? The CBC caught him in that conundrum, and he tried his best to avoid it.

We are also seeing a change, allowing final control to go from government and cabinet to bureaucrats. I have the utmost respect for the RCMP and all its specialized units, but as a veteran, a lawyer, a parliamentarian, I am very much of the view that Parliament creates the laws and the RCMP enforces the laws. It does not write the laws.

The government has grandfathered in the bill a number of firearms that it is reclassifying. Why did it do that? Because it is admitting that reclassifications are unfair. I would like to see a change to the bill that makes grandfathering permanent going forward, so if there is ever a reclassification, people affected and their property rights are grandfathered. The government seems to admit that grandfathering is required here. Why not make it prospective going forward?

Here is why. Law-abiding owners who follow all the rules and regulations with respect to their firearm are suddenly, because of one meeting of some bureaucrats, declared criminals or in possession of an illegal weapon when they have owned and used that weapon for sport shooting or hunting for many years. Suddenly, with one blanket move, what dozens, hundreds, or thousands of people already possess is somehow deemed illegal. If the Liberals are going to grandfather them in the bill, they should grandfather them going forward. I would like to see that.

The very fact that the Liberals use grandfathering is an admission that the reclassifications we have seen in previous years have been unfair to people who follow the rules and are law-abiding.

This suggestion by the Liberal government that this is not a backdoor registry is laughable. I mentioned a number of ridings before. The Liberals are going to have to go to the ridings and say how this is not a stealth attack to bring back the registry. As I said earlier, yesterday in the House the Minister of Public Safety suggested to the House, "All they are asking for now is for store owners to keep records of who bought the gun, and under what PAL (Possession Acquisition Licence)." That is incomplete. That is actually not accurate. What Bill C-71 says, and I am quoting from

section 58.1 (1), "(b) the business must record and—for a period of make, model and type and, if any, its serial number...." This is in addition to the two elements that the Minister of Public Safety suggested.

On top of that, the use of the term "registrar", the data, all of this is in a backdoor way. The problem here, as the member for Kenora, another riding where people are going to be asking questions, is that the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney brought in background checks. We agree with background checks. Enhancing those are fine. However, when the legislation is premised on tackling guns and gangs, and we look at the legislation, there is zero on illegal weapons smuggled from the United States, zero on organized crime, and zero on gangs.

There is a total focus on the registration, the recording, the auditing of people who are following the rules, the people who are using these in rural Canada, hunters, farmers, and first nations. The Liberals have set up the argument as having to tackle urban crime. Once again, it is a back-door attempt to regulate and reclassify law-abiding users.

● (1305)

To have a PAL, one has to be law-abiding. These are some of our most law-abiding citizens. Therefore, I wish the Liberals would stop this pitting of rural Canada versus urban Canada and be straight with all Canadians.

● (1310)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I invite the member opposite to take a look at page 208, under part 4 of the budget that was just dropped. The Conservatives voted against the section under part 4 entitled "Taking Action Against Guns and Gangs", which is a \$100 million a year investment to deal with the issue the member raised. He suggested that we were not doing anything about it. They voted against taking action and supporting communities that were experiencing violence, one of which is mine, a downtown riding in the middle of Toronto.

We just had an innocent bystander shot in our city by an individual who had access to 11 legal guns. He was a legal gun owner. When police officers found that individual and recovered the gun involved in the shooting, they could not recover the other 10 guns. That responsible gun owner had somehow irresponsibly lost those 10 guns, including shotguns. Because we could go back and find out where they were purchased, we then had access to all the other people the guns had been shared with and all the other crimes they had committed.

Government Orders

There needs to be a structure around how urban crime happens, and it does not just happen with guns smuggled across the border. It does not just happen with long guns. It happens with hand guns and pistols. We need a way to restrict those weapons and control their movement in cities to make them safe.

I appreciate that rural crime needs a different approach and that we need to respect long gun owners in rural Canada. Those guns are as much tools as they are a hobby or sporting utility. However, the reality is that this proposed gun legislation will make our cities safer and it will make responsible gun owners completely different from irresponsible gun owners. Therefore, when there are clear rules to follow, all of us are safer, all of us do better, and that is why the legislation is so needed.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, my friend for Spadina—Fort York demonstrates in the House the way the Liberals are spinning urban issues versus rural issues. I said that there was nothing in Bill C-71 on guns and gangs. That is the reason the legislation is before the House. The member had to quote the budget and some general allocation of funds. There is nothing in the bill. I invite the member to rise on a point of order and point me to something in the bill, because there is nothing in here with respect to that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the member asked me to rise on a point of order, and the point of order I would like to raise is that quite clearly he has not read the legislation. I can point him to where it helps.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We are getting into debate. I want to remind hon. members that when they rise on a point of order, it is because something is in contravention of the rules. I do not think inviting the other side to rise on a point of order is quite kosher. I will leave it at that. I put that out there as more of an advisement than anything else.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that clarification. I appreciate the fact that the member for Spadina—Fort York tried his best to correct the record from his previous intervention, but clearly was unable to.

The member is going back and forth. We need to control and ensure there is an urban crime strategy and therefore the Liberals have brought in Bill C-71. The challenge here is that none of this addresses gang-related gun crimes or organized crime. By going to the store level as opposed to the home, the Liberals are trying to bring in the registry by a back door. In several Parliaments in the past we saw that it did not work, it did not hit crime, it cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and it targeted law-abiding people as opposed to law breakers.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I come from a rural riding on Vancouver Island. We certainly have had the initial knee-jerk reaction to Bill C-71. However, the vast majority of gun owners in my riding own non-restricted firearms. When I have a cursory look at Bill C-71, I do not think anyone will see much of a change once the bill becomes law.

I want to question the member on the backdoor registry, because I am trying to understand the Conservatives. They like to support law enforcement and they want to support gun owners. If police officers

have a case involving a firearm, does the member not agree they should have a tool, through a warrant, to seek out more information about a possible firearm that was used?

● (1315)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member pointed to what law enforcement had right now. Enforcement officers do have the power to seek warrants. They have the power, supervised by our courts, to search a premise, demand property, tap phones, all these sorts of things. Law enforcement already has the tools to investigate.

My issue is always the premise for this debate. The member for Spadina—Fort York had to go to the budget to provide some reference to gangs. The Liberals always premise legislation like this as a way to tackle gang violence. However, when we look at the details, it is not. It is once again targeting the very law-abiding people who try to treat this right, and have done so responsibly. Going after responsible Canadians is not the way to fight urban crime. We need a real strategy from the government, rather than divide Canadians once again.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as with Liberals in the past, Bill C-71 targets legal and responsible gun owners while doing nothing to combat the criminal and unauthorized possession of firearms, address gang violence, or combat crime in Canada. The lack of focus on crime is particularly frustrating for everyday Canadians, who have felt helpless as crime, with increasing violence, has become a crisis in rural communities, as it has in Lakeland. It also shows how out of touch the Liberals are with rural Canadians who legally own firearms and need them for protecting livestock and pets from predators or for humane euthanasia of livestock suffering from fatal, catastrophic illness or injury when a vet is hours and miles away. For example, on March 5, a cougar attacked a group of farm animals at a rural Comox Valley property, killing a lamb and injuring a donkey. The owner called the RCMP and then shot at the cougar, and the predator subsequently ran away. These are the everyday uses of firearms by farmers and rural Canadians in remote communities.

Government Orders

Responsible firearms owners in Lakeland have seen what Liberal predecessors did, with the creation of a long gun registry, which treated law-abiding firearms-owning men and women as suspicious and nefarious by default, and they have been bracing for legislation similar to Bill C-71 to be introduced. It epitomizes the Liberals' approach of swinging blindly at an issue, in this case the real and serious problems of the unauthorized possession of guns, gang violence, and actual gun crimes, and penalizing only those who have done nothing wrong. Constituents in Lakeland are disappointed but not surprised that the Liberals missed the mark so badly. Tyler Milligan, a proud gun owner who enjoys going hunting with his grandkids, said this: "As a very active hunter and a competition shooter, I feel this bill is an attack on law-abiding gun owners, and I feel that this bill is not targeting issues that Canada has related to guns."

It is clear that this legislation was created by individuals who have no experience with law-abiding gun owners and no understanding of the legitimate use and need for firearms in rural and remote communities, or of those for whom firearms are culturally and socially significant, representative of pioneering and western heritage, or treasured family heirlooms.

Bill C-71 is yet another broken promise. The Liberal election platform said that the Liberals would take pragmatic action to make it harder for criminals to get and to use handguns and assault weapons in crimes, but law-abiding firearms owners' guns are not on the streets. They are safely secured and locked up in safes and cabinets, or they are on the range or in the fields with their owners. These people are not criminals. They should not be penalized for their choices to hunt or to sport shoot. The Liberals are repeating history and showing that they have learned nothing from the mistakes of past Liberal governments that were expensive and burdensome when it came to the legal possession of firearms in Canada, while being ineffective in actually addressing the criminal use of guns.

Bill C-71 also gives an indication of planned prohibitions to come. I get the strong sense that while the Liberals are trying to reassure Canadians by saying they are not banning anything today, Bill C-71 sets out a framework to implement bans in the future. Proposed subsection 12(9) does not explicitly state who would make the determination of which firearms could be added to a restricted list and under what legislative authority. It is also not clear if there would be any sort of appeals process or provision should a heavy-handed, behind-closed-doors decision without evidence or consultation be made to add a firearm to the list, penalizing law-abiding gun owners. I ask members to forgive the skepticism of everyday Canadians, but there have been mistakes made with incorrect firearms classification in the past, when there was, at the very least, a check and balance of elected officials. With this power removed, who would be left to ensure that law-abiding firearms owners are not suddenly and immediately criminalized and unfairly targeted by incorrect firearms classification? Anyone who supports civilian oversight of law enforcement should be concerned about Bill C-71.

Let us be honest. There is little trust to begin with between law-abiding firearms owners and the Liberals of today. Perhaps the aspect of Bill C-71 that I have already heard the most concern about is the creation of a registry by another name, a backdoor registry.

The Liberal campaign also promised explicitly not to create a new national long gun registry to replace the one that had been dismantled. However, under Bill C-71, businesses would be forced to keep a record associating individual people with specific, individual firearms. If this is not a registry, what is? It would create a registry without actually saying so. Under this legislation, firearms owners would be issued a reference number by a registrar. What do registrars do? They maintain registries. Canadians know that the long gun registry, which the previous Conservative government scrapped, was wasteful and ineffective, and did nothing to combat gun violence.

• (1320)

It is incredibly disappointing and frustrating for law-abiding gun owners to face new costs, responsibilities, and hurdles, when that will do nothing to get illicit firearms off the streets, or deter or punish criminals who use firearms in their heinous acts.

The Liberals claim that Bill C-71 is safety legislation. The public safety minister is cherry-picking statistics to maximize the illusion that the situation in Canada is dire, and that this particular legislation is desperately needed. Let me be clear. Conservatives believe strongly in making our country as safe and secure as possible and taking logical and effective steps to empower law enforcement and to protect vulnerable and innocent Canadians.

Let us look at the facts of what the public safety minister could have done to make Canada safer.

The public safety minister held a guns and gangs summit, but chose not to address gangs in this apparently flagship legislation.

The public safety minister has mentioned the insufficient commercial storage for firearms, but has not expanded on the issue and does not deal with it in Bill C-71, which does not allow us to debate it.

The Liberals have failed to invest in technologies to enhance the ability of the hard-working men and women who serve as border guards to detect and halt illegal guns from the U.S. into Canada.

Instead of spending \$8.5 million on a skating rink on the Hill, next door to the largest skating rink in the world, the Rideau Canal, maybe if the Liberals wanted to choose a campaign promise to follow through on they could have provided, as they promised, \$100 million per year to the provinces and territories to combat illegal gun activity.

Government Orders

Bill C-71 does nothing about any of that. It does nothing to combat gang violence in B.C.'s Lower Mainland, gun violence in the GTA, or the escalating crime rates in rural communities, which are making many in my home province of Alberta vulnerable and they feel totally abandoned by the government's slow inaction on crime.

Perhaps the Liberals will listen to Jennifer Quist, from Lakeland, who writes that people "have lost the 'small town' way of life to constant waves of crime without the punishment. It is the unlawful who run the show around here, the criminals with nothing to lose who win at this game." She also wrote, "Such bureaucracy in a time when all we hear about is the way our government is wasting the money of the taxpayer."

What the Liberals ignore is that responsible firearms owners across Canada are careful and conscientious. They believe in a culture of safety in the possession and handling of their firearms. They, more than anyone, want stiffer penalties and real action against those who use firearms to commit crimes, and against gang activity that puts us all at risk.

Roy Green gave a good explanation of what law-abiding firearms owners do. He stated:

To legally own a firearm in Canada comes with responsibility. When not in approved use, a trigger lock, at least, must be engaged on each gun. Ammunition must be stored separately from the gun it is intended for. And separately doesn't mean an ammo box parked beside the firearm. Separately means just that — perhaps rifle in one room, ammunition in another. Gun owners with children frequently will store their firearms, trigger locks engaged, in a gun safe with ammunition in a locked box some distance away.

These are citizens committed to safety, who are vetted to ensure they can acquire a firearm, not thugs on the streets who are quite obviously not worried about laws, rules, regulations, or paperwork.

I would like to end by imploring rural members of the Liberal backbench to listen to the common-sense concerns they are hearing from their constituents about this legislation. They know, as well as I do, that Bill C-71 does nothing to combat criminal activity and illegal possession or use of firearms. Law-abiding gun owners should not be treated like criminals. I hope these Liberals will not give in to caucus pressure to vote for this ill-conceived legislation, and instead will do the right thing and listen to the hunters, farmers, and sport shooters in their ridings, who are not criminals.

Bill C-71 should be scrapped. The Liberals should listen to everyday Canadians about what it is like to legally own and responsibly handle firearms. They should take action to crack down on criminals, protect the security of innocent Canadians, and prevent more victims of crime. The Conservatives will not support legislation like that. We will continue to be in favour of concrete actions that will actually keep Canadians safe. There are no new measures in Bill C-71 to combat gang or gun violence in urban areas, or to address the serious concerns of escalating armed crime in rural communities.

• (1325)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me once again try to put before the House how this helps people in urban settings who are dealing with extraordinary gun violence. I want to start by saying that I have been to more burials for people in one of the

neighbourhoods I represent than I have been to funerals for my own family. Gun violence is so serious in urban settings, and the margin of error is just not there. When a gun goes off in a crowded urban area, people get killed. We had an innocent bystander killed this week in Toronto. The gun that killed her was owned by a "responsible" gun owner, a licensed gun owner. All 11 guns this individual owned, including long guns, were in an arsenal in the riding I represent. The ability to transport handguns around the city without stronger regulation and restriction allowed this individual to "lose" his guns. Those guns have been lost in the streets of Toronto, and they make my city, my community, and the residents I represent very vulnerable.

This legislation, which would restrict the transportation of handguns in cities, because they are restricted weapons, is good for Toronto. Thank goodness so many gun owners are responsible and do what they have to do about locking up their guns, separating the ammunition, and disassembling the trigger mechanism. Thank goodness that happens. However, the lost handguns from so-called responsible gun owners are killing children in Toronto. This legislation addresses it and builds on the investments made in the budget to deal with this very dangerous issue in Toronto.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, here is what is happening in my riding of Lakeland. A single woman was working alone in a store at a hotel. Four men, masked with bandanas, sunglasses, and hoodies, entered the lobby and forced her to lie down on the ground. She tried to look up and was reportedly hit several times about the head, suffering minor injuries. She was unable to get a good look at the robbers' appearance and clothing. They were armed. They robbed her. This is a town that has repeated robberies. The RCMP was called immediately afterwards. That was in Vegreville.

More recently, after an armed robbery in Bonnyville, an employee was shot and three suspects were arrested. There are robberies happening all over the place in the rural area where I live, on farms up and down the highway. What is happening is that criminals, who are not worried about adhering to rules, laws, or paperwork, get a slap on the wrist and go out to repeat those exact same offences.

The reality is that Bill C-71 does not do one thing to address any of that. It does nothing to protect my rural constituents who are facing that kind of crime. If the member was being honest, it does not do anything to protect the constituents in his riding either.

Government Orders

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Lakeland, Alberta has a rural riding very similar to mine. Her clear understanding is the opposite of what the member across the way is trying to get across. I sympathize, and I am sure my colleague does, that there is a problem identified with illegal guns and murders when the trigger is pulled in a large urban centre. It is obviously different.

Everyone here, especially on this side of the House, wants communities to be safe, but we cannot target rural areas just because they have a larger number, on average, of law-abiding firearms owners, who use them to hunt and to protect their property.

When I was actively farming, the odd time over the years I would have a rabid fox among my livestock. I have a right to protect my property, and that is what the gun was for. That gun was there all the time. We cannot have the same rules there. I would like my colleague to comment on that, and why the Liberals continue to pretend they are not creating a backdoor gun registry.

• (1330)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, of course, I share the view of my colleague. He and his neighbours, just like me, legitimately need to use firearms as tools in their lives as rural Canadians, as farmers and producers.

What is deeply troubling is that the Liberals are trying to say they are putting forward effective legislation to increase safety and security, but at the same time they want to reintegrate terrorists and talk about removing mandatory minimum sentences, which our government put forth to act as a deterrent and real punishment against heinous crimes and the use of guns by criminals. They mused about removing consecutive sentencing. They clearly have a soft-on-crime approach, which I think we will see when they finally bring forward their criminal justice reform.

That is exactly right. We should be taking action to crack down on criminals, not target law-abiding, responsible firearms owners in any way in Canada.

Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

I am proud to take part in this debate. As communities across the country face the devastating consequences of gun crime and violence, it is important for Canadians to see the government taking a stand. Doing so does not have to mean making radical changes or placing unreasonable measures on responsible firearms owners, nor does it mean a return to the measures of the past like the long gun registry. On the contrary, it means taking a clear-eyed look at the problems, the data, and the evidence, filling the gaps that need to be filled, and taking a practical approach to tackle gun violence.

Bill C-71 follows up on the government's commitment to take this responsible approach, prioritizing public safety while being practical and fair to firearms owners. It is also a direct response to a growing problem.

The Statistics Canada report entitled "Homicide in Canada, 2016" paints a clear picture of that problem. The year 2016 is the last year for which we have data on this issue and the numbers, frankly, are startling. It indicates that for the third consecutive year, firearms-

related homicides increased in both numbers and rate. It tells us there were 223 firearms-related homicides in Canada that year, 44 more than in 2015. The statistics also tell us there were 2,465 criminal firearms violations that year, an increase of 30% since 2013. These figures reflect a tragic trend on our streets and in our communities.

My community is no exception to this reality and in fact faces alarming rates of gun and gang violence. I have the honour of representing the city of Surrey alongside several other members in this place. Last year alone, there were 45 firearms-related incidents in our community, including the riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. While this was a declining trend from previous years, it is still extremely concerning and one of the most important and frequent issues I hear about when door knocking and talking to constituents in the community.

Stories persist in our region of shootings taking place in residential areas that leave bullet holes in homes and front doors, and people are concerned for their safety and that of their families.

The first shooting in Surrey this year took place on 64th Avenue, a main road with gas stations, a variety of businesses, and residential housing in the surrounding area. It is unacceptable that anyone should feel unsafe or that this type of violence could erupt in our neighbourhoods at any given time.

The root of the trend is clear. Guns are falling into the wrong hands and this is happening in communities across the country. Sometimes, they are acquired by break-ins or by smuggling across the border. Other times, they are acquired through illegal sales by licenced owners or through firearms trafficking by organized crime. This only fuels the rise of handguns on our streets and more firearms-related violence in our otherwise peaceful communities, such as my home community of Surrey.

One way we can make a difference in keeping guns out of the wrong hands is by enhancing the utility of background checks and the effectiveness of the existing licensing system. One of the practical proposals in Bill C-71 would allow for a more rigorous licence verification process. Under this legislation, licence verification for non-restricted firearms sales would be mandatory. If people want to purchase or receive such a firearm from a business or an individual, they would be required to prove they have a valid licence. Further, the business or individual would be required to confirm the licence validity with the RCMP. Currently, this verification process is voluntary for non-restricted firearms. This legislation fixes that deficiency.

Government Orders

As part of strengthened background checks, authorities determining eligibility would have to consider certain police-reported information and other factors spanning a person's life, rather than just the last five years. If people have been convicted of certain criminal offences involving violence, firearms, or drugs, have been treated for mental illness associated with violence, or have a history of violent behaviour, authorities would be required to consider those factors over their life history.

Further, all licensees currently undergo continuous eligibility screening. This means that when a chief firearms officer is made aware of certain police-related interactions, they may place a licence under administrative review, pending an investigation to determine if the individual continues to be eligible to hold a licence.

This is only one of the reasonable reforms we can make to ensure firearms do not fall into the wrong hands. When we see the devastation gun violence causes, we often ask ourselves, "Why did that individual have a gun? How could this have been allowed to have happened?" In some cases, the answer can be quite complex. It may have been someone who never surrendered their firearm when they were supposed to, or it may have been someone without a licence or who smuggled or purchased a firearm on the black market.

• (1335)

Illegal gun sales often happen through so-called straw purchasing in which a licensed owner purchases firearms legally and then sells or transfers them illegally. A practical approach to this problem is to strengthen current tracing measures in order to better track the flow of firearms when that happens.

That is why under this legislation firearms businesses will be required to retain, transfer, and inventory records related to non-restricted firearms. While that is common practice in the industry, we will be requiring it by law. Making it mandatory will better support criminal investigations, giving police an important tool to help identify suspects of firearms-related offences.

In addition, under Bill C-71 business records must include information like the reference number of the licence verification, the licence number of the transferee, and information on the firearm that is sold or transferred, thereby ensuring firearms are only being sold to those with a valid licence. Firearms businesses, not the government, would need to maintain these records for at least 20 years.

In 2016, 31% of recovered firearms from gun-related homicides did not require registration. That included long guns, for example, hunting rifles and shotguns. Case in point, guns are falling into the wrong hands and that is why we are taking concrete action on licence verification and tracing.

All of this is bolstered by proposals in Bill C-71 that will provide consistency in classification of firearms and strengthen requirements for the safe and legitimate transport of firearms.

The Government of Canada has no greater responsibility than keeping Canadians safe, including citizens of my riding of Cloverdale—Langley City. The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has clearly demonstrated that we will crack down on gun crime and criminal gang activities by recently announcing \$328 million over five years and \$100 million annually

thereafter to reduce gun crime across Canada. This announcement took place in Surrey and reflects our government's commitment to investing in measures that will reduce crime in our communities.

Our approach to public safety also includes investing in our youth so that we prevent them from coming into contact with guns and gang violence in the first place. In February, I had the opportunity to announce \$5 million over five years in federal funding for the national crime prevention strategy to help expand the YMCA's plus-one mentoring program. We are building on the proven success of this program of directing at-risk youth away from interactions with the justice system and ensuring they have the support and guidance they need.

Our approach is multi-pronged, recognizing that public safety is paramount.

The Minister of Public Safety also recently hosted a summit on gun and gang violence, bringing together partners from government, law enforcement, academia, community organizations, and mayors from some of Canada's largest urban centres to tackle gun and gang violence.

These measures, along with the legislation before us today, demonstrate a package of sensible reforms and actions flowing directly from the platform commitment we made in 2015. They are aimed at reversing the increasing trend of gun violence in our country and we are confident they will make a real and lasting difference. These are practical, targeted, and measured steps that, when taken together, will make our communities safer.

In making these changes, we have ensured our approaches are fair, effective, practical, and safe. We believe we have achieved that.

I am proud to give my full support to Bill C-71 and encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. My community will be grateful for the improvements we will see in the safety of our neighbourhoods.

• (1340)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, repeatedly the Liberals have maintained that this legislation would not recreate a gun registry. They say it is not a backdoor reassertion of the gun registry, yet we see in this legislation the word "registrar" and the words "reference number" a total of 28 times.

If there are no concerns about this being another registry, why did the Department of Justice recently ask for some clarification? It is raising concerns about the potential on reasonable search and seizure of the private information of law-abiding citizens. If it is not a concern, why would the Department of Justice have raised this red flag?

Government Orders

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate the statement that our government has made over and over again as we have looked at the bill. It is not an intention. It is not intended. It will not recreate the long gun registry and that is it. It will serve to strengthen the safety of our communities, our neighbourhoods, and the people of my community of Cloverdale, an area that will be pleased with these changes.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague. I represent a very large rural region, and I am a registered gun owner. I have just gone through the re-licensing process, and I was very pleased at the checks and balances that were in place. In fact, the RCMP called my wife to ensure that I should be someone who could have access to a gun. She thanked them for taking those checks, because the gun owners who I know want to make sure that guns are not falling into the hands of people who should not have them.

The gun owners I know follow the rules in terms of safe storage, of making sure of licensing, and when they deal with gun stores, those gun stores take their responsibility very seriously. What I am looking at here will codify what for many is a practice already in place to prevent the bad operators.

However, I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the changing of the designation of firearms and deciding what is restricted. I personally am very uncomfortable with the cabinet and politicians deciding what is an appropriate firearm in this country, when I believe it should be law enforcement.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the decision to take the power to decide what is a restricted weapon away from politicians and put it in the hands of the RCMP. Does he think that this will be a good process of reassuring the public that decisions are being made based on public safety, and not based on political interference?

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments, his responsible gun ownership, and for his question. To the point that he has raised, I have heard from many gun owners who, like my colleague, are responsible and take the proper precautions and safety measures. That is what we need in our country.

To the specific point, I had a concern when the previous government made changes and put the classification into the political process. Our law enforcement officers and agencies are trained to do this, to make informed decisions. I think that is where it should be. I am very pleased to see that Bill C-71 will make that change. I think that it is the right direction for us to be heading toward.

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a home with guns. My father was an avid hunter. In the conversations I have been able to have with folks in my riding about this, mostly the response I am getting is that it is balanced, except for those who have received an email from the party of the official opposition. One of the things that I am hearing is that they are really pleased with the best practices that we are providing within this legislation that are already happening with organizations like Canadian Tire and Cabela's.

I wonder if my colleague might speak to that a bit more.

● (1345)

Mr. John Aldag: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a great statement. Unfortunately, I have lost my train of thought.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure it is to stand and talk about Bill C-71.

Members across the way should not be surprised. Bill C-71 is yet another piece of legislation in which the Liberals are saying that we made a commitment prior to the last federal election and we are fulfilling that commitment. Every day we see initiatives by the government that reflect what I believe Canadians really want to see good and responsible government doing and taking action on.

Contrast that to my Conservative friends across the way, who prefer to keep their heads in the sand, who prefer to stay out of touch with what truly are the interests of Canadians. They prefer to keep on the course Stephen Harper was leading them on. Quite frankly, I would think Stephen Harper was still leading the Conservative Party, given the behaviour those members continually demonstrate when it comes to their positions on policy.

The Conservatives should be a little cautious on that note. They should try to deviate from the old Stephen Harper agenda and move toward an agenda that at least demonstrates they are concerned about what Canadians have to say about good, solid public policy.

In listening to my friends across the way, it seems to me that they want to vote against this piece of legislation. They are talking negatively about this legislation. I would suggest that if they were to canvass their constituents, they would find there is very good, solid support for the legislation. Why? The essence of this legislation is all about public safety.

That is really what Bill C-71 is all about. It helps to keep firearms out of the hands of criminals, as an example. That is a positive thing. Conservatives would find their constituents would support that. It helps police trace firearms used in the commission of a crime. Again, that is a positive thing. Conservative members would find that most of their constituents would support that. The key is they have to listen to what Canadians have to say.

We hear members across the way talk about law-abiding gun owners. The vast majority of law-abiding gun owners do an outstanding job. I commend them on the fantastic work they do to ensure there is responsible ownership. The majority of those individuals, the average law-abiding gun owner would recognize this legislation as good legislation. If we take out the spin from the Conservative Party, it would be most, if not all, Canadians. There might possibly be a few eccentrics, the ones who believe that AK37s should be in everyone's home, who might say no.

Government Orders

This is good legislation. Why are the Conservatives opposing this legislation? They say it is about the long gun registry. Imagine that. They continuously mention the back door. How much clearer can the government be? We have the Prime Minister, even before he was prime minister and now while he is prime minister, saying that we are not bringing in the long gun registry. It is as simple as that, end of story.

It does not matter how many times we say it on this side of the House, the Conservatives will continue to tell mistruths, untruths, on the issue. They will try to stir the pot to say that the Liberals are bringing in a gun registry, when it is just not true. The national long gun registry is done. It is gone. We are not bringing it back—

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I know the deputy House leader for the Liberals does not speak in this House very often, but he said in his last statement that the Conservatives in debate today have been telling “untruths” and “mistruths”. Both terms are unparliamentary. He is saying we are lying.

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Now I have heard “mistruths” from both sides today, and I have let it slide. If the House prefers, we can ban it and if anybody brings it up, we will stop it, regardless of which side says it.

Do I have the unanimous consent of the House to do that for the next 10 minutes while I am in the chair?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): That will be for the next 10 minutes.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member across the way said that I should withdraw my remarks. I withdraw my remarks, given that we are going to have unanimous consent where the official opposition and the NDP will not be able to use the word “untruth”. I think that is a positive thing.

Having said that, there is a reason we have to be very cautious with the Conservatives' approach to this legislation. The bill is actually proposing to obligate retailers to register serial numbers and so forth when they sell guns. That is something that has been taking place in the United States since 1968. We are asking Canadians to support this legislation. Let me be very specific. All it is asking in terms of a registry is to require firearms vendors to keep records of all firearms inventory sales to assist police in investigating firearms trafficking and other gun crimes. The Conservatives are against this. It is hard to believe. That is the link. That is why the Conservatives say it is about the long gun registry. They have not done their homework. It has been done in the United States since 1968 and before the long gun registry we were doing it in Canada. That means Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party had that as a part of their law. There was not one complaint. In fact, we had one of the Conservative members talk about the good old days of Brian Mulroney when he brought in the background checks. This legislation would enhance the background checks, and the Conservatives are against that.

The Conservatives are so far out on the right on this issue, yet they do not have any problem telling Canadians information that is just not true. They are telling Canadians that it has to do with the long gun registry. That is not true. It does not and members across the way know that. We would think they would be telling Canadians what is in the legislation because that is what Canadians really and truly want to hear.

The Minister of Public Safety has taken the time to do the consultations that are necessary. He has worked with the many different stakeholders. There has been a great deal of debate within our caucus. Members of our caucus, both rural and urban, stand together on this issue because we see this as responsible legislation, legislation that is all about public safety first and foremost. That is why I believe that the Conservative Party, just looking at this legislation alone, is more concerned about spin than it is about good legislation that would have a profound, positive impact on Canadians as a whole.

In part, this legislation deals with the repeal of Bill C-42. I was in opposition when the previous government brought in Bill C-42. It is interesting that the Conservatives chose to bring it in as separate legislation as opposed to including it in budget legislation. They wanted to highlight the fact that they love to debate anything about long guns. Anything that allows them to bring up the idea of a registry, the Conservatives are all in on it. I remember the debate when I was on the other side and talking about how they were loosening up, so that if people wanted to they could put a restricted weapon in the trunk of a car, drive all over the city of Winnipeg or rural Manitoba and then ultimately get to their destination without having to have a permit that would authorize them to do that.

Many of my constituents were concerned about that. It fell on completely deaf ears of the Conservative government because the Conservatives had a message that they wanted to communicate to Canadians. That message, in my opinion, was motivated purely because of politics. To get an appreciation of this issue, we have to understand why it is the Conservative Party over the years goes out of its way, and goes even further than the NRA in the United States does, on these issues. The NRA actually supports retailers' registering guns.

I see my time has run out, although I suspect I might get a question or two.

• (1355)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for that dramatic and incredibly loud speech, but let us focus on the facts. The facts are we do not have a problem in Canada today with lawful gun owners. The problem the government says it wants to address is gangs with guns in urban areas. Many of those individuals do not currently follow the law. In fact, there are a lot of illegal firearms being used.

Could the member explain to me how a new law would impact on the problem of gangs with guns who do not follow laws today?

Statements by Members

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for the introduction of the bill said that it is all about public safety. Public safety is number one. When we think of public safety, not only does it impact gangs in urban centres, but it also has an impact in rural communities. When we talk about public safety and the enabling aspects of this legislation, the good news is that it deals with both urban and rural communities. That is a good thing.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Ajax, an incredibly tragic triple homicide took place. I had the unfortunate occasion to talk to a constituent whose daughter, Lindsay, was murdered by an individual who purchased a gun legally. This individual had a history of violence, yet was able to purchase a gun.

I can talk about so many elements of how this bill protects public safety, but on the background checks particularly, often in domestic violence situations a woman does not come out about the violence in that situation until much later. If an individual has a history of violence, it may not have been before that five years when that violence occurred. Somebody who commits a violent act in the past is unfortunately very likely to commit that act in the future. In the case of Lindsay and others who were murdered, that individual is not part of a gang network and does not have access to illegal guns. The individual goes to a legal gun shop, purchases that gun, and kills somebody.

Does the member believe, as I do, that these background checks that former Conservative member James Moore believed in are essential to make sure another case like Lindsay's does not happen again?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at expanding beyond the five years, it is an incredibly positive step forward. Even from the perspective of the Conservatives, they do not seem to be criticizing that aspect as much, because I suspect some are supportive of it. I would suggest that they should support the entire piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, as my friend has pointed out with that particular individual, there are too many Canadians in all regions of our country having to go through situations similar to my friend's. That is one of the reasons it is so important that we recognize the value of this legislation. I would hope for, and I would like to see, unanimous support for it.

The Speaker: The hon. member will have a very short time following question period for the rest of the questions and comments following his remarks. He will have a minute and a half, perhaps time enough for one question and answer.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

2018 PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate a talented constituent from my riding of North Vancouver, Emily Young.

Emily recently won two medals at the Paralympic Games in Pyeongchang: silver and bronze medals in cross country skiing. All North Vancouverites, and all Canadians, are so very proud of Emily and what she has accomplished.

If people know anything about Emily's background, they will know that these medals are but one of the latest chapters in a lifetime of outstanding personal accomplishment. Emily's achievements are all the more remarkable as this was Emily's first Paralympic Games.

I congratulate Emily. The drive, passion, and perseverance she has shown as a wrestler, a skier, a biathlete, a teammate, and as an athlete are an inspiration to all Canadians.

I look forward to following her story, wherever it takes her and wherever she takes it.

* * *

● (1400)

VOLUNTEERISM

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, April 13, just before the start of National Volunteer Week, I will be hosting my Second Annual Barrie—Innisfil Volunteer Awards.

Last year, I honoured 11 recipients from across the riding for their devotion and dedication to the residents of Barrie—Innisfil. This year I will be honouring Margaretta Papp-Belayneh who recently passed away. Ms. Papp-Belayneh was an outstanding advocate for the disabled in our community, and I had the pleasure of working with her while I was a Barrie city councillor.

Residents of Barrie—Innisfil have until Monday, April 3 to nominate an outstanding citizen for recognition. Nominations are being accepted through my website or by downloading a form from the website and emailing it in.

I look forward to celebrating the youth, seniors, women, men, and service groups that serve our community with pride, distinction, and dedication at the Barrie Public Library ceremony on April 13.

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WORLD THEATRE DAY

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 27, we celebrate World Theatre Day.

Canadians enjoy live theatre in communities large and small, including in my riding of Charlottetown. Locals, tourists, and Canadians from coast to coast come to the Confederation Centre of the Arts to experience high-quality productions such as *Anne of Green Gables—The Musical*.

[Translation]

Theatre makes our communities vibrant and inclusive places. It helps us to reflect, express ourselves, and develop our creativity. Sharing our stories helps us better understand one another. It is a space where we can examine our societal issues and explore solutions.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

In recognition of our love of theatre, I would like to celebrate our artists and creators, and all those who contribute to engage Canadians through theatre in their communities.

I hope all Canadians take the time to enjoy a theatre presentation in their community on World Theatre Day.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recently hosted a community town hall to hear from my constituents on the housing crisis in Vancouver. Passionate, thoughtful, sensible, and poignant points were made by a wide variety of residents.

I heard how the housing crisis had torn a massive hole in our social fabric. I heard how it had demoralized a generation, fractured families, hollowed out neighbourhoods, and threatened our economic foundation. There was a clear message that far too many folks had lost the ability to live, work, and prosper in the city they loved.

The housing crisis is real. It must be addressed. It must be remedied. We must chart a better, fairer course, one that works for everyone, not just the wealthy and privileged.

The Liberal government cannot call this a crisis and delay funding for years at the same time. We need federal leadership now to ensure that affordable, secure housing is available for every Canadian.

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CAPE BRETON VOICES

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a group of passionate and determined women in my riding, called the Cape Breton Voices. They came together on March 15 in partnership with Equal Voice to host their first panel on women in politics.

In the panel, 10 women, representing different levels of government, put aside their political stripes and shared stories of their personal experiences since entering politics, and the issues that surrounded women's involvement in the political process. As our Prime Minister has said time and time again, if we want to change politics, we need to add women.

Aside from hosting panels, Cape Breton Voices regularly speaks up on topics such as inclusion, business, immigration, governance, accountability, and of course its communities.

Cape Breton has a long history of strong women. I commend the women of Cape Breton Voices for uniting together to stand for Cape Breton and all it has to offer the world.

* * *

*[Translation]***HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND CHILD PROSTITUTION**

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, human trafficking and child prostitution has been a growing problem in Canada in recent years. Innocent young girls are falling victim to pimps who destroy their lives. In order to address this serious problem, all parties

unanimously passed the former Conservative government's Bill C-452, but the current government is refusing to sign the order in council for the coming into force of this bill. Instead, the Liberals introduced their own revised and watered down version of the bill, Bill C-38. Since then, there has been a growing number of victims, making this government complicit in this unacceptable plague on society.

Like all Canadians, I am outraged by the rise in the phenomenon of pimping in Canada and even more so by the fact that this so-called feminist government has stood idly by and allowed criminals to continue to destroy the lives of the young women it claims to want to protect and help reach their full potential. The government has a responsibility to take immediate action to help victims. It is a matter—

● (1405)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Jean.

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PARLIAMENTARY POET LAUREATE

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 18, 2018, Georgette LeBlanc became the new parliamentary poet laureate. Today, March 27, we celebrate her arrival on Parliament Hill. Although she grew up in Baie Sainte-Marie, Nova Scotia, she was born in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. I am particularly proud of that, so I just had to point it out.

Ms. Leblanc's rich artistic journey will help her to set the quality standard for Canadian poetry, which will help this literary form to thrive. She is the eighth parliamentary poet laureate and she will be responsible for writing poems for Parliament to use at official ceremonies. On behalf of the people of the riding of Saint-Jean, I am honoured to congratulate our new parliamentary poet laureate.

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*[English]***HONG FOOK MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION**

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in any given year, one in five Canadians will personally experience a mental health issue or illness. Immigrants and refugees in Canada are under more stress than people born in Canada.

Since 1982, the Hong Fook Mental Health Association has helped well over 100,000 newcomers manage mental issues. Many former clients and their family members are now among its 300 long-time volunteers. Hong Fook's 64 staff members speak seven different languages and provide culturally sensitive services within the greater Toronto area.

Statements by Members

I salute this valuable institution for keeping newcomers mentally healthy and happy for 36 years. The name says it all. In the original language, *hong fook* means healthy and happy.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the longer the Liberal government is in power it is becoming clearer that it considers anyone who disagrees with it, including women with a different point of view, to be beneath contempt.

That is what the Minister of Finance said at committee yesterday. Anybody who challenges or asks tough questions about a Liberal policy is “a neanderthal”. It is the same old Liberal arrogance all over again and it is more of the same fake feminism for which the Liberals are gaining a global reputation.

Women in Canada have the right to speak their minds without being insulted for it by the Minister of Finance. The minister should apologize to the member he insulted and to all Canadian women for his ridiculous and insulting comments.

* * *

ROGER ANDERSON

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Roger Anderson who tragically passed away. As our chairman of Durham Region, Roger was both a colleague for many years when I served on regional council, the police services board, and also a friend.

It is impossible in 60 seconds to summarize the contribution that somebody makes in public life, but I think I can say on behalf of all members of the House, that we recognize that living a public life is tough. It is hard on families and it means being away a lot. Roger, over the course of his life, whether as a councillor, or deputy mayor or as our regional chairman, gave so much to our community and did not have the opportunity to retire and be able to enjoy time alone with his family.

I am sad that Roger's passing has happened. As a businessman, as a politician, as a policeman, he did so much for Durham.

We remember Roger and thank him for his service.

* * *

●(1410)

FIRE ON DEER ISLAND

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House today to recognize the residents of New Brunswick Southwest for their overwhelming support to the community of Deer Island following a devastating fire at the island's main employer, Paturel International, on March 1st.

On Firefighters on the Hill Day, I want to recognize and thank the first responders in my riding, as well as those across the country, who act so bravely and swiftly to keep us safe.

I would like to thank the management of Paturel International for its support to its employees; Darrell Tidd, a lead hand who

volunteered to act as the official spokesperson; area employers, including Connors Brothers, Northern Harvest, and Cooke Aquaculture that offered employment to displaced workers; Service Canada; and the provincial government and agencies.

Despite these difficult circumstances, the kindness, resiliency, and community spirit demonstrated by everyone has created the most positive outcome possible.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a citizen who has made an outstanding contribution to the Calgary Jewish community, interfaith relations, education, and to the advancement of Canada-Israel relations.

After 14 years, Judy Shapiro is retiring from her role as assistant executive director of the Calgary Jewish Federation. Judy also worked with Calgary's Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

While steering her community through many troubling incidents of anti-Semitism, Judy's work in human rights and Holocaust education built strong, enduring bridges between many diverse communities.

Calgary's Jewish community has been honoured to have Judy as their champion. We are grateful for her legacy of making our city a better place.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadian firefighters came to Ottawa to discuss how we can help save lives in the event of a fire. The bravery that these men and women show, day after day, is a testament to their courage and their desire to protect Canadians.

[English]

This bravery has come with sacrifice and we must remember the 1,300 firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty since 1848. Having met with both fire departments in Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge, it is clear that the well-being of their members should be a priority.

Since the last election, we committed to looking after the families of fallen firefighters and first responders across Canada and created the memorial grant program, which will take effect in the upcoming fiscal year.

[Translation]

We must also remember that first responders may face traumatic events every single day.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

I thank all firefighters and first responders, past and present, for their service.

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PINAWA NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to voice concerns about the current plan to decommission the nuclear research reactor in Pinawa, Manitoba, located just 500 metres from the Winnipeg River. When the reactor was built, the federal government promised to restore the site to greenfield conditions upon decommissioning. The original plan would do that by removing the contaminated reactor parts from the site. However, the plan has changed.

The federal government converted this important project to a for-profit job and awarded it to the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, a conglomerate of multinational companies, some with a record of nuclear safety breaches around the globe.

The environmental assessment process was gutted by the Harper government and left licensing to a regulator some saw as too cozy with industry. Most important, to save money, CNL has decided not to remove the contaminated reactor parts but to bury and grout them in place instead.

If the concrete fails some time in the future, it will be impossible to safely remove the contaminated material. For the sake of future generations in Manitoba, I urge the government to reconsider before a decision is taken that no one can reverse.

* * *

*[Translation]***ARNAUD BELTRAME**

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 23, France experienced another senseless terrorist attack, in Carcassonne and Trèbes. Four people were killed and 15 others were injured after crossing paths with a despicable radicalized Islamic terrorist.

After assaulting someone in a car, the terrorist took people hostage in a grocery store. At this point, French police officer Arnaud Beltrame committed an extraordinary act of bravery. Arnaud Beltrame traded places with a female hostage, putting his life in the hands of this dangerous madman. In doing so, Mr. Beltrame saved a life, but he sacrificed his own. Arnaud Beltrame is a hero, and he must be honoured, not only in his home country, but also here in Canada.

The world is changing. Every day, thousands of men and women in uniform confront unknown and intangible dangers. These men and women, whether they work for the RCMP, for provincial or municipal police forces, within our armed forces, or even here, for the Parliamentary Protective Services, are prepared to step up and deal with the worst case scenario.

On behalf of my colleagues in the House of Commons, I salute Arnaud Beltrame for his sacrifice. He will not be forgotten.

● (1415)

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to rise in recognition of Development and Peace's 50th anniversary. Through its community development and humanitarian aid projects, the organization has enhanced Canada's presence in the world.

Development and Peace helps vulnerable populations worldwide by promoting universal values, such as social justice and intercultural harmony. Much like our government, whose international aid is informed by feminist policy that promotes gender equality, Development and Peace firmly believes that women play a critical role in making peace and economic justice a reality.

I am proud to see that our government's actions are consistent with the Development and Peace vision for a more just and accountable world. For example, we created an ombudsperson to monitor the activity of Canadian companies abroad and boosted our international aid funding by \$2 billion.

I am so impressed by Canada's dedicated, 13,000-member-strong organization, Development and Peace, especially the dynamic team located in the Plateau neighbourhood of Sainte-Foy. I thank them for being an inspiration to me and to all of us. I look forward to seeing them again in our Campanile Street office.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***ETHICS**

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister broke the law when he took an illegal trip to the Aga Khan's private island. It is totally unacceptable that he is now refusing to tell Canadians what additional gifts he received during that trip.

What was the unacceptable gift and what is the Prime Minister doing about it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members across the way know, I worked with the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner for months last year. I answered all her questions, I was completely open and I provided all the information she asked for. Then, I not only accepted her recommendations, but I also followed through on them.

Canadians take comfort in knowing that we have an Ethics Commissioner who rises above the partisanship we see in the House when ruling on these matters.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these transparency rules exist for a reason. Not only did the Prime Minister accept an illegal trip to a private island, he went there and received additional gifts from someone who is actively lobbying the government. Those are the facts.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister come clean and tell Canadians, did he return those illegal and unacceptable gifts before he could be lobbied again?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I worked with the Ethics Commissioner throughout last year, answering all her questions, putting forward a full disclosure, full transparency. She made a report, which we accepted. We followed every single recommendation she made within that report.

As often happens at holiday times, when we are with family and friends, we exchange gifts. If the member opposite really wants to know, I gave him a sweater and he gave me an overnight bag.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the fact that he accepted a gift in the first place that broke the ethics laws.

[*Translation*]

The problem is that the media was offered a briefing in India that was organized by the Prime Minister's Office as a distraction from a disastrous trip where the Prime Minister rubbed elbows with a convicted terrorist. However, yesterday, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety suggested that the information was classified.

Can the Prime Minister tell us who in his office helped provide classified information to the media?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at no time did members of our public service provide classified information to the media, nor would they. The hon. member across the way knows that full well.

The odd thing is that the Leader of the Opposition, who could get a classified briefing on everything that happened, refuses that briefing because he does not want to know the truth. He just wants to keep playing political games, just as he is doing right now.

• (1420)

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister allowed a convicted terrorist to attend an official Government of Canada event in India.

Someone in the Prime Minister's Office then ordered the national security adviser to tell the media that the Indian government was responsible for this embarrassment. Yesterday, the Prime Minister and the public safety minister suggested that the content of that media briefing was classified.

Can the Prime Minister inform us who in his office helped orchestrate the release of classified information to the media?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, at no point did members of the public service ever reveal classified information to the media, nor would they.

The issue is that the Leader of the Opposition so wants to be able to play political games with this issue that he plugs his ears, refuses to know the truth, and continually refuses to get a full classified

briefing on this situation. The only reason he is doing that is so that he can continue to play petty politics instead of getting to the truth.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only reason why the Prime Minister is offering me a briefing of classified information in my capacity as a privy councillor is to prevent me from asking questions about his disastrous trip to India and the cover-up that he helped orchestrate.

All we are asking for is that the same information that has been provided to the media be provided to the House of Commons. The Prime Minister has just affirmed that classified information was not provided to the media. Why, then, can that same information not be provided to the House?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, only Stephen Harper's Conservative Party would think that giving information to the media is somehow hiding information from Canadians.

The question is: why does the Leader of the Opposition not want to know the truth?

Canadians understand that when it comes to intelligence issues and security issues, there is a need for classified information.

We have offered the member opposite to know the truth, but he prefers to play political games.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ETHICS

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, allow me to clarify something for the Prime Minister. The Ethics Commissioner's report was not a series of recommendations; it was a penalty for violating the Conflict of Interest Act.

Now, we know that the Prime Minister received a gift on his all-expenses-paid visit with the Aga Khan. Today, the commissioner's office said that this gift cannot be listed on the public registry because it was declared unacceptable. Ultimately, we can deduce that this gift was worth more than \$1,000 and that it was not simply a bag or a sweater.

What gift did the Prime Minister receive from the Aga Khan?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have answered this question here in the House and also to the Ethics Commissioner directly.

The very reason we have an Ethics Commissioner in the House is so that he or she can resolve and examine issues far away from the partisanship we see here in the House. Canadians can know that I worked with the Ethics Commissioner, that I answered all of her questions, and that, yes, I followed all of her recommendations to avoid these situations in the future.

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, the report did not contain recommendations, but rather a penalty.

It would be nice if the Prime Minister would stop hiding behind public servants and backroom, closed door discussions. In his open letter to Canadians, he said himself, “I am committed to leading an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards”.

Accepting a gift that the Ethics Commissioner considers to be not allowed and unacceptable does not fall within my definition of “highest ethical standards”. We are still waiting for the open and accountable government the Prime Minister promised to Canadians.

Has he forgotten the basic principles of ethics that should be guiding his government's behaviour?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to demonstrate the openness and transparency Canadians were looking forward to after 10 years under Stephen Harper. We remain open and accountable because we want to convince Canadians that we are building a better country with more opportunities for our young people and our seniors. We are delivering on our promises and doing what Canadians have asked us to do.

• (1425)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this old city on the Rideau has heard some pretty outrageous whoppers over the decades defending the loopholes for graft and pork-barrel lobbying, and rum-bottle politics, so it is not often we hear a new one.

Kudos to the Prime Minister for coming up with a new loophole. When he accepts a gift from a billionaire lobbyist like the Aga Khan, if it is appropriate, he is compelled to report it, but since it was inappropriate, he told us that he did not have to report it. Oh, come on.

Is that his new standard, that the door to the PMO is open as long as the lobbyists bring the gifts?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner so that Canadians can be reassured that above the personal attacks that happen in the House of Commons, the wild accusations and the mudslinging, there is someone to look into the facts of the matter, gather those facts together, make a report, and make recommendations.

As I said, we fully accept the report of the ethics commissioner and have moved forward to ensure it never happens again and that we fulfill all of her recommendations.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Okay, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of loopholes that are big enough to fly the Aga Khan's private helicopter through, I note that the Prime Minister's beach buddy on that trip also did not register his inappropriate gift.

It is a simple thing. All members of Parliament have to register all travel that is paid for by lobbyists and third parties, yet the member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl did not bother to register his trip to billionaires island. What is with that? Were they sharing loophole ideas when they were hanging out on the beach?

Oral Questions

Why does the Prime Minister have such a low standard for accountability for his caucus?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we report gifts, when we report issues and actions, we report to the Ethics Commissioner. I sat down, answered all the Ethics Commissioner's questions, and disclosed fully everything that happened, and she made her report. She did the work that she is asked to do by this House and by Canadians; that is, get to the nub of the matter, get to the heart of the facts, rather than fall into the partisan mudslinging that, unfortunately, characterizes this House.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for weeks we have been asking, as parliamentarians, for the same briefing the media received from the government's national security adviser. For weeks we have been denied. In fact, last week we had to sit here while the government and the Liberals stood up for over 20 hours protecting the Prime Minister from our being allowed to hear what the media received. Yesterday we were told it is classified. All of a sudden, the media must be part of the Privy Council, if it was classified. Today the Keystone cops seem to have changed their story. Why cannot we, as parliamentarian, hear the same—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the media have already reported everything extensively, and there was no classified information. As senior Conservative bloggers have pointed out, the key issue is the broader and classified context around the Atwal matter. We have offered the Leader of the Opposition a full classified briefing, but so far, he has declined, so the essential question is, why is he choosing to remain deliberately uninformed and misinformed?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): This is incredibly serious, Mr. Speaker. The government sent out the national security adviser to the media to float out a story that India was responsible for the government's absolutely disastrous India trip. We want to know what the media were told. Now the public safety minister is saying, “Just read the newspaper and you're fine.” No. We are elected by Canadians to get an answer from the government, and it should answer the question.

• (1430)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the point clearly is this. Why would the Leader of the Opposition decline to get the full story and prefer to operate on bits and snippets of misinformation, or disinformation, or incomplete information? The government has made the offer to the Leader of the Opposition to be fully informed of all of the context around this situation so that he can, in fact, function in an appropriate leadership role. He has declined, and the only conceivable reason is that he wants to play a political game.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister confirmed today that the information Daniel Jean gave to the media was not confidential.

If that is the case, why does the Prime Minister refuse to allow Mr. Jean to give the same briefing to parliamentarians? Is there something in it that would embarrass him?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition needs to have is all the facts. All the facts have been offered to the Leader of the Opposition. His response thus far is that he would rather have partial facts, incomplete facts, or inaccurate facts. If he wants the full story, he can have it. If he declines to get the full story, one can only conclude that he has a partisan reason for turning it down.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise today. If members have not read the Standing Orders, I recommend them to the members, because they do include provisions about not interrupting, and they should take those seriously, because I am getting tired of it, and so is the public.

The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is evading our question. He is aiding and abetting the Prime Minister on this issue. It is now clear that a briefing was given to reporters, so it would be perfectly normal for the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security to get the same briefing from Daniel Jean.

Why does the minister insist on defending the Prime Minister's indefensible behaviour?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): What I am defending, Mr. Speaker, is the entire and complete description of the facts. What the opposition is declining, or refusing to do, is to accept a full briefing that would provide to the Leader of the Opposition all the facts and all the context so that he can make a full, informed judgment of what transpired. If he declines to be fully informed, if he prefers to operate on bits and tidbits of partial information, one has to be pretty suspicious of the motive.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. On February 22, the Prime Minister's Office arranged a briefing with the media and the national security adviser. Today the Prime Minister confirmed that it was not classified.

Today you ruled that MPs are entitled to hear from Mr. Jean, but there has been no order of Parliament, because the Liberals are blocking the public safety committee.

When will the Prime Minister end this cover-up and allow Mr. Jean to testify?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first step in any

process is for the Leader of the Opposition to fully inform himself of the facts. That opportunity is available to him. He has, so far, turned it down.

To fully inform the Leader of the Opposition of the full context of the Atwal situation, we have offered the Leader of the Opposition that classified briefing. He has turned it down so far. That amounts to wilful ignorance and irresponsibility. The Conservatives are setting themselves up to be pawns of other interests.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals are continuing to block us from asking Mr. Jean, the national security adviser, questions, I will ask the Prime Minister. The CBC story that ran after Mr. Jean's briefing to journalists said that he told journalists to ask questions about whether the Indian government invited Jaspal Atwal to the Prime Minister's event in India.

Did the Prime Minister's Office ask the national security adviser to plant a story about the Indian government to deflect from the Liberals' terrible India trip?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all have the utmost respect and trust for Daniel Jean. He has served governments of all political stripes with honour and distinction for 35 years. For Stephen Harper, he was the deputy minister of foreign affairs. He spoke for the former prime minister at the United Nations. In all of his roles, Daniel Jean has always protected Canada's vital interests, including the proper management of classified information.

* * *

● (1435)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning the environment commissioner released a historic report on the combined audits of the climate action of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. She reported that more than half of all governments have no reduction targets. Only two are on track to meet targets. Most governments have failed to assess climate risks or deliver adaptation plans, including federal departments and agencies. She reported that Environment Canada has failed to provide leadership and is failing to measure, monitor, or report publicly.

When will the government provide real accountability and establish an independent commission to advise, audit, and report on progress?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reports of the commissioner are very important to highlight the status of issues and to highlight issues that require attention. We welcome this report. However, let us be clear about what she said.

First, she said that most audits, including almost all of the federal audit, were done before the achievement of the pan-Canadian framework.

Second, she said that the pan-Canadian framework represented significant progress, and she looked forward to seeing its implementation.

Oral Questions

Third, she commented that this was one of the best climate plans that Canada has ever had. We agree. We have a plan to achieve our commitments, and we are committed to doing so.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): The member missed the point that the government will miss its targets.

[*Translation*]

Can you tell me, what is the point of having greenhouse gas reduction targets when they are not taken seriously? The report released by the environment commissioner this morning is damning. It gives the Liberal government a failing grade. The few measures put in place to fulfill our objectives fail to meet our international commitments, and the Liberals are on track to miss even the weak targets set by Stephen Harper's Conservatives.

What is it going to take for the Liberal government to swing into action, meet our commitments, and fight climate change?

The Speaker: I want to remind the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that he is to address his comments to the Chair. I think he is well aware of this. I trust he will not fail to do so again.

[*English*]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been actively implementing the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, and we are starting to see results, putting Canada on a path to meet its emissions reduction targets under the Paris agreement. As was published in December 2017 in Canada's third biennial report to the United Nations, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be 232 megatonnes lower than was expected in early 2016. This decline relates directly to the achievement of the pan-Canadian framework. It is the biggest improvement in Canada's emissions outlook since the reporting began. It is widespread across all sectors. It reflects the breadth, depth, and success of the pan-Canadian framework.

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[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the Prime Minister's catastrophic trip to India, the director of national security, Daniel Jean, organized a briefing for journalists on what has now become known as the Atwal affair. Oddly enough, yesterday, the Minister of Public Safety indicated that this information had magically been classified as confidential.

Why is the Prime Minister refusing to give MPs and Canadians the same information that he gave journalists on Parliament Hill? What is he trying to hide?

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what has been offered to the Leader of the Opposition is a complete briefing, including classified information that would put this entire situation in full context. The Leader of the Opposition is so far declining that offer, but he needs that full context in order to be totally informed. If he

would prefer not to be totally informed, then one can only assume that he wants to play politics with this information.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what constitutes a confidential document for the Government of Canada? A confidential document is one that contains information that, if compromised, could cause injury to the national interest, defence and maintenance of the social, political, and economic stability of Canada.

I would therefore like to repeat my question to the Prime Minister. Why did the Prime Minister give journalists information that was classified as confidential and that started a diplomatic conflict with India, and why is he refusing to give that same information to MPs and Canadians? What is he trying to hide?

● (1440)

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know of no classified information revealed by the national security adviser, but to fully inform the Leader of the Opposition about the full context of the Atwal situation, we have offered him a classified briefing with all the essential details. So far he has declined to receive that information, and that amounts to wilful ignorance and irresponsibility. The Conservatives are risking putting themselves as pawns of other interests.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if what the public safety minister said was right, the media got no classified information, but they could not report the story, because they did not have the full context. Without the full context, they would be spreading misinformation and bits and snippets of false information.

Would he not say that without giving Parliament this full context, in fact it is the public safety minister who is spreading misinformation and playing partisan games?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in case the opposition missed it, the media have already reported all of that information very extensively, and there was no classified information included.

I would point out, as senior Conservative bloggers have done in the last short while, that the key issue is the broader and classified context around the Atwal matter. We have offered the Leader of the Opposition that full classified briefing, but so far, he has declined. The essential question is why the Conservative opposition is choosing to remain deliberately ignorant.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given what the public safety minister just said, how is the media supposed to know what was classified information and what was not?

Oral Questions

They sent out the national security adviser, who has some of the most confidential information in our country, to the media. They did not say what was right. If they could not distinguish that, how could the media put forward a true story at all? The only person here who is admitting to anything is that the PMO put out the public safety adviser of our country to spin for the Prime Minister.

This person needs to come to committee. He needs to come clear, or how is Canada supposed—

The Speaker: The Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me make it abundantly clear that we have the utmost respect and trust for Daniel Jean. He has served governments in this country with distinction and honour for over 35 years, and there is no question about his integrity or his dedication to Canada.

The hon. member seems to be bewildered, and I think the problem is that she does not have the facts. We are offering to give her leader the entire classified briefing so that she can have the facts and end her stunning bewilderment.

The Speaker: Order. I encourage all members, including ministers, to be restrained in their use of language. I encourage members to listen to both sides, whether they like it or not.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been asking important questions about the infrastructure bank for months. To date, the government has been unable to answer them. What is more, appointments to the board are only raising more questions. The government had announced a transparent selection process based on merit, but half of the board members have close ties to the Liberal Party.

How can this government explain the cronyism that has beset the appointment process at the infrastructure bank?

• (1445)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure bank is an important part of our \$186 billion infrastructure plan to build sustainable, strong, and inclusive communities.

The group of leaders on the board of directors has a great deal of experience and can help the bank attract private capital in order to build 21st century infrastructure. Let us be clear: board members were not accepted or rejected because of their political affiliation.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, any appointment process that makes sure mostly Liberals are appointed is not fair, open, or transparent in any way. These appointments of Liberal insiders and supporters is just old-fashioned cronyism at the Infrastructure Bank. While Canadians are waiting for infrastructure projects that are years overdue, while Canadians wait for housing, Liberals are stacking the board with wealthy supporters.

Why does the government not put Canadians' interests ahead of the Liberal Party and replace the discredited Infrastructure Bank with public investment in infrastructure?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat this in English. The Canada Infrastructure Bank is an important part of our government's 12-year \$186-billion plan to build strong, sustainable, and inclusive communities across Canada, as we promised to do during the last election. The diverse group of leaders who compose the board bring a wide range of experience to the bank and attract private capital to invest alongside public dollars in building more infrastructure in the public interest.

Let me be clear that political affiliation was neither a qualifying nor a disqualifying criterion for prospective board members. The member will note that within that board is someone who had made a donation to the NDP.

* * *

SCIENCE

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Markham—Thornhill, I am fortunate to be able to meet with scientists and researchers at Seneca College and York University to see the incredible work they are doing.

After 10 years of stalled funding and neglect, in 2016 with our first budget, our government immediately began rebuilding Canadian science and research with the largest investment in fundamental research in over a decade.

[*Translation*]

Can the Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities inform the House of the next steps that our government will take to support science, research, and innovation in Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science and Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Markham—Thornhill for her strong support of science.

After muzzling scientists and ignoring evidence for 10 years, the Conservatives are back to attacking Canadian science. Last week, the Conservatives voted against funding for scientists and researchers to do their important work for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Our government is committed to supporting science in Canada to improve Canadians' lives.

[*English*]

That is why budget 2018 announced the largest investment in discovery science in Canadian history.

*Oral Questions***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, forgive me for being stunningly bewildered, but the minister has said today that there is no need for the national security adviser to testify before a committee for the reason that the media has reported everything the national security adviser told the reporters. This just in: a very esteemed senior individual journalist, David Akin, has just said, “I had one of those briefings from the 'senior government official'. At several points...the official told me stuff he said I couldn't print.”

Let us give up the pretense. Let us give up the—

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Order. That is not quite the same as recognizing someone in the gallery.

The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the opposition would like to interrogate Mr. Akin, but the point is that the whole classified context and detail has been offered to the official opposition. Members of the official opposition continue to refuse to receive that information. One can only assume that they want to continue to play a political game rather than get informed of all the facts and not just from Mr. Akin, but directly from the senior officials of the Government of Canada.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the opposition House leader not to yell when someone else has the floor. As all members should know, the time to speak is when a member has the floor, and I give that now to the hon. member for Milton.

* * *

• (1450)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a troubling history that every time its members get pushed on questions that show the fact that they do not have a good answer, they resort to name calling.

Yesterday at the finance committee I was questioning the minister with respect to his own record on promoting women in senior positions. In response the minister said I was one of those people he needed to drag with him and I was a neanderthal. It is unacceptable language. Could the minister please clarify what he was trying to say?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was at the committee meeting yesterday. It is unfortunate that the opposition members make such personal attacks, when they have an opportunity to discuss budget 2018 and provide constructive criticism.

They do everything but talk about the budget while we are tackling the following problems: in Canada, a woman earns an average of 69 cents for every dollar earned by a man; there is still much to do to achieve pay equity; and women's participation in the economy is not on par with men's.

If I have the opportunity to reply to a second question, I would be pleased to list the very concrete measures in budget 2018 that will address these challenges.

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no attack in saying the facts. One, the minister never once sought to ensure he had proper representation on his private sector board. Two, the finance department is woefully lacking women in senior positions by 4:11. Three, in his own office there is only one woman who is a member of his senior staff. That is his choice.

I have every right to ask questions that make the government uncomfortable and I am going to continue to do it whether those members like it or not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we often see in the House a type of selective amnesia. I would like to remind the House that the cabinet of the previous prime minister, Stephen Harper, was far from gender-balanced. That is the example set by the Conservatives for Canadians.

Budget 2018 provides for shared parental leave in order to foster more sharing of family responsibilities and to ease women's return to work, because that is what is important to Canadians. This represents an investment of \$1.2 billion over five years. The Conservatives should have thought of that in their 10 years in power. This works in Quebec and Sweden, and it is only one of many measures that will foster true gender equality.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only parliamentarian who was subject to a personal attack yesterday in committee was the member for Milton. That is the truth. We did not know that these people could be aggressive towards women. What we now know is that they are poor managers and, even worse, secretive.

Today, iPolitics reported that the President of the Treasury Board decided to set aside \$7 billion in the budget to be used when he deems it necessary, and to not provide any follow-up information. This is anything but transparent.

Why is the President of the Treasury Board being so secretive?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to answer this question to point out that this government is increasing transparency and accountability. For the first time in recent history, the main estimates will include all budget measures for the upcoming fiscal year. I would draw the hon. member's attention to the budget. In fact, funding in the main estimates will be tied to a detailed table A2.11 from the budget outlining exactly how much will go to each initiative in each department and they will only be able to spend the money on each specific initiative.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: I am not sure if the member for Edmonton West heard me. I cannot imagine that his constituents think that he should be talking when he does not have the floor. Perhaps they could tell him otherwise.

The hon. member for Saskatoon West.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, budget 2018 was a disappointment with very little new money to help Canadians find safe, affordable housing.

The \$15.9-billion co-investment fund announced last fall is supposed to start accepting applications in less than a week, but so far, there are no details. Meanwhile, our existing rental stock is aging, and communities are waiting anxiously to make repairs and build new affordable housing, but so far there is nothing.

How much longer will Canadians have to wait?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 22, we were very proud to launch the first ever national housing strategy. Canadians had been waiting a long time for this strategy. We had the fortune of building it with a large number of partners, and with the support of many organizations. We are very proud of the result. We are even more proud of the fact that over the next 10 years, we will work very hard with a number of partners to make sure that more Canadians have access to affordable housing in this great country.

•(1455)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister vacations in the mansions of his millionaire friends, first nations in northern Manitoba are facing a housing crisis. Tataskweyak Cree Nation is facing a shortage of 300 homes and Sagkeeng First Nation is facing a shortage of 250 homes, yet budget 2018 commits to enough money to build one house per reserve, if they are lucky.

The shortage of housing on first nations leads to health and well-being challenges for these communities. Communities are trying to find solutions and yet the federal government is not at the table.

Why is the government ignoring the housing crisis on first nations across Canada?

Mr. Don Rusnak (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to co-developing distinctions-based indigenous housing strategies with our first nations, Inuit, and Métis partners. This is why budget 2018 invests \$600 million over three years for first nations housing, \$500 million over 10 years for Métis Nation housing, and \$400 million over 10 years for an Inuit-led housing plan. This funding is a significant step toward addressing the housing needs in indigenous communities.

Our government is committed to closing the unacceptable housing gap for indigenous communities.

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Conservatives undertook consultations that Liberals refused to, and we led the charge against the Prime Minister's summer jobs values test. While Liberals started attacking us, now they are starting to back down, but that will not be good enough for the kids this year, for charities that feed the hungry this year, and for churches that provide child care this year.

Why are the Liberals waiting until next year to do the right thing?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake that the actions taken by this government were actions that would defend the rights of all Canadians. Women's groups, immigrants, and the gay, lesbian, transgendered, queer community fought long, hard battles to earn those rights, and they expect their government to stand and defend them. I am proud to be part of a government that did exactly that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the Liberal Party proves that they cannot be trusted to defend the rights of Canadians.

The Canada summer jobs program was working well under the previous Conservative government. This government plowed straight ahead, instead of taking the advice of the official opposition, which showed that the values test violated Canadians' fundamental rights.

Since the Minister of Labour now admits that her values test was inappropriate, why does the Prime Minister not ask her to get rid of it immediately instead of waiting for the next election?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the benefits of being in this House for 18 years is that one can remember back to when the Conservatives wanted to cut the program entirely, but Mike Savage, Maria Minna, and the Liberal caucus fought hard to make sure that the program was reinstated. The Conservatives got dragged back into the program, and then put no more money into it from 2006 on.

We doubled the amount of money. We doubled the number of people—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. parliamentary secretary gets everybody excited.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Liberals will clap at anything, because it is no justification for discrimination to say, "We increased funding to the program that's discriminating." That is what we are talking about here.

Oral Questions

After the Liberals voted down our motion, now they are saying they might not proceed with the values test next year. The minister continues to deny funding to charitable organizations that are helping the very groups the member talks about this year.

If the parliamentary secretary knows that the values test is bad for an election year, why will he not get rid of it right now?

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government appreciates and respects the work that those religious groups do, and they know. They were contacted and they know that they could very well apply for grants.

I know in my own riding there were 21 groups last year that applied and received funding. There are 21 groups that applied this year, and most likely will receive funding.

The MPs who did their job know that that is the truth.

* * *

• (1500)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as co-chair of the all-party steel caucus, I am proud to have hosted our Prime Minister in Hamilton earlier this month.

We sat and talked with steelworkers from both ArcelorMittal Dofasco and Stelco, as well as union representatives and stakeholders. We heard first-hand the concerns that they have over steel import tariffs and their unintended consequences concerning steel dumping.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs please update this House on the strong measures announced by our government today to address this important issue?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for organizing the Prime Minister's visit to Hamilton to meet steel workers.

The transshipment and dumping of unfairly cheap foreign steel and aluminum is a threat to Canadian jobs and the North American NAFTA market. Canada has one of the toughest enforcement regimes in the world, with 71 trade remedy measures already in place.

We are strengthening this enforcement further, including new powers for CBSA. We will always stand up for Canadian steel and aluminum workers, and for NAFTA.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 1, when the public safety minister was asked why the Liberals will not let the national security adviser appear at committee, he said, "You are asking me to wade into a classified discussion. I can't do that." Then he ran away from questions, to the elevator.

Today he says that none of the information given by that adviser to the media was classified.

On what date was the minister telling the truth?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said consistently, the comments that have been attributed to the national security adviser in the media disclosed no confidential information. The challenge, of course, is the questions the members of the opposition want to pursue in relation to classified matters in the context of this whole affair.

We have offered to answer those questions. We have offered to give them the whole information. They continue to refuse.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the stranded Air Transat passengers have not forgotten that the minister promised them a speedy resolution by adopting a passenger bill of rights. It has been a year since the incident and two and a half years since this government was elected, but there is still nothing, and the bill could double the amount of time that passengers have to wait on the tarmac before they get assistance. The Liberal government obviously does not have the guts to deal with the airlines.

Could the minister tell us whether he is going to show some courage and eliminate the provision doubling the tarmac time limit in his Bill C-49?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always try to show courage in everything I do in life. I promised Canadians that there would be a passenger bill of rights when the bill is passed. That bill of rights will be prepared by the Canadian Transportation Agency. It will be the best passenger bill of rights in the world. If my colleague can be patient a little longer, it will come out later this year.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a healthy and prosperous society, it is essential to ensure that everyone can participate in the economy on a level playing field.

Can the Minister of Status of Women tell us what we are doing in budget 2018 to further empower women so that they have equal opportunities to work in the field of their choice and further their careers, whether they are just starting out or are experienced professionals?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vimy for her leadership in advancing gender equality. By investing in women, we will improve the economy for everyone.

Government Orders

[English]

Budget 2018 includes several measures to close the gender wage gap, including an investment of \$1.65 billion for a women's entrepreneurship strategy to support women to start and grow their businesses and to benefit from trade agreements, and to create jobs for all Canadians, because when we invest in women we grow the economy for everyone.

* * *

• (1505)

TAXATION

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year my constituents went through the worst B.C. wildfire in history. In the aftermath, residents tried to salvage what they could, harvesting some of the wood on their property. It is now tax time, and the capital gains from selling their wood are putting them into a higher tax bracket. We have seniors losing their OAS and GIS. Months ago, we asked the finance minister to create a simple fix. We have not even had the courtesy of a response.

Will the government do what it said, stand by the victims, and commit to fixing this failure today?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the Canadians affected by the wildfires, particularly in British Columbia, are facing challenges, and the Canada Revenue Agency is committed to helping ease their burden.

The CRA provides taxpayer relief in the event of natural disasters, such as the B.C. wildfires. Every application for taxpayer relief is examined individually.

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, the negotiations between the Davie shipyard and the federal government regarding the conversion of ships have been dragging on because Ottawa cannot make up its mind.

The federal government is making Davie beg on its hands and knees for a contract to convert three used icebreakers, and meanwhile we have learned that the Liberals have a plan up their sleeve to build six brand new icebreakers. There are 800 workers in Quebec City who want nothing more than to go back to work.

What is the government doing? Does it have a plan to solve this problem?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the excellent work done by workers at the Davie shipyard and we understand the impact the job losses have had on them.

We are negotiating with the Davie shipyard regarding the Coast Guard's icebreaker needs. We will continue with those negotiations. We are doing the necessary checks and the process is ongoing.

Mr. Michel Boudrias (Terrebonne, GPQ): Mr. Speaker, that does not sound like a plan to me.

The Liberals' plan, if one can call it that, seems to be this: to award \$100 million in shipbuilding contracts but not give a cent to Quebec; to say they need four icebreakers converted and then remove the most profitable and put the other three on hold; to keep plans for building six new icebreakers under wraps; and to tinker with the tendering process so that Davie is excluded from bidding on the maintenance of seven frigates.

Is the Liberals' plan to make the shipyard go bankrupt?

Hon. Carla Qualtrough (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Coast Guard has identified its icebreaking needs, and we are working with the Davie shipyard to meet those needs. We are negotiating with Davie and we will continue with those discussions. The process is ongoing.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN THE GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mrs. Georgette LeBlanc, the eighth parliamentary poet laureate; the Hon. David Eby, attorney general for the Province of British Columbia; and Mr. Fred Sasakamoose, elder of Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, a former student at St. Michael's Indian Residential School, the first indigenous hockey player in the NHL, and the inspiration for Richard Wagamese's award-winning book and the film of the same name, *Indian Horse*.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

MOTION NO. 23

Hon. Bardish Chagger (for the Minister of Finance) moved that a ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled on February 27, 2018, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

Government Orders

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 642)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Baylis	Beech
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cornier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Fortier
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Hardie	Harvey
Hébert	Hogg
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Khalid
Khera	Lambropoulos
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Ng	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard

Rodriguez	Rogers
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sorbara
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yip
Young— 167	

NAYS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Ashton	Aubin
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu	Benson
Benzen	Bergen
Bernier	Berthold
Bezan	Blakie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Chong
Choquette	Clarke
Cooper	Davies
Deltell	Diotte
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseau	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
Falk (Provencher)	Fast
Finley	Fortin
Gallant	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kitchen	Kusie
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lavergère
Leitch	Liepert
Lloyd	Lobb
MacGregor	MacKenzie
Maguire	Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Moore
Motz	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Pauzé
Poilievre	Quach
Raïtt	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs

Privilege

Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 136

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (for the Minister of Finance) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-74, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 27, 2018 and other measures, be read the first time and be printed.

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

• (1550)

The Speaker: In a moment, I am going to call upon the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove from whom I have notice of a question of privilege, however, first I want to refer to my ruling of last week, on March 20, when I said the following:

As I already noted, the Chair is concerned that this question of privilege was not brought up at the earliest opportunity. Members know that in determining a question of privilege *prima facie*, the Speaker must consider whether the two requisite conditions have been met; that is, whether the matter was raised at the earliest opportunity and whether, in the Speaker's view, it constitutes, at first view, a breach of a parliamentary privilege.

With respect to timeliness, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 145:

...the Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a Member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a *prima facie* question of privilege."

I went on to say:

...This is cause for concern for the Chair, particularly as the member did not provide an explanation as to why the condition of timeliness was not satisfied. While I am prepared to be flexible on this point this time and not dismiss his question of privilege for this reason alone, it is a condition that must be taken into account in assessing the alleged question of privilege.

Therefore, I would ask the member to have regard to that in his comments.

The hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ACCESS TO CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my earliest opportunity to raise this issue of a question of privilege. It relates to this year's Canada summer jobs program. We have just received the list, and it highlights the concerns I have. Having gone through the list, I bring it forward to you at the earliest opportunity on a question of privilege.

I rise on a question of privilege regarding a matter that members will appreciate does not fall within certain enumerated rights and immunities for the House to treat as a breach of privilege, but falls within the scope of contempt, as explained by Joseph Maingot at page 226 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*. He writes:

In addition to these enumerated rights and immunities that are necessary for the House and its Members to perform their legislative function, the House of Commons may also examine any direct or indirect act or omission other than an attack or disregard of the enumerated rights and immunities, and if the House is of the view that any such act or omission tends to obstruct or impede the House or its Members in their parliamentary functions, the House may declare such act or omission to be a contempt of Parliament and invoke its penal jurisdiction, whether or not there is a precedent.

Page 81 of Bosc and Gagnon says:

There are...other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House...its Members, or its officers.

I have been dealing with the summer jobs program for 14 years. I was elected in 2004. The government's value test has impeded my role as a member of Parliament, and I would like to share with members in what way.

This year's Canada summer jobs program started with an email from Service Canada on December 8, 2017. I received that email. It was probably a common email that was sent to every member of Parliament. It stated:

As a Member of Parliament (MP), you will have the opportunity to fulfill the following roles in the delivery of CSJ:

1. promote the CSJ program within your constituency;
2. participate in establishing local priorities;
3. validate the list of recommended projects; and,
4. notify successful applicants.

I did respond to the Service Canada representative, who actually did a very good job. I talked to her on the phone and asked what the definition of reproductive rights was within the new attestation requirement. She could not answer, so I responded to her with the following email, which I sent on December 13, within a few minutes of talking to her on the phone, just to clarify what we had talked about. I said:

I agree with the Canada Summer Jobs 2018 priorities on the condition that the new attestation requirement will not restrict organizations from receiving Canada Summer Jobs 2018 funding if they object to the definition of reproductive rights and refuse to sign the attestation agreement. There may be controversial reproductive issues that have nothing to do with their funding application and should not render their application incomplete or ineligible. You were unable to define what is the program's definition of reproductive rights and I look forward to your response. Until then, my approval is conditional.

Just a couple of minutes later, she acknowledged receiving the email and said, "It was good speaking with you today. Thank you for sending the email so promptly. As soon as I have a response to your inquiry, I will be in contact with you. I look forward to connecting with you in the new year."

The next correspondence I received from Service Canada was not a response to my questions. It was the list. Therefore, I never had the definition of reproductive rights in the requirements.

Privilege

• (1555)

Then, I received this list. As I said, I have been doing this for 14 years. I went over previous years' lists, from 2015, 2016, and 2017, and often the same people were applying and providing incredible job opportunities for youth in my riding of Langley—Aldergrove. I noticed that all of them were in the not-for-profit sector, and I really liked that. I also looked at the assessment score. Out of 100, it went from 87 down to 73, for all those that were recommended on the approved list.

Then I looked at this year's list, and it is not on par with what happened. There are so many people and organizations in my riding that are not on the new recommended list. The assessment code went from 87 to 73; it now starts at a much lower assessment rating of 73 down to 48, so there has been a major change. There are a number of constituent groups that were not able to apply and were rejected. The groups that have asked me to bring this to the attention of the House are Northwest Langley Baptist Church, Christian Life Assembly, Fort Langley Evangelical Free Church, Brookwood Baptist Church, North Langley Community Church, Willoughby Church, Riverside Calvary Chapel, Loft Country, Living Waters, and Power to Change.

There was one additional group, which was providing jobs for recovering young women. It was teaching them how to build and install cabinets as part of their recovery program. Unfortunately, that applicant, again, was not able to apply.

To deny certain Canadian taxpayers access to provincial programs or grants because of their belief, faith, personal conscience, or opinion, all of which are guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, even if they are contrary to the views or policies of the Liberal Party of Canada, is an offence and a breach of privilege, and it impedes my ability to represent the community and to administer the summer jobs program on behalf of my constituents, as I am required to do.

I believe the House can consider these acts by the government to fall within the scope of contempt. *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* explains it this way at page 226:

This is why it is said that the "privileges" of the House cannot be exhaustively codified; there are many acts or omissions that might occur where the House would feel compelled to find that a contempt has taken place, even though such acts or omissions do not amount to an attack on or disregard for any of the enumerated rights and immunities.

Mr. Speaker, if you find that this is a *prima facie* question of privilege, I am prepared to move an appropriate motion and send this matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. I look forward to your ruling.

• (1600)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Before I go to the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, who was kind enough to let me know he wanted to add to the argument, I must say that I remain concerned about the timeliness. I recognize that the member is arguing that the situation as he is characterizing it has just arisen, although I think he will note that the topic has certainly been under debate for quite a while now.

The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. I think one of the reasons for the request today is that today is the deadline for much of the application process around the Canada summer jobs program. We did not want to waste your time, Mr. Speaker. We had hoped that the pressure would lead the government to drop the requirement. That is not so, and now we find ourselves here today.

I am rising on the same question of privilege, on the Canada summer jobs program. I want to highlight two points that I think are relevant to this discussion. In order to do our jobs as members of Parliament, we must be able to represent our constituents fairly, based on the charter and on the legislation passed by Parliament.

While the policies of the various parties guide them as they move forward, until these policies are implemented through legislation, they do not become the law of Canada and they cannot direct MPs in their work.

Through the added requirements for the Canada summer jobs program, the Liberal government has created barriers based solely on its party policy. The requirement to attest to Liberal Party policy limits my capacity to represent my constituents and creates an issue of privilege for me. It has also made it impossible for many of my constituents to access a government program because of their inability to support the Liberal Party policy.

My role requires me to support the principles of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and that includes the right to belief, faith, personal conscience, and opinion. I have been happy to do that. Indeed, in the 17 years I have been here, I have never seen or had to deal with an applicant for the Canada summer jobs program who did not accede to the rights laid out by the charter and the Parliament of Canada. There have been many programs I agree with, and many others I disagree with. However, the rights and requirements of each were a matter of parliamentary discussion and decision.

However, that is no longer the case. This winter, that all changed. In its implementation of the 2018 Canada summer jobs program, the government added additional requirements for my participation and for the participation of my constituents. Long-time recipients of CSJ funding were denied even the opportunity to apply because of the additional requirements, which consisted of an attestation that emphasized Liberal Party policy. These rejected applicants included private businesses, charities, camps, and municipal governments.

The issue here is not actually the content of the attestation, on which people hold a variety of positions. It is about having to agree to it at all. Members must not be required to adhere to the governing party's policy in order to access programming. That is a practice that may take place in other countries, but it has never been part of our national fabric. When we had a vote in the House, every party had representatives who supported that position.

The required attestation has impeded my ability to represent my constituents. As many have pointed out, the issue is not whether we agree with Liberal Party policy in this case. The issue is the requirement to attest to it. We allow many different points of view in this country. Requiring applicants to assert belief in a policy and MPs to attest to it in order to participate is a question of privilege.

Government Orders

There is a second aspect to my question of privilege. The government has presented and insisted that misleading information, which is a condition for a question of privilege, be part of the Canada summer jobs program application and participation.

The charter and LGBT rights are enshrined in law and codes. As I mentioned, in 17 years I have never had an applicant who has made an issue of this in his or her application.

The issue of reproductive rights is a topic of much discussion, both in this country and around the world. It is clear that there is a wide variety of positions on those rights, even in this House. The one thing they are not is a charter right in Canada. The admonition to legislate on this issue was invited by the Supreme Court some 25 years ago, and to this point Parliament has declined to legislate.

Inaccurate and misleading information is part of the attestation that individuals and organizations must sign. It has been reinforced by numerous other communication pieces of the government. It is that misleading information that has made it impossible for me to participate, and that has prevented my constituents from participating.

Our members' privileges can be violated by the provision of inaccurate information. If we look at the attestation, we see that it is inaccurate. I and the applicants are required to adhere to the charter and respect LGBT rights, but we are not required to subscribe to Liberal Party policy distinctives around reproductive rights in order to participate in Canadian—

• (1605)

The Speaker: Order. I am afraid that we are well into debate now. I expressed one concern, which was about the question of time on this. Another is about this being a matter of debate, a debate on which members have very strong views, which I completely respect and acknowledge. However, this is what it seems to be.

Nevertheless, I will examine the matter and come back to the House. I think I have heard enough about it for now. I thank hon. members for their interventions on this. We do not have endless interventions on questions of privilege, as members will know. I appreciate the member for Langley—Aldergrove raising the question, and I thank the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his intervention.

However, I do think I have heard enough, if it is on the same issue. There is no need for a point of order, unless it is on a different issue.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order and not on a question of privilege. To illustrate that, I would draw your attention to Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, citation 26(1) and 26(3), page 12 of the sixth edition, which illustrated, you would know, that you, as Speaker, can rule on points of order, but on a question of privilege, you are simply making a prima facie case, ruling on such, and then bringing it to the House for a motion.

However, I would draw your attention to page 147 of Bosc and Gagnon, which states, "The Speaker will hear the Member and may permit others who are directly implicated in the matter to intervene." These members who are seeking the floor are clearly implicated in this matter.

I would draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to precedent on this matter to, first, May 18, 2016—

The Speaker: I think the member is referring to the discussion going on. He will know that, in fact, I read last week an excerpt from the procedural manual to which he referred. It expresses the fact that the Speaker can decide when he has heard enough in terms of a question of privilege, which I have. I thank members for their attention.

* * *

OCEANS ACT

The House resumed from March 26 consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day here when members cannot have their question of privilege heard in this House. I respect your position, but when we have members standing on a point of order and simply being shut down, it is a dismal day for democracy in Canada. What we have seen this week with the government shutting down debate and calling time allocation on multiple bills has to make one wonder what it is that the Liberals are trying to change the channel on, and it is disturbing.

I will start on a lighter note, noting that this is the second half of a 20-minute time slot that I was allowed. I had 10 minutes yesterday. It has now been almost 24 hours to carry on this section of the debate. I was debating whether I should wear the same clothes so if the two videos get clipped together it does not look like I did a Superman change. Oh, pardon me, that would be a super-person change, or a super-people change.

It has been almost 24 hours since I began my speech to Bill C-55, so I want to recap a bit of what has taken place. In December 2016, I saw what the current government may intend to do with changes to the way marine protected areas are established in B.C., so I put forward a motion at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans that the committee undertake a study on the criteria and process for establishing MPAs in Canada. That motion was accepted and approved by the committee members. We eventually got around to starting that study in about April 2017. We travelled to the north and to the west coast in June. We travelled to the east coast in the fall. As I said yesterday, we heard differing testimony on how the MPA process was working.

Government Orders

We heard that with the process that is taking place right now, in some cases, it took seven to 10 years to establish an MPA. That is a fairly lengthy time, but we heard that those MPAs that were created under that process were accepted by the communities and in fact in many cases were put forward by and promoted by the communities that were most affected. What we heard was that the proposed changes that Bill C-55 could bring forward would eliminate the opportunity for those fishers and those communities to have input into how those MPAs are created, and it was quite discerning. We heard that many times in Atlantic Canada and yet the current government, with full representation in Atlantic Canada, has chosen to ignore the testimony that we heard there.

The committee study on MPAs has been kicked aside and sidelined many times. We started a study on small-vessel licensing, which kicked the study aside. Now we are going to see legislation on Bill C-68 coming to the committee so the study on MPAs will be further kicked aside. I question whether the Liberals may be causing this because they do not want that testimony exposed to the public, and the recommendations that may come out of that committee study. The recommendations we would have seen would have indicated the problems with the new proposed process, so for some reason the Liberals are pushing aside that MPA study and the report that would result out of it, kicking it aside and fast-tracking by time allocation the debate on Bill C-55 so that we have no process of really exposing the issues and the problems that are in the bill. Again, it is an affront to democracy and just an example of the arrogance that the government has been showing over the past couple of weeks. It is really disturbing to me and should be disturbing to all Canadians.

There is another part of this scenario that we can only speculate on. Is there another reason that the fisheries minister wants to get this legislation out there and get it in front of the committee to tie up the committee's time? That may be because Conservative members on the committee have started to expose the surf clam scam.

● (1610)

One may ask what the surf clam scam is all about. The fisheries minister decided unilaterally to expropriate 25% of the surf clam quota from a holder in Newfoundland. He then issued that quota to a non-existent company that was established by close Liberal friends and family members. Unbelievable. The threads are starting to unravel on that surf clam scam.

I project that perhaps time allocation on Bill C-55 and Bill C-68, an act to amend the Fisheries Act, may be a cover-up process to take attention away from what really should be concerning, that being a perceived conflict of interest.

That takes us all the way back to the mandate letters that were provided to Liberal cabinet members by the Prime Minister, which indicated that there should be no actual or perceived conflict of interest and yet we have seen it happen time and time again with the government, not just perceived conflict of interest but actual conflict of interest. The finance minister was found in conflict. There are still questions around the Prime Minister, who was found guilty of breaking the law four times and had to address that with the conflict commissioner.

I will get back to Bill C-55 and some of our concerns, which I touched a bit on yesterday regarding wildlife management, fisheries management, totally protected areas, and no-take zones as they are being referred to in reference to the Oceans Act and MPAs.

Similar things to those no-take zones have been put in place on land and in parks across Canada and they have created problems. They have also taken place in the U.S. and we have seen problems. We heard testimony from a U.S. scientist at committee who explained what had happened with the California MPA process. It was absolutely devastating to the recreational fishery and the supporting sectors down there. There was a 20% drop in licence sales and vehicle sales relating to towing equipment for boats. It was absolutely devastating for that process. We cannot afford to see that same process take place here in Canada. We need full consultation.

This legislation would give the minister overarching power to decide to close an area on extremely short notice, only taking into account one year's previous activity within that area, not going back eight to 10 years to see what might have been there. I also spoke a bit about this yesterday. I spoke about how a halibut fishery had recovered and was going back to an area in Nova Scotia. Fishermen had not been able to fish there for five to 10 years but suddenly the halibut were starting to come back, so they were going back to fish in that area. As I said, fish move, fisheries move, and ocean currents change.

This legislation proposes to eliminate all of the background information that can be gathered, the process of consulting with local fishermen, local communities, and the science community for establishing what should be a well-received and well-accepted MPA, as has been happening in the process already.

We have also heard that there are other processes for protecting our oceans and a lot of those are in place already in Canada with rockfish conservation areas on our west coast.

● (1615)

Those areas are not MPAs, but now some are saying that just to meet our targets we should include those. I do not disagree with that. That is a good process. However, those conservation areas need to be established, have long-term goals, but also the long-term background, which the bill fails to allow.

It has been interesting to have make the same speech almost 24 hours apart.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, while I lament that we have interruptions and a loss of time for debate, overall the bill is quite welcomed. It is well constructed. It is overdue. The initial Oceans Act was passed well before the Harper administration, but unfortunately it has never really been fully implemented. It has a lot of opportunities to improve adjacency, that local fishing communities have more say in the fisheries management adjacent to them. The bill also focuses on long overdue improvements to creating national marine protected areas.

Government Orders

While I understand my hon. colleague's frustration with the interruptions, such is the nature of work around here, particularly lately, I hope the House will pass Bill C-55 expeditiously.

• (1620)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I would caution the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands not to get Bill C-55 confused with Bill C-68. Bill C-55 is the Oceans Act. Bill C-68 is an act to amend the Fisheries Act.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for all the work he has done in the fisheries committee on this subject and many others. I have enjoyed working with him. We have a very cordial relationship at committee.

He spoke about the MPA study that had been conducted by the fisheries and oceans committee. It has been a very interesting process. All of the witnesses who come to the fisheries and oceans committee are broadcast on Parlvu. Everyone can see and listen to the testimony in a very open and transparent way.

Some of the comments from the Conservative side around the precautionary principle concern me. Does the Conservative Party of Canada support the precautionary principle?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, it is good to have a congenial relationship so we can hopefully find common areas on which to move forward.

The precautionary principle is a good principle, but we also need to find a balance between ensuring our country, our fishermen, and our communities are able to continue with their livelihoods in a sustainable way, to find that balance between conservation and preservation. There is a big difference there. Conservation allows the conservative use of a resource so we gain a benefit from it and can put back into it. I do not agree with the preservation system. It is not the best wildlife management system out there.

We have seen so much human intervention. I do not know if “human” is the correct word to use now or if it should be “hupeople”. However, we have seen so much human intervention in fish and wildlife habitats and species management over the years that we simply cannot step back and expect an area to recover fully, or to find that sustainable balance within itself without predator management or other activities that may be able to bring it back to that balance.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, what a rare chance to be able to thank my friend from South Okanagan—Shuswap. He is quite correct. I had earlier today jotted down that we were moving to Bill C-55 this afternoon, and things do move quickly. We are on Bill C-68. Therefore, I regret that the Fisheries Act is moving so quickly, with time allocation on it. However, I support the bill.

I am so relieved to see the restoration and the protection of fish habitat in the bill. We have had the Fisheries Act since 1867. Protecting fisheries, including fish habitat, was a provision brought in by the current fisheries minister's father, the late and much respected Romeo LeBlanc. He also served as our governor general. Having those sections ripped out of the Fisheries Act in the spring of 2012 in an omnibus budget bill of over 420 pages that changed 40

different acts, with no consultation, not a single amendment allowed, and no proper hearings, was an abomination in this place. I am glad to see at least this part of it repaired.

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, there may still be a bit of confusion on the part of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. I believe we are studying Bill C-55 right now.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise for a third time to express my support for Bill C-55 and to speak against the proposed amendment to refer the bill back to the standing committee for the purpose of reconsidering all of the clauses.

The Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard has been given a clear mandate to protect Canada's three oceans, our coasts, our waterways, and our fisheries to ensure they remain healthy for the benefit of future generations, something I thought about today when I saw so many young people in our gallery. This is a commitment that I take very seriously and very personally.

As I said previously, when we debated the bill at second reading, I am extremely honoured that my first piece of legislation as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard is for such a worthy cause.

The Oceans Act is a fundamental tool that Canadians rely upon to ensure the future health of our marine ecosystems. I truly believe that at the end of the day, a pristine and abundant environmental ecosystem is our greatest underlying economic driver.

Specific to today's debate, the Government of Canada has committed to Aichi target 11 under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. As well, I just returned from the World Ocean Summit, where I was able to share the leadership that Canada had once again taken to protect our oceans.

In addition to this bill, we are returning lost protections and incorporating modern safeguards into the Fisheries Act through Bill C-68. We have committed to making the protection of our oceans a pillar of our G7 agenda. This includes leadership in four key areas, including ocean health, sustainable fisheries, addressing plastics, and building resilient coastal communities. We were applauded for making such significant progress on our targets.

As a government, we are committed to protecting 10% of our oceans and marine areas by 2020. When we took office, less than 1% of these areas were protected, but today we have protected 7.75%, representing hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of new protections, protections of which I know Canadians are proud.

Our three oceans are complex webs of ecological and human systems that need to be understood, protected, and in many cases restored. Marine protected areas and marine protected area networks preserve these ecological links and protect diverse marine ecosystems and species. We will continue to establish marine protected areas through science-based decision-making, transparency, and in a manner that advances reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Government Orders

It currently takes an average of seven years to designate an Oceans Act marine protected area. It requires time to undertake scientific assessments and socio-economic studies, as well as conduct consultations with governments, indigenous groups, and stakeholders. These are important steps that cannot be eliminated as they ensure that a marine protected area achieves its intended objectives while supporting local culture, the economy, and other needs. That said, a very clear understanding of what needs to be protected typically emerges well before all of the data is compiled.

Amendments to the Oceans Act under Bill C-55 propose solutions that will help us protect critical and unique areas of our Canadian oceans faster, without sacrificing the necessary science and consultation processes. The amendments ensure collaboration continues, requiring provinces, territories, indigenous groups, industry, and other stakeholders to be part of both the establishment and management processes.

Essentially, Bill C-55 proposes amendments to the Oceans Act to provide an additional tool that will allow for interim protection of specific areas through a ministerial order. This interim protection will be done following initial science and consultations, which would take around 24 months.

Following this step, the full federal regulatory process would continue to formally designate the marine protected area within the next five years. These amendments would ensure that when needed, an interim marine protected area could be put into place. New activities that risk further harm to ocean ecosystems, habitat, or marine life would not be allowed to occur in these interim protected zones.

These amendments not only respect current activities but also the need to conduct comprehensive consultations and scientific research before the final marine protected area is established.

Therefore, the time frame to fully establish a marine protected area may still take up to seven years, but there could be some interim protections in place within the first two. No longer can a lack of 100% scientific certainty be used to delay or prevent the protection of a sensitive marine area. Right now there is no protection until there is full protection, which is a problem these amendments are effectively solving, a problem that is amplified by an ocean that is so quickly changing, along with our climate. This policy is entirely in lockstep with the precautionary approach, which is a founding principle of conservation in Canada.

• (1625)

To put it another way, an interim marine protected area would freeze the footprint of ongoing activities. Under this concept, only ongoing activities, which are those activities occurring one year before the interim protection is in place, would be allowed to continue. For example, current fishing activities, or fishing activities where a moratorium is in place but licences are still held would be considered ongoing activities.

To further support this new concept, which is integral to the creation of an interim marine protected area, Bill C-55 also includes amendments that would require application of the precautionary principle when deciding whether to designate new marine protected areas. That means incomplete information or lack of absolute

certainty would not be justification for avoiding protection where there would be a risk to the marine ecosystem.

Bill C-55 also includes modernized, updated, and strengthened enforcement powers, fines, and punishments under the Oceans Act.

The proposed amendments to the Oceans Act have received broad support during outreach efforts to discuss the bill. Canadians recognize the amendments would not short-circuit the development of sound science or cut off people's opportunity to collaborate and be consulted in the development of marine protected areas. Instead, they would ensure protection would be put in place quicker, in the interests of all Canadians.

We would be able to act on initial science and information to help these areas safe while additional research, engagement, and regulatory processes would be worked through.

Supporting the health of our ocean is necessary to ensure that future generations will be able to rely on the unique and precious marine ecosystems and resources that underline our environment and economy. It should go without saying, but Canadians are counting on us to protect our oceans, a resource that at times we have too often taken for granted.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to congratulate the fisheries and oceans committee on the great work it has done on this bill and on additional studies it has taken on, including several fisheries and MPAs, which was raised by the previous member. An example of its extraordinary work is visible in Bill C-68, amendments to the Fisheries Act. The committee made 32 recommendations after examining the changes made to the act by the previous government. We now know all 32 recommendations were not only considered but incorporated into the act.

I was also very impressed by the committee's deliberations and thoughtful consideration of Bill C-55. It consulted broadly and incorporated amendments from colleagues on both sides of the House. This is the primary reason sending the bill back to committee does not make any sense. The committee has considered the legislation clause by clause and now it is time to pass it for third reading.

I invite everyone in the House to support Bill C-55, an act to amend the Oceans Act, and to oppose the Conservative amendment.

• (1630)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned the committee's study on marine protected areas and congratulated the committee for its work on that. Why has the committee's work on that been constantly derailed by issues put forward by members of his party, by legislation that has been put forward, which has not allowed the committee to finish that study and make any recommendations from the study? We have been sidelined. Now with time allocation being called on this bill at third reading, it is obvious the Liberals do not want to hear the recommendations that might come from that committee, if we are ever allowed to finish it. Why has that taken place?

Government Orders

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, I believe the committee passed a motion, when it was considering Bill C-55, that all witness testimony determined during the MPAs could be utilized when determining Bill C-55. I might be wrong about that, but that is my recollection.

The party opposite seems to want it both ways. On one hand, it wants to say that it set these targets, despite the fact that it only made it to less than 1% of protections during its time in office. It wants to say that somehow by 2020 it will meet the target of protecting 10% of our oceans.

This is a difficult task that our government has taken on wholeheartedly since the last election, and now we are at 7.75%. As I have said, that is hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of new protections. In fact, in total I believe that represents 446,000 square kilometres of protections. We are committed to hitting our Aichi targets and we are going to continue to do so.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has said that there has been lots of support for the Liberals' legislation. Let me share some of the comments people have made.

Linda Nowlan, a long-standing environmental lawyer, now with West Coast Environmental Law, said:

These proposed amendments...should go much farther.... For the long arm of the law to be truly effective we need even stronger legal powers like minimum protection standards, and requiring ecological integrity as the foremost priority in MPA.... With a vast area in three seas within our boundaries—and the world's longest coastline—Canada must implement a forceful...Oceans Act.

The World Wildlife Fund has expressed extreme concerns:

proposed regulations will still allow oil and gas...and seismic blasts in 80 per cent of the MPA. These activities threaten whales and other wildlife.

It also says:

We will challenge these proposed regulations through every possible means, and we ask Canadians to join us in expressing their dissent.

A professor of geography at Memorial University said,

Unlike terrestrial parks, marine protected areas...can allow industrial activities which are known to impact marine ecosystems.

Sabine Jessen, of CPAWS, said:

we are concerned the areas being protected do not meet the standard set out under the Convention, and therefore will not actually count toward the target

Where are the supporters of the Liberals' bill?

• (1635)

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for all her work. This might be one of those cases where we have one side telling us that we are going too hard too fast and one side telling us that we are not going fast enough.

With regard to minimum protections, I would like to let that member know that the minister made an announcement in Malta recently that he was going to assemble an expert panel to talk about minimum standards for marine protected areas. That panel is currently in the process of coming together.

With regard to oil and gas, the minister has stated in this House on several occasions that thousands of Canadians have expressed their concerns when it comes to oil and gas exploration in marine

protected areas, and those concerns are going to be taken very seriously when these decisions are taken.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take us a bit further than Bill C-55. The Minister of Fisheries has thus far dealt with amendments in Bill C-68 and amendments to the Oceans Act in Bill C-55. He has not yet touched on the area that is of profound concern to people who want to see our fisheries areas protected and our oceans protected to protect the fish within those lines in a marine protected area on the map by really dealing with the threat of aquaculture in open waters in open pens.

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary can let us know when the minister and the parliamentary secretary will turn their attention to the threat posed by open-pen aquaculture of not-local species, with the contamination of sea lice and viruses that affect our wild fisheries.

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is aware, members of the B.C. caucus have been very vocal on the issues around aquaculture. It is an issue I have spent a lot of my own personal time researching. In fact, I made a statement earlier in the House, during question period about four weeks ago, that we are currently looking into this, along with our partners in the province and along with indigenous communities. In fact, I have a copy of that statement here.

As a British Columbian, I understand the very real concerns Canadians share about aquaculture. We rightly expect that aquaculture practices and technology must minimize impacts on wild fish and the environment. We support a new vision for sustainable aquaculture that recognizes that in the long term, a pristine environment is the greatest economic driver. We are working to ensure that Canada's aquaculture industry is a global leader in producing high-quality aquaculture products in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to note that when they put interim protections in place, it sometimes makes it more difficult to remove those later if there is not the science to back them up.

I want to ask the member about the consultation process. Our previous government put in \$252 million over five years to secure ecologically sensitive lands and support voluntary conservation. We were looking at the marine protected areas as well.

The part I want to ask the member about is the area between the extensive consultations and the concerted effort to prioritize the needs of the local communities, between the economic side of it and the commercial side of it for local communities. I wonder if the member can elaborate on why the Liberals do not have more opportunities for that recognition in the bill.

Government Orders

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, the member for Brandon—Souris and I had an opportunity to work together for a brief period on recreational fish. With regard to the consultation process, we have consulted broadly from coast to coast to coast. We consulted with industry, fishers, coastal communities, indigenous people, and environmental groups.

I do not know exactly what the consultation process was under the previous government, but I am assured that the consultation process we have taken on as part of Bill C-55 has been extensive and thorough, and I am quite confident that it has gone well above and beyond anything the previous government did with regard to consultation.

• (1640)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burnaby North—Seymour has been referring to the 7.75% that is now protected. That did not just magically happen in less than two years of the current government.

Could the parliamentary secretary provide how much of that percentage was actually through other protective measures, areas that were already closed to fishing, during our previous government's tenure?

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in that these hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of protection did not just magically happen. They happened because of the dedication of this government and how much we care about protecting our oceans, along with our planet. The 7.75% reached by the end of last year represents 446,000 square kilometres, and it was achieved through the combination of the five-point plan the minister previously outlined.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, National Defence; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Families, Children and Social Development; and the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I normally say what a pleasure it is for me to rise in debate on a specific piece of legislation before the House. That is the case because I enjoy talking about public policy. However, I would be remiss if I did not comment on why we are debating Bill C-55 today.

In fact, I feel bad for our table officers, our parliamentary clerks, and everyone trying to support debate in the House, because it has been a bit sporadic over the last number of days, for one simple reason. That is the fact that the government, which ran on slogans of accountability and transparency, has been desperate to not provide those two things to the opposition with respect to the Atwal India affair.

I have been speaking for some time, so I think my colleagues will see that I am ready for the debate. However, we would not be debating Bill C-55 at all today were the government willing to be accountable, with the same level of disclosure that was provided to the media, be that classified or non-classified, which is very hard to determine after today's question period. MPs should be entitled to that same thing.

In a ruling earlier today, Mr. Speaker, you confirmed that MPs, collectively and individually, are entitled to hear from Mr. Jean, but there needs to be an order of Parliament to facilitate that appearance. Normally, a committee would call on him to provide testimony to appear. However, when the government uses its majority to block Mr. Jean, to block the ability of Parliament to exercise that order, it is stifling debate, covering up the Atwal affair. Whatever they want to call it, the government cannot suggest that it is not violating our right to get to the heart of the matter, based on the fact that it is using its majority to quash proper scrutiny of the major diplomatic incident.

I say that at the outset, because I want Canadians following this debate, both in our gallery and at home, to recognize that we are debating Bill C-55, an act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, because the government is desperate to keep the national security adviser, Daniel Jean, from answering a few simple questions and providing the same level of information he provided journalists.

What I find curious about today's question period is that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety suggested that none of the information he gave is classified, yet a member of the press gallery, during question period, confirmed that the national security adviser said that certain pieces of information could not be shared publicly. They could not write about it. That would suggest the contrary. This is like an onion. Every level we peel away is another layer, and our eyes are watering with tears for the lack of accountability of the government, to keep with that analogy.

Getting to the heart of the matter on Bill C-55, what may look to Canadians like sort of an update of an act, I am going to suggest, is the creeping edge of ideological Liberal policy and ideology creeping into the science of our oceans and our economic relationships with companies that invest capital to develop resources offshore. I will speak to that in a moment.

Overall, the bill is suggested as empowering and clarifying how the minister can establish marine protected spaces and provide a national network of those. That has been done before, but I would suggest, with this bill, that the government takes a very ideological turn.

The bill contains new powers for enforcement officers and new offences for ships and operators that violate nationally protected marine areas. What is also contained in the bill is where the government is really going with this. It would provide the ability to cancel interests, be they economic or others, in a marine area and to compensate for them. Petrological investigation and development, I think, is what is meant by that. Already the government is signalling that it intends to basically pull back on some of the offshore licences many companies have.

• (1645)

I would suggest that members from Atlantic Canada ask some questions. They are already suffering greatly from the Prime Minister's move to try and increase the regulation that led to the cancellation of energy east. I know my friend from Saint John has watched that closely.

Government Orders

The Liberals are already hurting the energy industry in Atlantic Canada, and now, have they consulted with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland? We have provincial-federal boards to regulate the offshore. There is the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board, and there is one that was created for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would add that all of the work with respect to allowing provinces to be net beneficiaries of their offshore petroleum wealth, much like the onshore in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and even in Ontario, Petrolia, Ontario, at one point, all of that security for those Atlantic provinces was provided by Conservative governments, which do not try to chase away investment from the energy industry. They try to make sure Canada benefits to the full extent that our royalty regimes will allow, and to make sure that areas like Saint John, New Brunswick, Halifax, Nova Scotia, and St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador benefit from employment and secondary and tertiary benefits from the offshore. It was the governments of Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper that provided that.

I was proud to learn all about that at Atlantic Canada's finest law school, Dalhousie Law School, where we studied that approach to the offshore.

Bill C-55 already indicates that the Liberals are going to be pulling a lot of these economic rights back. The members from Atlantic Canada should already be worried about the government's move to ensure energy east did not happen, and about the war on small business, which I know my friend from Saint John watched very closely, because he publicly criticized his government on that. There is a war on job creation in Atlantic Canada, and I see Bill C-55 as the latest arsenal in the Liberal government's attempt to stymie the ability for Atlantic Canada to benefit from its offshore resources.

There is a number of other measures in the bill. Interestingly, it excludes first nations organizations that may have agreements as part of a land claims treaty. If the Liberals really are doing this in the public interest, I wonder why there would be that exclusion. I think our first nations would want to know they were being consulted on part of the decision related to marine integrity.

Finally, there are obvious exemptions for search and rescue, scientific research, and damage response that would allow first responders and others to go into marine protected spaces. It is the odd time I get to speak in the House about my own experience in that regard. When I was with the Sea King 423 squadron in Atlantic Canada, we deployed with our Atlantic navy. We went out into these economic exclusive zones, to the fisheries patrol in the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. My crew and I landed on *Hibernia*, hundreds of nautical miles from St. John's, because we had to train and prepare for evacuations and responses to tragedy. Newfoundland and Labrador knows that from the sad *Ocean Ranger* tragedy.

Developing a resource and the jobs related to the offshore has its risks. I have seen that first hand, but from living in Atlantic Canada and serving in that role, I have also seen first hand how the economic activity in, for example St. John's and the outports along the Avalon, benefits from this resource development. Bill C-55 is the plan to stop that, to pull back licences and the ability for these resources to be developed responsibly.

I think we are debating this now because of the cover-up in the Atwal affair, but I am hoping that shining a light on Bill C-55 allows some of the Atlantic caucus to speak up to the Prime Minister and say, "Enough is enough, Mr. Prime Minister. We're already going to see jobs at risk and the energy industry impacted by your cancellation of energy east because of the burdens you have put on Trans Canada and other operators. Now, with this, are you forecasting more cuts in offshore oil and gas exploration?"

• (1650)

I hope our friends, particularly my friend from Saint John, asked those tough questions at caucus, because Bill C-55 seems to signal that.

The ideological underpinnings here that really concern me can be found in proposed sections 35 and 35.1 of the act, because it appears to integrate directly the precautionary principle into the legislation, and that should cause some debate. Those sections basically say that we cannot use scientific uncertainty regarding risks, marine health, and that sort of thing, as a reason to be cautious with respect to regulation, or to phase in or to not have regulation until there is scientific certainty.

The precautionary principle, which clearly some ideological adherents in the Liberal Party want to push forward, is that before the science is even clear, let us regulate and remove activity. That is what that says. Some call it the "better safe than sorry" philosophy, but actually it is not, because acting before we have the science will have unintended risks, especially, and learned scholars have written about this, when it comes to economic activity. We would hurt economic activity, because we would be leaning in favour of stopping something before the science was even clear.

As a Conservative MP who had the pleasure of being in government for a short time, including in cabinet—and now we are on our way back there, but we are on this side—one thing I remember clearly at the time was the current Prime Minister's love for such expressions as the Liberals were for "evidence-based decision-making", that they were going to be a "science-led government", that they were going to unshackle science. Well, here in the bill, it should concern Canadians that the Liberals are actually saying that they are not going to wait for the science at all. They are going to regulate. They are going to stop development. They are going to stop technological improvement that could address some of the issues at play before the science is confirmed.

People have written on how the precautionary principle, if it is mandated, will lead to economic disruption and stifle technological innovation. We would not have actually assessed the situation properly, and so we are going to run into unintended risks, because we are leaning forward without a proper assessment of the science.

Government Orders

The good thing, the way environmental legislation already reads, is that it generally will regulate where there is science, and it does not have to be absolutely certain. Legislation generally in Canada, the United States, and other countries has been able to regulate in a way that is minimally intrusive, particularly while the science is uncertain. I am not just making this up. These are sections that the Liberals are inserting into two acts of Parliament that already exist. I do not think the Liberals could suggest that there is no regulation of the environment in our oceans. They are acknowledging that the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act exist to do this, but they are going further by inserting this ideological approach to governing. This should concern people, especially my friends in Atlantic Canada who would like the Liberal government, for a change, to lean in favour of jobs. However, the Liberals lean in favour of stopping investment.

Members do not have to just take my word for it. We remember the famous and mildly embarrassing speech the Prime Minister gave introducing President Obama in this chamber, the hallowed ground where once Winston Churchill gave his “some chicken, some neck” speech. The Prime Minister introduced the president of the United States by saying that the Press Gallery and Canadians were going to witness a bromance in action, or “dude-plomacy” as he termed it. I wanted to crawl under the table at that moment I was so embarrassed by our Prime Minister.

● (1655)

What did President Obama's chief official from the office of information and regulatory affairs say about inserting the precautionary principle in legislation? He said, “The precautionary principle, for all its rhetorical appeal, is deeply incoherent.” He acknowledges that it is policy on the fly, so that people could feel good, without clear science.

We have the ability to have science, in terms of the impact of resource development, how to mitigate that. We have science with respect to fisheries, marine life. Why would we not consult the science?

The Liberals are inserting into legislation the ability for government to ignore the science and stop first. Stop and ask questions later. I think, particularly in Atlantic Canada, that should concern a number of people.

There has been criticism of this approach because it is inserting ideological value judgments in place of sound public policy supported by science. The interesting thing is so many of the Liberal candidates, and I am sure the members listening to my speech, probably repeated that “evidence-based decision-making” line. That was one of the Liberals' top hits from the election campaign. Where is that now?

By incorporating the precautionary principle into legislation, the Liberals are saying that they are making a value judgment—their value judgment—rather than consulting the science. That should concern people. I hope people see that in Bill C-55. They might think it is innocuous.

This is ideological creep of the Liberal government. We see it everywhere. I have said that this is a government that, in NAFTA negotiations, did not mention the auto industry or other core sectors

of the economy. It said the priorities were going to be indigenous issues, environmental issues, and a number of things that are not even contained in the rules of origin, the market access provisions of a trade agreement. I termed that at the time as “virtue signalling”.

Liberals will say, “Here are our values. Who cares what the science is? Who cares what the trade agreement says? We only want to speak to a certain number of voters.” They are willing to change legislation and prioritize trade negotiations, all to support their voter base.

For a party that was constantly using the refrain “evidence-based decision-making” and “a science-based government”, Canadians should be concerned. This ideological approach we are seeing in this legislation is part of the Liberals' overall virtue signalling. “Damn the science. Let us stop development now. Let us have the ability to cancel interests in the offshore in here, and move on.”

The Liberals are not worried about the science. They are not worried about the impact on local economies in the St. John's area, and in the Saint John area, where our refinery is. There is no concern about some of the offshore support vessels throughout Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and what a value that is to the regional economy.

People in Atlantic Canada should be saying, “Wait a minute. We have a science-based approach to our offshore.” I still remember the famous case of John Crosbie putting a cod moratorium down, almost getting lynched but saying that the science said we had to do this because the stocks were dwindling, and we were going to do it. It was a science-based, tough decision.

Here we have the Liberal government basically saying, “We are not concerned with the science. We are going to lean forward. We cannot stop what we want to do because of the lack of scientific certainty.” This is an ideological wedge the Liberals have placed in this bill, and I think they are going to put it into others.

● (1700)

I have raised concerns that people in Atlantic Canada should have. I will conclude by asking the government to take that provision in sections 35 and 35.1 out, and to return to its old rhetoric about being focused on evidence-based decision-making. Stop the virtue signalling. Stop the ideological creep. Stop preventing areas of the country from properly and effectively benefiting from their onshore or offshore wealth, because thousands of families are paying the price for this Liberal ideology.

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member's speech, I have two questions for him.

First, can he confirm that the Conservative Party of Canada no longer supports the precautionary principle as it applies to fisheries management?

Second, if those members want to depend on science, which involves fully understanding our oceans, why did they muzzle scientists and cut science programs and funding almost unilaterally while in government?

Government Orders

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member I did mention that Canada, the United States, and other western democratic countries have used an approach on regulation that allows the best available science to be used to regulate. There has been no stop to regulation. We do need some science. By inserting provisions with respect to the precautionary principle, the Liberals are saying science is a back seat. They have regulated before. Why do they need this principle inserted directly in? It is because they are going to lean forward without the science.

The approach in the past with respect to fisheries regulation, with respect to environmental regulation both in Canada and the United States, goes right back to when the first Rio climate change conference was in place, which Prime Minister Mulroney helped to lead. It was about having a reasonable belief based on the best science available. What the Liberals are doing is the opposite.

Another one of the myths that the Liberals developed in the last Parliament was the so-called war on science. More scientific scholarly articles were published under the Harper government than under the previous Chrétien government, with one difference being that as the government went forward, a minister would speak on behalf of policy direction for the Government of Canada and a lead scientist would speak.

It was like when I was in the military. I could comment on the operations of the Sea King helicopter, and I did all the time, but I could not comment on the operations of the CF-18s in Cold Lake. Just because I was in the air force did not mean I could comment outside the areas I specifically worked on. It was common sense.

The trouble now is that all the Liberal slogans, like evidence-based decision-making, are catching up and conflicting with what they are actually doing.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague. It is sad to see the government throwing Bill C-55 at us so quickly today, as a smokescreen, to avoid talking about the things that embarrass them.

What is even more embarrassing, though, is hearing the member caricature the debate by presenting positions that are so predictable that he could put anyone to sleep. Here we have a Conservative who believes that whale conservation is not based on science. We have international obligations in that regard that must be met. We have a duty.

Since my colleague seems so determined to talk about science, I wonder what his response is to the fact that science has proven that belugas are vulnerable. If an oil terminal were to be built in the beluga nursery, what would my colleague have wanted today? Does he think we are correct in guessing that this would cause a problem, or does he think we should have waited for this to be confirmed in black and white?

Many young people are talking to us about these problems, and reminding us of our international obligations regarding the protection of at-risk species. Another whale became beached yesterday in the Magdalen Islands.

Does my colleague think that not building an oil terminal in Cacouna was the right decision?

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I make my responses formed in evidence-based responses and because I do not know enough of the specifics about the terminal at Cacouna, I do not feel I am in a position to answer that. I do admire how my colleague is bringing in a regional issue to questions and comments.

No one would dispute the fact that the Oceans Act and other forms of regulation have regulated based on science, based on making sure that the integrity, whether it is a national marine area or others, is safeguarded. It has always been done with science at the centre of the decision-making.

Why, other than ideology, would the government be inserting these principles to say that it is not going to wait for science to move forward? That is an ideological flag. These acts have operated without that flag. The government is doing it to signal to people. Canadians should be concerned, given the track record of the government from NAFTA through to everything else.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Durham for his fine intervention this afternoon. I take lessons from his speaking attributes. It is in admiration that I watch him.

I would ask the member if he sees the trend and traits that have been established by the government with its “we know best” attitude being reflected in Bill C-55, and with its proposed ability to close an area without any lengthy consultation and only one year of previous activity to be included. That trend is following, and we saw it in fisheries committee this morning when we tried to put forward a motion dealing with an issue of poor interaction between the Minister of Fisheries and the Minister of Transport, causing great consternation with fishermen in Atlantic Canada, hampering growth, and hampering activity in Atlantic Canada. We put forward a motion to try and put an end to that and get the two ministries together, but the Liberal members, mostly from Atlantic Canada, shut that down.

I would like the member to comment further on the comments he made about the Liberal government shutting down opportunity for growth, particularly in Atlantic Canada.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and colleague for North Okanagan—Shuswap for his nice words and comments.

He is absolutely right. The example he is raising from committee is yet another example of the government, particularly a few people in the Prime Minister's Office, making decisions that are having terrible consequences on Atlantic Canada and western Canada, and affecting jobs at the kitchen table. If we dare suggest that those decisions are poor ones in Canada's national interest, they say that we do not understand Canada or that we do not have the right values. Our deputy leader had the gall to ask a few questions of the finance minister, and he said that people who did not agree with him were going to be dragged along and called her a neanderthal. This is the approach, and I have seen it countless times.

The Canada summer jobs values test is an example. They do not want faith organizations from other groups to participate in this program and so they are going to design a way to exclude them. It is terrible, and I think Canadians are starting to catch on, and the Liberals are seeing that Canadians are trying to catch on.

I am hoping that, by raising this with respect to the Oceans Act, we start tackling it every time the Liberals do this virtue signalling, value judgment division, dividing Canadians, and dropping job opportunities for Atlantic Canada.

• (1710)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has brought in legislation, and we have a very progressive approach in wanting to have protected areas, which is a reflection of what Canadians really and truly want to see happen. We are seeing more empowerment of the minister to be able to take action. These are all good things. However, on the one hand, we have the New Democrats, of course, constantly saying that we can always do more. To a certain degree, we can do more. There is always room to improve, and we will work toward that. Then we have the Conservatives on the other hand saying that we have gone too far. Therefore, we are somewhere in between. I wonder if the member across the way would not agree.

As a government, we have to know we are doing right when we have the Conservatives saying that we are going too far and the NDP saying that we have not gone far enough.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I love how the Liberals will often try and play the Goldilocks approach to government in that they are right in the middle where the porridge is perfect. They are actually not even on the kitchen table.

The member just said that they are so progressive and that is what Canadians want. Well, Canadians would like to hear from Daniel Jean. Where is that? They are muzzling Daniel Jean. Do Canadians want to pay Omar Khadr \$10.5 million? Do Canadians want to remove words like “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” or “mom” and “dad” and start referring to people as “peoplekind”? Do Canadians want summer jobs for university students to have to go through a screen to screen out churches and faith organizations? No, Canadians actually do not want any of the ideological drivel from the government. That is why in 2019 they are going to replace them with the Conservatives.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION PRESENTED BY GOVERNMENT

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to a question of privilege raised by the hon. opposition House leader on March 21, 2018, concerning statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Public Safety. My hon. colleague affirmed that the government had misled the House by giving allegedly conflicting versions of what happened with regard to the Jaspal Atwal invitation during the Prime Minister's trip last month.

The House is governed by rules that help to frame the debates that take place here. As mentioned in many rulings, a matter must be

Privilege

raised at the earliest opportunity with the Speaker to be considered a prima facie breach of privilege.

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states at page 145:

...the Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a Member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a prima facie question of privilege.

The alleged conflicting statements were communicated on February 27, 2018. The hon. opposition House leader only raised that matter with you on March 21, 2018. That is six sitting days or 22 calendar days after the fact.

On the crux of the matter, I would argue that the matter before us today is not a question of privilege, but rather a matter of debate. In her speech, the hon. opposition House leader referred to Speaker Milliken's 2002 decision where the hon. minister of defence of the time was found in prima facie breach of privilege. What the hon. member failed to mention in her statement is that the PROC committee studied the question and exonerated the minister from the charge laid against him.

It should be noted in the committee report tabled on March 22, 2002, on the question, PROC referred to David McGee's *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, which at page 491 states that when it is alleged that a member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House, "... it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect, and that in making it the member intended to mislead the House."

Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to your predecessor's ruling of April 29, 2015, which stated at page 13198 of *Hansard*:

...as your Speaker, I must take all members at their word. To do otherwise, to take it upon myself to assess the truthfulness or accuracy of Members' statements is not a role which has been conferred on me, nor that the House has indicated that it would somehow wish the Chair to assume, with all of its implications.

I would also like to add that in a ruling from January 31, 2008, which can be found at page 2435 of *Hansard*, Speaker Milliken stated that:

...any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of a minister's response to an oral question is a matter of debate...

As such, I believe that it impossible to state that the Prime Minister or the Minister of Public Safety has misled the House of Commons and that there is no ground to qualify the actions as breaches of privilege. I also maintain that the question of privilege has not been raised in a timely manner. Consequently, I respectfully submit that this is a dispute as to the facts and as such does not constitute a prima facie breach of privilege.

• (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for these additional reflections on the question of privilege and will certainly take that under advisement and get back to the House in due course.

Government Orders

I see the hon. member for Durham on his feet in regard to the question of privilege.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise with regard to the question of privilege brought by the opposition House leader. I have an addition to her question of parliamentary privilege, which relates not only to the point she raised based on the previous Eggleton ruling.

I have read into the record, for the Chair's decision with respect to this question of privilege, the question from question period that was posed by the deputy leader of the Conservative Party today, where she directly refuted comments with respect to the briefing by Mr. Jean.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister and the public safety minister suggested, or left open the possibility, that there was classified information in that judgment. Today, the Prime Minister seemed very clear that there was no such classified information in that judgment, as was the case with the public safety minister.

In response to questions for the public safety minister, the deputy leader of the Conservatives read into the record in this place, so it is before you as Chair, Mr. Speaker, the evidence provided by one of the journalists who was given the briefing by Mr. Jean. He said that certain things he was being told could not be reported. Therefore, the original question of privilege brought by my colleague, the House leader for the opposition, was based on the fact that the opposition, in our individual and collective ability to hold the government to account, have freedom of speech, conduct inquiries, and call witnesses, was based in part on the fact there were two responses coming from the government. I would add to her question of privilege today's evidentiary record, which shows, once again, that there were two different versions coming from two separate members of the government with respect to whether all parts of the briefing by the national security adviser Daniel Jean to journalists were classified or were not classified. We have heard various versions of this.

Unlike my friend, who brought up several Speakers' rulings with respect to you, Mr. Speaker, not being in a position to ascertain the quality or accuracy of the responses, I agree with that precedent. This is not about accuracy; this is about a question of privilege where the members of the opposition, in our ability to do our job, are being told two different stories, two different responses. It is not the quality of them; it is which response is the response of the Government of Canada.

One would think it should come from the Prime Minister, as the leader of the government in the chamber. However, even today his response with respect to whether the information in the Jean briefing was classified or not, as the evidence from the deputy Conservative leader shows, was being refuted within minutes by members of the media who participated in the briefing.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we would like to add to the question of privilege not just the issue of two different responses with respect to the Atwal India affair, but we now have for your consideration two different responses as to whether the briefing by Mr. Jean was classified or was not classified.

● (1720)

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Durham for these additional comments. I certainly accept them on their face, as with the earlier interventions. Of course, all of these additional comments will be taken under advisement for consideration, and we will come back to the House in due course.

* * *

OCEANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-55, An Act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to again speak to Bill C-55, an act to amend the Oceans Act and the Canada Petroleum Resources Act.

I had the opportunity to speak to the legislation back in September at second reading. I expressed some serious concerns with the legislation and how it might affect fishers and coastal communities. It was my hope that the government would make some significant amendments to the legislation in response.

It was not just me expressing concern. A huge number of Canadians who rely on the ocean for their livelihoods have voiced their concerns loud and clear, but these concerns have fallen on the deaf ears of the government.

As I stated back in September, the provisions in Bill C-55 will certainly make delivering on the government's campaign promise of increasing the amount of Canada's marine protected areas much easier, but there are costs associated with moving at this unreasonable pace. We are again seeing the government move forward with a timeline that is so strictly tied to a campaign promise rather than having promises that are based on reasonable timelines. This makes for good politics, but it does not make for good policy.

For example, once an area has an interim designation, it will be very difficult to reverse. Once the minister decides to deem an area as an interim MPA, there will be restrictions, regulations, and prohibitions put in place that will affect the use of the area for a full five years. What if, for example, at the end of the five years it is determined that the area should not be deemed to be an MPA? It would appear to me that this is a classic example of the old adage of "putting the cart before the horse". It would be a much more effective process to examine all evidence in a fulsome process to determine MPAs rather than create a piecemeal approach wherein areas are designated on an interim basis and then reviewed. Again, this is all the result of arbitrary, self-imposed deadlines that are unreasonable and will result in a rushed and, quite frankly, messy process.

At the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the committee heard time and time again that the government was moving much too quickly and needed to take a step back to ensure the process for creating an MPA was actually based on scientific evidence and proper consultation rather than simply the will of the minister. My colleague, the member for Durham, eloquently explained that lack of science. While the government constantly pretends to base everything on science, quite obviously it does not.

A number of the amendments that the Conservative members of the committee put forward were rejected by the Liberals. These amendments would have made Bill C-55 much more effective and would have ensured that all those who would be affected by an MPA would be properly consulted before it was put in place by the minister.

I would like to take some time to present to the House some of the amendments that were rejected by the Liberal members of the committee, many of whom represent coastal communities by the way. In fact, six of the Liberal MPs on our committee represent Maritime ridings. Their constituents have told our committee constantly that they are not very happy with the lack of consultation and science.

Under Bill C-55, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, without any consultation with stakeholders, fishers, or community members, may implement an interim protected area. The committee heard time and again that an interim designation without any consultation was simply not acceptable.

Therefore, the Conservatives introduced an amendment to require the minister to give a 60-day consultation period before using his or her powers under this act. Given that the government's favourite word on almost any other topic is "consultation", we naively assumed that this amendment would pass. Unfortunately, the Liberal members of the committee did not agree that it was a good idea for their constituents to have a voice and they ultimately rejected this amendment.

• (1725)

I represent a landlocked riding in Ontario, so the impact of Bill C-55 on my constituency is fairly minimal. However, that does not take away the fact, as I see it, as well as many of the constituents of the Liberal members at the fisheries committee see it, that this would take away their livelihood without any consultation. Nobody should have to put up with that. If this thing were affecting my constituents in Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, they would be screaming bloody murder.

However, it truly boggles my mind that Liberal members at the fisheries and oceans committee would not fight against this legislation. We are supposed to be looking out for the best interests of our constituents, not the Prime Minister or the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

I feel truly sorry for the residents of South Shore—St. Margarets, Miramichi—Grand Lake, Avalon, and all other ridings of Liberal members on the fisheries and oceans committee. In 2015, they thought they were electing their voice in Ottawa. Instead it appears they have elected Ottawa's voice in their community.

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Furthermore, the Conservative members of the committee also introduced two amendments that would have required some form of reporting to Parliament by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to update the House on the status of the MPA process and interim designations made under this act. Specifically, the amendment would have called for the minister to report to the House once per fiscal year regarding the administration and enforcement of this act for that specific year. The report would include any MPAs that were designated during that period, the extent to which, in the opinion of the minister, the conservation reasons stated for each designated MPA had been respected, and, finally, any further measures that the minister thought were required for any designated MPAs.

One would think that a party that has spent years in opposition, claiming that the former government had no respect for Parliament, would welcome this amendment with open arms. We were not asking the minister to come out every year and spill state secrets. It was simply to be a quick update on where things were at and where we were going. Unfortunately, once again, these amendments were rejected.

Before I wrap up my comments, I wanted to put on the record some comments that were made by Dr. Larry McKinney, executive director at the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at the University of Corpus Christi in Texas. Dr. McKinney is an expert on MPAs and has established a number of them throughout the United States. He told the committee that the MPA process worked best when the identification and establishment of MPAs were driven by the communities that would be impacted by their designation. He stated that the most successful MPAs he had overseen were the ones that were actually identified by local recreational fishers who saw a need for protection and worked with the government to protect these areas.

I always say that anglers and hunters are the true stewards of the environment and true conservationists.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will have eleven and a half minutes remaining for his remarks when the House next gets back to debate on the question. He will also have a period of 10 minutes for questions and comments.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NET NEUTRALITY

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.) moved:

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That the House: (a) recognize that the Internet has thrived due to net neutrality principles of openness, transparency, freedom, and innovation; (b) recognize that Canada has strong net neutrality rules in place that are grounded in the Telecommunications Act and enforced by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC); (c) recognize that preserving an open Internet and the free flow of information is vital for the freedom of expression and diversity, education, entrepreneurship, innovation, Canadian democracy, and the future economic and social prosperity of Canadians; (d) express its firm support for net neutrality and the continued preservation of an open Internet, free from unjust discrimination and interference; and (e) call on the government to include net neutrality as a guiding principle of the upcoming Telecommunications Act and Broadcasting Act reviews in order to explore opportunities to further enshrine in legislation the principles of neutrality in the provision and carriage of all telecommunications services.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to start debate on Motion No. 168. At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Andrew Quinn for his diligence, hard work, and excellent research on this topic, and also my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for seconding the motion.

Motion No. 168 is a motion to strengthen and protect an open Internet in Canada by ensuring that net neutrality is a guiding principle in the Government of Canada's upcoming review of the Telecommunications Act and the Broadcasting Act. The object is to further enshrine in legislation the principles of neutrality in the provision and carriage of all telecommunications services.

Net neutrality is an issue that has become increasingly important to Canadians, and it is imperative for the Government of Canada to reaffirm our commitment to preserving a fair and open Internet for Canadians. I also believe it is time for Canadians to have a robust conversation about this issue.

While some may be unfamiliar with the term net neutrality, every Canadian has experienced its benefits. Net neutrality is the concept that all web traffic should be given equal treatment by Internet service providers, or ISPs, a term I will be using a lot. Under net neutrality rules, ISPs should be prevented from blocking or slowing down access to lawful content, nor should they be allowed to create fast lanes for content providers willing to pay extra. For example, net neutrality laws would prevent an ISP from slowing down one's access to a content provider such as Netflix to encourage one to move to a rival content provider that pays the ISP more money for faster streaming speeds. The concept of net neutrality is ingrained in the way we consume and exchange information in Canada and has contributed to the success of Canada's economy.

It is important to note that the term net neutrality is not expressly used or defined in the Telecommunications Act. As it currently stands, Canada has demonstrated a commitment to net neutrality, and we enjoy some of the protections through the concept of common carriage.

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC, defines net neutrality as:

the concept that all traffic on the Internet should be given equal treatment by Internet providers with little to no manipulation, interference, prioritization, discrimination or preference given.

Interestingly, the sections of the Telecommunications Act that deal with the idea of net neutrality predate the term itself and predate the Internet. It has been pointed out that the concept of common carriage in Canada dates back to the Canadian Railways Act, 1906. Chris

Seidl, executive director of telecommunications for the CRTC, states:

It turns out that the same principles are effective whether we're referring to cargo transported on railway cars or data carried over telecommunication networks. It is important to keep in mind that net neutrality is focused on carriage rather than content.

Because these sections were written in a technology neutral manner, they have allowed the CRTC to protect the idea of net neutrality in its policies. However, I do not think it is enough to accept the status quo. The CRTC has defined net neutrality, and it is clear that it understands and agrees with this concept. Therefore, the government should modernize the legislation by enshrining the definition and the concept in the Telecommunications Act.

In speaking to residents in my riding of Oakville, I heard loud and clear that this is a priority. In my riding of Oakville, whether it was CEOs, entrepreneurs, business leaders, youth on my constituency youth council, or just everyday Oakvillians, they all supported net neutrality.

I introduced this motion at Sheridan College to a room full of computer, applied sciences, and Internet communications students and faculty. Collectively, the students and faculty were engaged and were significantly worried about this issue. They had thoughtful and in-depth questions about how this motion would work and how much net neutrality is needed in today's Canada. It is very fulfilling to see a younger generation passionate about a topic and engaged with our democratic processes. This is clearly an issue that transcends traditional divides and has strong support across Canada.

Let me outline some of the reasons for strengthening net neutrality. So much of how we live our lives now happens online. It is important that the Internet remain an open forum for us to express ideas, reach new markets, and preserve the opportunity for democratic conversations. The Internet has thrived due to the net neutrality principles of openness, transparency, freedom, and innovation. This needs to be continued and protected.

● (1735)

Net neutrality allows every Canadian to access lawful content on the Internet without interference from third parties. It underscores our freedom to express and share ideas. Net neutrality prevents third parties, like ISPs or telecommunications providers, from choosing which content Canadians see. It prevents corporations from becoming censors, which has dangerous implications for Canadians' fundamental right to freedom of expression. Further, our digital economy is built on the foundation of net neutrality.

Let me expand on some of these points a bit more. Consumers, everyday Canadians, stand to be most affected if there was the loss of net neutrality. I introduced the motion because I believe it is our government's role to protect consumers from unfair circumstances and to promote competition in the Canadian economy. Reaffirming net neutrality in Canada would do just that. We need to preserve an environment online that favours consumers' freedom instead of corporations' profits and that promotes diversity and entrepreneurship instead of monopolies.

Mobile carriers and ISPs should provide a platform through which consumers are able to access and share content without intervention. Consumers should be concerned if ISPs are able to prevent what they are able to access online. The ramifications of that interference are part of why I am asking our government to reaffirm its commitment to net neutrality. We need to be on the side of the consumers.

Net neutrality also promotes competition in a way that allows for better quality products and services for Canadians. Consumer-oriented competition is valuable for Canadians and for our economy. Competition between ISPs will continue to lead to innovation and excellence. ISPs can and do compete on the price of their packages, the quality of service, and data plans. I think all Canadians would applaud continued investment in infrastructure, better connection speeds, and better service.

The loss of net neutrality would also affect our rights and freedoms. Canadians cherish our right to express our ideas and beliefs openly, so much so that we enshrined our freedom of thought, beliefs, opinions, and expression in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Without a firm commitment to net neutrality, the freedom of Canadians to express themselves online could be undermined. If net neutrality was repealed or scaled back, the possibility that third parties could essentially censor content for financial or ideological gain would be a real possibility.

This is alarming, and it should raise concerns for all Canadians. The Internet is a forum for Canadians to exchange ideas, get exposure to new and different points of view, and explore new and unfamiliar concepts. It is imperative that we keep it that way.

Let us talk about politics. In this day and age, most Canadians get their news online. Much of people's perceptions and world views are based on the articles they read, many of which are online. Access to a wide range of information, from a variety of sources, is a valuable tool for developing a well-rounded, informed view on political issues.

I know that every member of the House understands the value of discourse and debate in politics. Our democracy is deeply tied to our freedom of expression, and net neutrality is the foundation of our democratic expression online.

Third parties like ISPs and mobile carriers should not have the ability to limit Canadians' ability to see content from political parties or to access media from all political leanings and viewpoints. This allows for a wider conversation and ensures that Canadians have access to arguments on all sides of political issues. Reaffirming our commitment to net neutrality would preserve open democratic discussion from all perspectives and make sure that Canadian democracy remains healthy, open, and strong.

One of the most important reasons to ensure continued longevity and support for net neutrality in Canada is our vast and quickly growing digital economy. According to the Information and Communications Technology Council, the digital economy accounted for \$71.5 billion of Canada's GDP in 2015, and it has been increasing each year since.

We all hear and read stories of the next best product or service coming from a Canadian company or entrepreneur. It is vitally important that we make sure that this continues. Net neutrality

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allows for an even playing field for everyone. A young entrepreneur, fresh out of university with the next big idea, is relying on opportunities afforded by a fair and open Internet to get into business.

Let us say that some entrepreneurs are building a bigger and better video streaming service. Imagine that they have raised the money, built out the product, launched it into the world, and are getting their first customers. They are doing well and are starting to grow, but the next thing they know, their ISP comes along and says that unless they pay a substantial fee, it is going to slow down their content to their customers. They do not have the money to pay for that.

● (1740)

Customers are not going to select their product to get slow service. Nobody wants constantly buffering videos. They know that they have built a product that is better than the competition, but they cannot afford to pay the additional fees just to distribute the content.

There is a term for this. It is called highway robbery. ISPs make their money from selling Internet access to consumers. They should not be charging companies at the other end of the pipe as well.

How could any new company get started if it could not compete? Without net neutrality, we would stifle innovation and undermine our digital economy.

Let us take it one step further. These entrepreneurs have built the video streaming service. Canadians all over the country are flocking to their program. A big ISP sees this. It has a competing video program, and it does not like that it is losing customers to the new service. Rather than competing, that ISP just blocks the service entirely so that no one can access it.

That is exactly what happened in the United States in 2012, when AT&T blocked FaceTime, a video chat service created by Apple. It was blocked to all of its U.S. customers, because it was competing with AT&T's own service.

Some will say that this is Canada and it would never happen here. It has happened, and without net neutrality, it will happen again.

In 2015, Bell made a complaint against the wireless carrier Videotron. Videotron had launched a feature in August of that year enabling customers to stream music from specific music streaming services without it counting against a monthly data cap. It was a way to entice people to subscribe to Videotron's Internet service. In 2017, the CRTC ruled in favour of Bell so that all data used by a consumer had to be treated equally and no inherent favour could be given to an ISP's in-house services.

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This differential pricing practice, known as zero-rating, allows Internet providers to charge different prices depending on the type of app or service a person uses. Once ISPs and mobile carriers are able to exempt data from a data cap, they can start to favour and prioritize content. That is unacceptable, and we can never let it happen again.

Every ruling on net neutrality is a concern when the concept is never expressly defined in the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act.

For all these reasons, it is clear that net neutrality is vitally important for Canada. Our democracy, our economy, and even simple social interactions are reliant on a neutral and open Internet. We need to support Canadians, whether entrepreneurs, political advocates, or online consumers.

I hope this motion is a catalyst for all stakeholders, businesses, consumers, the government, ISPs, and Canadians to come together to discuss net neutrality as part of the upcoming review of both the Telecommunications Act and the Broadcasting Act. A conversation needs to happen, and now is the time.

The House must provide leadership on this important issue. We must call on the government to include net neutrality as a guiding principle in the Telecommunications Act and the Broadcasting Act reviews in order to explore opportunities to further enshrine in legislation the principles of neutrality in the provision and carriage of all telecommunications services.

Canada needs to reaffirm its commitment to net neutrality. I have no doubt that Canadians will say loudly that they want net neutrality strengthened and protected. That is why I have brought forward Motion No. 168. I look forward to hearing debate on it.

● (1745)

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Oakville for his strong defence of net neutrality, something I support very much and that is important to a number of my constituents as well.

I am wondering if the hon. member could elaborate on the current protections. What is the current situation? I noticed in his speech that he talked about reaffirming net neutrality in Canada. In what ways would this bill strengthen net neutrality in Canada?

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, today the CRTC defined net neutrality, and it will take action to defend net neutrality in the Internet space.

The Telecommunications Act does not specifically mention net neutrality. It deals with the concept of open carriage. I provided a quote during my speech about the origins of open carriage, which dealt with freight transportation and content versus carriage in freight cars. That is the concept that is in place today. I do not believe that it is strong enough.

I believe that we need to specifically address and approach the Telecommunications Act with a net neutrality lens and attempt to enshrine those principles in the act itself. The CRTC has been doing a great job defending that position. As a House and as a government, we should work to see this enshrined in legislation.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this motion forward. I want to

highlight a bit of the hypocrisy that pertains to this debate. We see a motion like this speaking of something like net neutrality, where it ensures that freedom of speech is allowed and encouraged. However, I wonder how the member reconciles that with something like the Canada summer jobs program where the government is telling Canadians what they should and should not be able to accept as part of an attestation.

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, this is all about protecting our rights and freedoms. We need net neutrality to protect our rights and freedoms. We want to enshrine them in our Constitution, and open and frank dialogue on the Internet is an important element of that. I would note that the opposition members and others have been in full debate on the Internet on the concept of whether the attestation has been a fair and applied principle. We can have that debate and we can have discourse in this House on that issue and online because of net neutrality. Therefore, the member actually speaks very well in defence of this motion.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, net neutrality is a core essence for New Democrats and we continue that to today. The member for Timmins—James Bay has been on this file for a number of years.

Net neutrality is critical, but the member needs to shed some light on fair practices on the use of net neutrality with regard to Facebook and some of the activity that is taking place. We have seen serious manipulation of people's information and data that undermines democracy. I wonder what the member's comments on that are. Does he not think that part of the problem we face is abuse of circumstances like that, which defeats the whole principle of net neutrality?

● (1750)

Mr. John Oliver: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to personal data, people are making their own choices and decisions about what they would like to put on the Internet. That to me is a fundamental principle of net neutrality. We are not censored. We can put information out there as we see fit. In terms of the motion, there are other issues around mining that data and how they are used by large companies like Facebook. It is a secondary debate to this one. I still stand by the principle that Canadians should be entitled to put their views or their opinions out there, put whatever personal data they think is appropriate out there, and there should be no censorship or blockage of that information.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion by the member for Oakville regarding net neutrality in Canada.

This is an important issue for all Canadians as they navigate through the complexity that is the digital marketplace. This debate has come to the fore due to the decisions made south of the border. As all Canadians know, whatever happens with our American neighbours is likely to reverberate in Canada.

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Net neutrality is a principle that has been respected in Canada for quite some time. The CRTC has been proactive in enforcing the principles of net neutrality through a number of decisions. Canada has also had a robust debate on the merits of net neutrality among stakeholders, and it is important that we raise this issue in the House today.

I am proud that we have a number of telecom companies and ISPs that provide first-class service across Canada. This competition promotes innovation and ensures that consumers have a wide variety of choices and the power to make free decisions on what content they wish to access.

We can all marvel at the changes that have taken place in the digital sphere in the past decade alone. Former start-ups such as Amazon, Netflix, Facebook, and Google are now household names and impact our lives every day. Growing up, we had a VCR and then a DVD player. Now my generation is unlikely to have either, as we rely upon the Internet through our hand-held devices to provide us with media content.

The explosion of content and the ease with which consumers can access it can be significantly attributed to our principled stand that Internet content be shared at an equal speed. Without the equal opportunity to be a content creator on the Internet, the diversity of choices would be significantly restrained to the detriment of start-ups and consumers.

Net neutrality does not mean that Canadians have the right to view Netflix content at 100 megabytes per second wherever they may be. What it does ensure, however, is that whatever content consumers wish to access will be provided at the same speed. This is very important because, as members can imagine, the prospect of having one website slowed down in favour of another could have a dramatic impact on the success of that website and, by extension, that business, regardless of the quality of service provided by that business.

For example, a travel page that has consistently provided a competitive price with great service may be at a massive disadvantage to a competitor sponsored by an ISP with preferential speeds, even though that competitor may provide consistently higher prices and poor service. Merely slowing down the time that it takes for a consumer to navigate a website can be the deciding factor in whether that service is used or not.

The implications of this slippery slope can be seen in the history of trusts in the 20th century. Steel and oil trusts with overwhelming market share have acted as monopolies, not merely in their own industries but in any related industries, such as transport and retail. As our economy becomes increasingly digital, it quickly becomes apparent that allowing ISPs to have unfettered control of the speeds at which websites can be accessed will allow them to wield a disproportionate amount of power. In the end, this will lead to less efficient outcomes, as consumers are forced to pay higher prices and companies with overwhelming control can get away with providing lower quality service.

As a Conservative, one of my fundamental beliefs is that government must do all it can to ensure that we have equality of opportunity in this country. Everyone should have the opportunity to

succeed, and the government should stay out of picking winners and losers. That is the job of the free market.

When it comes to net neutrality, it may seem that the government is encroaching too far into the realm of the free market. However, the government must ensure that free competition takes place in order to protect the integrity of the market.

Net neutrality is one of those areas where the government, with minimal intervention, can ensure that consumers, entrepreneurs, and major companies operate on a playing field that is beneficial to all players, particularly start-ups and consumers.

Taking a step back, it must be said that in Canada we have not faced a significant challenge to the principle of net neutrality. It is not a law that is enshrined in the Telecommunications Act nor the Broadcasting Act. With that knowledge, I do not want any of my comments to malign the industry players who have done a great job of ensuring that Canadians have access to the latest digital innovations.

• (1755)

With that being said, with the prospect of our American neighbours repealing net neutrality, I believe it is likely that major changes could have an effect on Canadians. With empowered consumers backed by responsible legislation and a healthy respect for the free market, Canada should not face a significant challenge to the principle of net neutrality. Any company that would attempt to slow down access to a website like Netflix in favour of its own provider would face a significant backlash that would hurt its brand more than benefit it. It is that fear and that respect for consumers and respect for the principle that all players have an equal opportunity in the digital marketplace that will ensure the success of our digital companies. Their content and services should be delivered free of discrimination, and this will ensure that Canada maintains its status as a competitive jurisdiction.

My remarks have been primarily focused on the role that net neutrality plays in the digital economy. Additionally, though, net neutrality is vital in preserving the free marketplace of ideas, which is one of the most powerful qualities of the Internet. Canada has a strong record of protecting freedom of expression and no government or business should be able to throttle the opinions and the views of its citizens. The Internet must continue to be a forum of expression where people can freely voice their dissent and concerns. Fundamentally, supporting the principle of net neutrality and defending it from the possibility of significant challenges will have a positive impact on our economy and our society. Businesses, especially start-ups, will have confidence in knowing that they can invest in creating the best product or service without the fear that they will be effectively shut out of the marketplace. This will ensure that the best companies can effectively compete with the major players, the kind of competition that has proven time and again to be the lifeblood of an efficient economy.

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I know Canadians can rest assured that our system respects net neutrality, and they can use Internet services free from undue interference from ISPs and government regulations. Net neutrality is not just about holding companies accountable. It is about holding government accountable as well. By holding government to the standards that we hold businesses when it comes to respecting consumer choices, we can ensure that Canada continues to be the free and competitive jurisdiction that it is today.

With that, I want to thank the member for Oakville, who brought this motion forward. This is an important conversation to be having in this House. All too often, we take it for granted that the way of life and the services we are accustomed to will be available forever, and that is not the case. The price of freedom is constant vigilance, and although there does not appear to be a threat to net neutrality in Canada at this time, we must have these conversations so that we are ready to tackle the challenges we will inevitably face in the future.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion on net neutrality, which is very important for a number of reasons for Canadians.

Net neutrality is important to how we set our mark in the world, especially with regard to the United States and its decision under President Trump to move away from net neutrality toward the telecommunication giants for the management of Internet traffic. This is very important for so many different things, not only the business aspect, but also the personal and democratic aspects of it and the innovative side of using the Internet.

The previous member highlighted one of the more important aspects of this, that perhaps we have taken this for granted in Canada. Many countries in the world do not have net neutrality like we have today. The mere fact that we do have Internet service providers, ISPs, that rely upon American servers and infrastructure will mean we are affected no matter what. In fact, there is also a consumer-driven element to this of cost, which no doubt will be borne by the consumers. In fact, we have some of the highest prices right now.

However, we receive some solid services. Therefore, it is not necessarily just a one-way street to the customers here. For a country of our size, our demographics, and the challenges we have, there has been a footprint of the industry that is very important for all Canadians, and it has been successful in many respects in employment and moving net neutrality and services to Canadians.

We just came from the industry committee in which we are studying the issue of rural broadband. We will have recommendations to table in the House very soon. Although I cannot get into the full report right now as it has yet to be tabled, it does get to the heart of the matter, which is the fact that net neutrality is important not only for urban areas but rural areas as well. We also have the obligation of moving online government services to that area.

Net neutrality and the spectrum it travels on is a public service. It is owned and part of a national asset. The previous Conservative government and the current Liberal administration, through spectrum auctions, have received over \$8 billion in revenue. However, there is a responsibility of the government and the providers to Canadians who own this natural resource. Canadians have supported net

neutrality from the birth of the service in Canada, and we would like to see that continue.

We have seen so many challenges in this file, but net neutrality will affect more things in the future. I will point to one of the more practical things we have, which is streaming users to certain services, products, and marketing. Some of that, without net neutrality, would also incur a cost. For example, if an Internet service provider wants to stream users to a particular advertisement, or a particular page, or a download, or something of that nature, that will part of the data package and that will cost. The users will then have to break out of that or have that incurred cost of data management in their system. Alternatively, they could seek a different product by going to different sites, which would use more data, just to try to find what they are looking for. It could be anything from online shopping, news information, sports entertainment, or a series of different things. It affects not only our democracy, but our purchasing habits as well.

It also affects small and medium-sized businesses, which should not be forgotten in this debate. They will get eclipsed by the larger operations, some of them international conglomerates, and that will stymie small business. As we try to include small business as a more innovative part of our Canadian society and business strategy, they will have trouble in a dominated non-neutral market.

● (1800)

This will affect everything, from people looking for entry into the business market, such as our youth, as well as people with second careers and those who have just developed work in an industry, to more sophisticated operations, where we have some of our creative and well-known talent in Internet web design services and other things that would, in many respects, be put at a disadvantage trying to compete.

The U.S. decision to follow in this vein as well gives us a strategic opportunity to capture some of that technology and workers in that area, as well as an economic advantage. Although we have a much smaller market to deal with, it does provide an opportunity for us as Canadians to take advantage of that type of restrictive and planned market, where access is going to be dominated by the dollar and not necessarily by the principle of being on the platform.

There are a number of things that are happening with this motion. Because the government, in budget 2017, reopened the discussion on this, the motion is appropriate to speak to today. It is something that is beneficial for the House. It is something that we as New Democrats will support. Having never wrestled with the concept of net neutrality, we believe that it is important not only for consumers but for our democracy.

Private Members' Business

It goes further and deeper. Very soon, I will be working on and launching a digital strategy platform that covers several different aspects. One of the things that connect to net neutrality here, as was implied in my previous question for the author of the motion, is the example of Facebook. There are different ways to undermine the principles of net neutrality. Where we really want to see a difference right now is in the enforcement through the CRTC board, which is more like a reactive model. We would rather see a proactive approach so that the CRTC could enforce the different types of penalties against ISP providers if they decided to throttle, skew, or change things. That is important, because it allows for a less defensive approach, where the onus is on one to play the game with one's competitors in that field, and at the same level.

Going back to Facebook, and how this connects with that, its activities and manipulation not only affect our democracy, but provide an example of how a business can purchase and get around net neutrality in many ways. However, generally, at least there are some rules out there for that. They have now been identified, and Christopher Wylie and unfortunately the Liberals were caught for this, with several operators who come from their war rooms and different types of operations now being connected to this and using data simulation and data models, and we are not even sure where they are being sold, how they are being used, and what third party involvement there is.

All these things are critical, especially with an Ontario election coming up, as we do not even know the crossover effect to the fullest degree. These things are critical, because we have a skewing of the net neutral model in the sense that Facebook is using data assimilation, collection, and so forth to stream people into different brackets, to be sold for marketing.

Where I would take issue with the author of the motion is that when something is put out there, basically it is a free-for-all. The reality is that the use or the eventual purpose of this information or data is sometimes not known when it is collected. What they do is keep a reservoir of collected information, and unfortunately we see the abuse that is taking place right now. Basically, people are being categorized and inventoried, and their behaviour is set, and that information, collectively, becomes a great economic tool, and also a management tool for streaming them toward a certain content. That is the problem we have. The crossover to net neutrality starts there. If we do not have that as a foundation for the use of the Internet, then we are at a loss to begin with. That is the most important thing. If we are going to play fair in the system, everything needs to be done, at least in the beginning, on a fair and equitable level. That is one of the things that are important for Canada.

In conclusion, we can show a divergence from the United States on this by further enshrinement of that model.

I thank the hon. member for bringing this motion to the House of Commons.

• (1805)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today in support of Motion No. 168, which seeks to strengthen net neutrality and protect an open Internet in Canada.

I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Oakville for his determined defence of a free and accessible Internet. In his

speech we heard him refer to the need to be a catalyst and I can think of no better catalyst than the member for Oakville himself. His work and the motion he has put forward today will do much to protect net neutrality in Canada.

When we speak about net neutrality, Internet traffic management practices, and differential pricing practices, it can seem like we are grappling with new frontiers in the ever-expanding world of technology. In fact, however, the principles at the core of net neutrality are in many ways similar to the foundations on which our country was built 150 years ago.

When we defend net neutrality, we are preserving principles as foundational to our democracy as freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Indeed, values of diversity and freedom of expression are fundamental to what we celebrate about being Canadian. One hundred years ago, views were exchanged, debated, and challenged in our town squares. Today, the Internet is our town square and it is vital that we ensure it remains open, diverse, and accessible.

However, free access to the Internet is not just important because we are committed to protecting basic rights and freedoms. It is also absolutely crucial because access to an open Internet where everyone enjoys a level playing field is integral to creating Canadian jobs, supporting innovation, and allowing our businesses and entrepreneurs to reach markets around the world.

In my riding of Willowdale, I am proud to have vibrant and cutting-edge businesses that employ people in good-paying jobs and put Toronto on the map for innovation. One notable industry leader is Square. Square's Canadian headquarters are located in Willowdale. Square employs dozens of people locally and even more people in Kitchener-Waterloo. The office in my riding has hardware engineers who contribute to the design of products that are used globally and a business team that brings integrated payments and business tools to Canadian sellers. Square's innovative tools are used across Canada by everyone from contractors and professional services to cafés, local stores, and vendors at farmers markets. It is a testament to the truth that when everyone has equal access to the Internet, local businesses and charities have the tools they need to succeed.

Protecting a free and open Internet means standing up for the innovators who drive growth in all of our communities.

Not only do we need to protect the Internet for today's businesses, but we also need concrete action on behalf of tomorrow's generations who will be working in an increasingly online workforce. This government understands the importance of getting our youth the skills they need for the labour market of the future.

Private Members' Business

I was thrilled to help launch Canada Learning Code in Toronto this past January, where our government invested \$7.9 million in coding and digital skills through CanCode, which is a \$50-million federal program that gives children from kindergarten to high school the chance to learn coding and other digital skills. While our children are learning how to thrive in tomorrow's economy, it is our duty to ensure that their innovations and entrepreneurial spirit are provided the free and open Internet they desire.

In Canada, we are not starting from scratch when it comes to protecting the Internet and promoting access from coast to coast to coast. I am proud that our government is already working to increase access to the Internet with initiatives like connect to innovate, where we have pledged to invest \$500 million by 2021 to ensure that 300 rural and remote communities in Canada have access to the high-speed Internet so they can be connected to new opportunities. Protecting net neutrality is another facet of ensuring that Canadians are able to be connected for success.

●(1810)

I am also encouraged that we already have powerful tools at our disposal to defend net neutrality. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission is committed to supporting and enforcing net neutrality because it understands that Canadians must have access to choice and the free exchange of ideas. The CRTC makes sure that Internet traffic management practices comply with our laws. In April 2017, it established a new framework to deal with differential pricing practices. Furthermore, Canada has some of the world's strongest legislation in this area. The Telecommunications Act treats Internet service providers like utilities, which means they cannot give preference to certain services or influence the content transmitted on their networks. However, we still need to be vigilant in protecting this vital right.

We are at a pivotal moment in the defence of net neutrality. Today, we face an environment where decisions are made in international markets to back away from net neutrality. The world may be made up of countries spread across seven continents, but we are one global community tied together by shared culture, media, and businesses that thrive online.

At the same time, Canada is also approaching reviews of the Telecommunications Act and the Broadcasting Act. The Minister of Canadian Heritage has launched a review of both acts as part of a greater effort to ensure that Canadian content is celebrated and has an international audience. I applaud this initiative. Digital technology is a most rapidly changing field, and for this reason we must review Canada's legislation to ensure that our laws remain up to date. These reviews also present an ideal opportunity to explore avenues to further strengthen the laws that protect net neutrality.

In summary, I would like to once again thank my colleague for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. As we consider the importance of net neutrality, let us reflect on the fundamental question of what it means to live in a free and open society. In the words of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, "I am a Canadian...free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong."

●(1815)

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for moving this motion. I think it is extremely important to be talking about this topic today, especially in light of recent events. It is an honour to stand today and support this motion which is important to me and many of my constituents.

The free flow of information is important to all Canadians. Access to all sources of information allow citizens to form and articulate their own opinions, a fundamental pillar of our democracy. That is why I am supporting private member's Motion No. 168, to affirm my support for net neutrality and the protection of an open Internet in Canada.

Our neighbours in the United States recently decided that Internet service providers will no longer be regulated as utilities like they currently are in Canada. Instead, these service providers will now be designated as information services. This new information service designation means that providers can purposely impact the speed at which websites load based on how much users and content creators are paying them or if the content belongs to a competitor.

Although there is no formal move to give Internet service providers in Canada the same power, the American case highlights the importance of protecting net neutrality here. It is an issue that has many Canadians concerned and rightfully so. The Internet has become an essential service in Canada and it must remain a freely available utility. Service providers should not dictate how people use the Internet.

According to Canada's Telecommunications Act, Internet providers in Canada, such as Bell and Rogers, are explicitly treated as providing a utility, ensuring they practise common carriage. Common carriage stipulates that these providers cannot influence or give preference to content passing through the distribution networks, such as the website a user is trying to access.

There will be a review of the Telecommunications Act in the near future. I'm honoured to have a seat at the House Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, where I presume I will have the opportunity to formally engage in this review process. In that capacity, I will push for the continued protection of common carriage in the telecommunications industry.

The fight for net neutrality is extremely important right now. A few months ago, Bell and several other media conglomerates announced a proposal to create a mandatory blocking system for websites that they have arbitrarily determined are inappropriate. Bell's proposal asks Canada's Internet service providers to block websites they deem as piracy. The blocking process would take place with little to no oversight by our courts. Obviously, this plan has Internet and net neutrality experts concerned. This plan would seriously harm open Internet access for users and also violates freedom of expression rights.

Private Members' Business

Michael Geist, the Canada research chair in Internet and e-commerce law at the University of Ottawa, warned that agreeing to this proposal is a slippery slope:

The CRTC should be particularly wary of establishing a mandated blocking system given the likelihood that it will quickly expand beyond sites that "blatantly, overwhelmingly or structurally" engage in infringing or enabling or facilitating the infringing of copyright. For example, Bell, Rogers, and Quebecor last year targeted TVAddons, a site that contains considerable non-infringing content, that would presumably represent the type of site destined for the block list.

Canadians should be concerned about this proposal. In fact, more than 6,000 people complained directly to the CRTC. Advocacy group OpenMedia's Stop Canada Censorship campaign logged almost 30,000 comments. Clearly, maintaining net neutrality is important to many Canadians. I have heard personally from many of my constituents in Edmonton about how important net neutrality has become to them.

I am passionate about free speech, a freedom promised to all Canadians in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We have already seen attacks on our free speech and freedom of conscience, including the Liberals' values test, which blocked hundreds of charitable and religious organizations across the country from receiving Canada summer jobs funding.

As well, free speech on university campuses is under attack. Controversial speakers are frequently uninvited when a minority of students complain because they do not want to be exposed to ideas they do not agree with. This is plain and clear censorship happening on university campuses across the country. Students enrol in universities to learn to think critically, and part of thinking critically is to be able to dissect and decide their positions on certain issues. How can students develop this crucial skill if universities are not allowing discussion on different viewpoints?

• (1820)

Lindsay Shepherd, a teaching assistant at Wilfrid Laurier University, was recently disciplined for showing a debate that aired on public television which featured a commentator with a viewpoint that made a student in Lindsay Shepherd's class uncomfortable. In her words, "Universities are no longer places where one can engage with controversial ideas. They are echo chambers for left-wing ideology."

Being exposed to different ideas may be uncomfortable, but learning and respecting the viewpoints of others is essential to our democracy, a democracy that we can be proud of, and one that is at risk of deteriorating. We cannot stop healthy debate and discussion from happening just because it might make someone feel uncomfortable.

We also have a government that recently promised to give, over five years, \$50 million to save local newspapers. As a Conservative, I wholeheartedly support a strong, free, and independent press, because local news sources strengthen communities. However, I do not support government funding and the level of control that comes with government funding. In order to be free and unbiased, the press must not have, or even have the perception of, government interference. The Prime Minister cannot be trusted to pick and choose the organizations that will administer funding to news outlets. Such a process will compromise the independence of a free press and lead to skepticism from the general public.

As well, the Liberals are now involved in a scandal involving the possible misuse of Facebook users' data. A Canadian, Christopher Wylie, went public about how his company mined Facebook data during the recent election in the United States. We later learned that he was employed under two separate Liberal leaders and was also awarded a \$100,000 contract by the Prime Minister just two years ago. He allegedly helped the party refine its data analytics practices. We do not know what else he did because the government will not tell us. As well, it will not go public about its data collection practices, though we know it stepped up spending on data analytics for the 2015 election. I hope the government will be honest with Canadians about what data it collected and what it used it for.

Data mining allows companies to collect information about people online and learn what they like and do not like. Companies can then release targeted ads and control what people see based on their online profiles. We know that targeted ads on Facebook played a huge factor in the U.S. election, and we do not want to see that happen in Canada. We want Canadians to be able to formulate their own opinions about elections and who to vote for without influence from companies or political parties.

Net neutrality fits into this complex debate. No one has the right to arbitrarily decide what people can and cannot access, not the government, not Internet service providers, and certainly not the Prime Minister and his cabinet. Doing so would be blatant censorship. Allowing companies like Bell and Rogers to slow down Internet speeds when users try to access certain websites is a slippery slope.

The government has clearly shown a laissez-faire attitude about Canadians' privacy online and our rights to freedom of speech. When we have a government that may have been involved in data mining, it makes protecting the Internet and the privacy of Canadians even more important. It is vitally important that we support net neutrality in Canada and continue to ensure that all web traffic is given equal treatment by Internet service providers.

Given the government's record on attacking free speech and freedom of conscience, I am a bit surprised this motion was brought forward by a government member. However, I think this is a very important motion as it recognizes that the Internet has thrived due to net neutrality and its principles of openness and transparency. Supporting the motion is the right thing to do for my constituents and for all Canadians.

Private Members' Business

As shadow minister of science, I am keenly interested in research, innovation, and technology. I support loosening regulation where appropriate to encourage innovation. However, the belief in equality is a fundamental principle of conservatism and, as such, I do not believe that Canadians' access to information should be arbitrarily disadvantaged.

Freedom of speech, and with that the free flow of information, is important for all Canadians. Large media conglomerates should not have the ability to arbitrarily decide on Canadians' behalf what they can and cannot see online. These are guiding fundamental principles of our society. That is why I am grateful to have had the opportunity to stand today and support Motion No. 168.

• (1825)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the member for Oakville's initiative on bringing forward a motion to defend net neutrality, and it gives me great pride to be able to second this motion.

As has been noted a number of times already, the core concept of net neutrality already exists strongly in Canadian law without being specifically named. It is an important principle.

Net neutrality is a significantly bigger issue than limiting the speed of Netflix, and I am somebody who is quite sensitive to being asked to slow down. It is also a far broader discussion than we give it credit for. I will dive into all of that over the next few minutes and into next month.

At its core, net neutrality means that Internet service providers and the backbone providers that ISPs are connected to do not judge, limit, or control the content, speed, or nature of Internet traffic. Any packet, the basic unit of an Internet connection, coming in is relayed to its destination provided it meets basic security requirements. Net neutrality need not extend to blindly permitting distributed denial of service attacks, for example, nor the forwarding of packets with spoofed headers. Indeed, a DDoS is a third-party attack on neutrality by negatively affecting another service, but I digress.

The point is that if we take away net neutrality, what we take away is the network provider's obligation to pass on a packet without judging it. At its simplest, not having net neutrality means that any ISP can rate-limit, which means selectively slow down a bandwidth-intensive service like Netflix, without affecting the rest of the connection. That is how the big Internet service providers will sell this to us, as a fundamental question of fairness.

It sounds reasonable. Netflix alone represents about 35% of Internet traffic in North America today. It is not, of course, actually reasonable. If an ISP is not capable of sustaining the capacity it has sold someone, it has oversold it. I will come back to that the next time this is up for debate in a few weeks.

Unfortunately, this position by net neutrality-opposing ISPs means that providers are given the right to look at the traffic of individuals, a right they do not currently have except in aggregate. Once they have this right, this right also comes with obligations. ISPs, for example, will no longer be able to claim neutrality if a customer is looking at illegal content. Good, one might say, but no, not necessarily good, and here is why.

Once the ISPs are required to monitor the traffic of individuals, because without neutrality they become effectively required to, because they can no longer claim they could not should they be sued or charged and are also no longer required to be neutral about the transmission of this traffic, the door is wide open for ISPs to decide what we can and cannot do on the Internet. This then becomes a fundamental rights issue.

Without net neutrality, there is nothing stopping, for example, Bell Canada, the country's largest Internet provider, one of three roughly equally large-sized cellphone providers, and the plurality owner of Canada's domestic content creation market, from limiting people's Internet access on their Bell Canada connection or phone to Bell Canada content, which includes CTV news, The Movie Network, Crave TV, the sports network, and so forth, nor preventing them from accessing, say, CBC content. In fact, Bell already does this to an extent. People cannot watch Discovery channel online without a login to either a Bell service or a television provider that subscribes to it. It is clearly keen to have this power.

I am looking forward to finishing this in a few weeks.

• (1830)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member will have seven minutes and 10 seconds coming to him when the topic comes up again.

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

It being 6:30 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 37 the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill S-232.

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CANADIAN JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of the motion that Bill S-232, An Act respecting Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was really happy to be able to previously speak to Jewish heritage month, and so it is a pleasure to once again have a chance to rise and speak about this important private member's bill, which is going to give the opportunity to all of us to celebrate our Jewish heritage here in this country.

Private Members' Business

As someone who is proud to now live in Toronto, one of the parts I really enjoy is the opportunity this bill would give people as an encouragement to discover our heritage and history of Jewish Canadians living in Toronto. Jewish people have been in Toronto since the early 19th century, but since the 1970s we have become the largest Jewish community in the whole country. We now number about 200,000 people. We have made our mark in the city, showing all the things we can contribute in so many ways through our cultural centres, art, and food, which I will get to. The last time I spoke about bagels, and we have so much more tremendous food in the city.

One of the parts I really enjoy is the music. For me, Jewish music, klezmer music, is something that really makes me happy. Being 2018, this year will mark my 20th wedding anniversary in August, and at our wedding we had the Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band. We had klezmer music, and it was a really wonderful way for us to celebrate the day. It was 20 years ago, and I get to bring back memories of great music.

The Flying Bulgar Klezmer Band just celebrated its 30th anniversary with a concert at Hugh's Room in Toronto. It is just a chance for us to get out there and listen to the music we have in our city. There is an Ashkenaz festival that has often happened down at the harbourfront. It is a place people can go to listen to music and really enjoy and celebrate together. When I think about Jewish heritage month, I get to think about things like that, chances to get out and really enjoy our music and celebrate.

I also like to think about things like film. Many years ago, I went to the Jewish Film Festival. In fact, this year it will be held May 3 to May 13. People can go out and get their tickets. The film I remember from the last time I went to the movies is *Havana Nagila*, which is a film that is very topical for the moment because we are on the eve of Passover. It is a film about Jewish Canadians who went to Cuba to help Jewish Cubans celebrate Passover by bringing matzo and *haggadot*, and to have the chance to celebrate and see the different ways different countries celebrate the holiday.

It is opportunities like that, going out and seeing movies, listening to the music, and telling the stories, where we can really hear about and experience our Jewish heritage. When I was thinking about films, we do not just have the Jewish Film Festival. There is also a Jewish Film Society that is located at the Miles Nadal Centre. This is a year full of anniversaries, apparently. In fact, this year the society is celebrating 40 years. It is the longest-running Jewish film society in all of North America, and it is based in Toronto. The Jewish Film Society was founded in 1978, and it has eight Jewish film events throughout the year. These include discussions, where people have the opportunity to learn more about these films.

The next one is coming up on April 8, and it is called *Hanna's Journey*. It might be a bit of a spicy film. I was looking at the description, and it might be a little controversial. It might be an interesting choice for people who are looking for a film. If people cannot make the April 8 film, the next one after that is on June 3, and it is called *Melting Away*. It is a Jewish film, but in celebration of pride because it is also happening during pride month.

These are ways we see how Jewish history is evolving in our city through the arts, with our music and films, and there are opportunities to enjoy them every day in our city. However, with a

Jewish heritage month, it would give us an extra impetus to go out and seek those opportunities.

There is a lot more that happens at the Miles Nadal Centre as well. It is located right on Spadina and Bloor, a downtown hub location. It is somewhere people can take Yiddish lessons. Maybe because of Jewish heritage month, people will want to go out and renew the Yiddish language.

• (1835)

I have to say it is one of those things that I have noticed in my own family. My grandparents spoke Yiddish perfectly well, my father a little less, and with me, they used it as a secret language to talk about things when they did not want me to understand. I do not really understand Yiddish at all. When I saw that there are Yiddish lessons at Miles Nadal, I thought that it was a chance to understand what my dad is talking about when he is talking to others in Yiddish. I might seek out some of these lessons.

They also do Shabbat together. I particularly like the “no-shush Shabbat”. That Shabbat is noisy by design, for people who otherwise might not feel welcome, those with families, with young kids, and it is loud. It is an opportunity for people to rediscover Shabbat, and the community meal that brings people together.

What I really love about the vibrancy of the Jewish community in Toronto is that it has so many different aspects like that. There is such an inclusive feel, with opportunities for people who maybe have not really thought about their Jewish heritage or who want to learn more about it, to be able to jump in and learn more. It is kind of an exciting thing.

When I think about Jewish heritage in Toronto, though, I think about the *King of Kensington*. Many may have watched it on CBC in the past. If I thought about the one person who I saw on TV who was a Jewish person, and what that meant as part of our cultural history, our television history, it was the *King of Kensington*. Just down the street from the Miles Nadal Centre is the Kensington Market. That is where the TV show was based.

There are walking tours that people can take if they are interested in Jewish history. If during Jewish heritage month members are interested in getting out there and learning more, they can in fact take a walking tour through the Kensington Market to learn about how the Jewish community really came together at Kensington Market in the 1920s and built up the market.

It has changed. It is not a largely Jewish community anymore, but there are still parts of the history to be found there, including some synagogues. It is a chance to really see how the life continues to be vibrant in the changeover. I recommend it. May is a nice warm month. People should get out there, take a walking tour, go walk around in Kensington Market, and think about the *King of Kensington*.

Last time I closed off speaking about food, and again we are at that hour of the day when I start thinking about food. I would like to close by talking about some Jewish food.

Private Members' Business

In Toronto, we now have NoshFest, which I think is a wonderful idea. It happened in October last year, at the Artscape Wychwood Barns. There were cooking demonstrations and kids' activities, and klezmer music.

There was also a chance to eat all sorts of Jewish foods, like dill pickles, knishes, even new twists on knishes, bagels, rugelach, and because Passover is around the corner, I have to mention that they had gefilte fish, which is not my favourite Jewish food but they had it there. It was something for people to go and check out.

One of the things that I think about when I think about heritage is mementoes in the kitchen, things that bring back childhood memories. For me, it is a cookbook called *Second Helpings, Please*. Lots of Jewish households across the country have that cookbook. They actually had a signing at NoshFest. They have a renewed *Second Helpings, Please*, and they had a signing by the authors of the cookbook. I am going to have to go check it out, and try some of the recipes during Jewish heritage month. That brings a particular smile. I can remember my mom going through the pages of that book.

I know that my time for debate is coming to an end, so I will just close by mentioning that we are heading into Passover. It is just around the corner. To me, it is one of the most important holidays. It is a chance to slow down, spend time with family, share stories, and to talk about our heritage. It is when we build our heritage and our future. As we head into Jewish heritage month, I really want to thank the member for York Centre for bringing this to us. This is going to be a chance to celebrate so much of what we have, and it is so vibrant in the Jewish community across Canada, but in Toronto in particular.

• (1840)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill S-232. Ultimately, the bill proposes that throughout Canada the month of May be known as Jewish heritage month in recognition of the many contributions Jewish Canadians have made toward helping to build a stronger, more prosperous Canada.

Prior to the bill coming from the other place, I was unaware that Canada has the fourth-largest Jewish population in the world. Likewise, on the list of major cities worldwide with the highest percentage of population with a Jewish origin, Canadian cities appear on the list eight times.

In my time in the House we have known great parliamentarians, such as Irwin Cotler and Joe Oliver, who were elected from some of these very same communities. These gentlemen are well respected on both sides of the House. In this Parliament, I will recall the passionate words from the member for Mount Royal who spoke against the BDS movement. In my view it was a proud moment in the House when 229 members of Parliament on both sides opposed and condemned the BDS movement. The BDS movement serves as a reminder that those who are Jewish still face challenges here in Canada to this very day. In fact, we know of the groups most frequently targeted for hate crimes in Canada the Jewish population is among them. I know all members of this place are concerned about that.

Does the bill fix that? No, it does not. However, the bill serves as an important reminder. Here in Canada, we have always known it is our diversity that makes us unique, but despite that diversity, we all have a common love for this great country we call Canada, because collectively, we are all part of Canada. We are what makes our country so unique and so special.

We may not always agree on how best we can build a stronger Canada, but we are almost universally admired at how respectfully we can agree to disagree with each other. As parliamentarians, we are well versed in the art of disagreement, and we often do so daily. However, at the same time, we recognize our role and we respect our differences.

We also understand the importance of showing leadership on issues. In this case, it is important to recognize that Jewish Canadians have been very important in helping build a stronger Canada. I did some research on this subject. I am sure some people are shocked that I did some research on this. In virtually every Canadian endeavour, in virtually every decade since the 1930s, Jewish Canadians have made significant and important contributions to virtually every area of Canadian life. In fact, there are literally too many to mention in this speech. Of course, I would be remiss if I did not point out that to this very day, Jewish Canadians continue to make important contributions toward our Canadian fabric in cities, towns, and communities all across Canada.

As a member of Parliament, I believe pointing out and honouring this proud part of Canadian history in the month of May through the declaration of Canadian Jewish heritage month is a small and important step toward increasing tolerance and acceptance.

Before I close, I would also like to recognize the member for York Centre, a Liberal MP who has worked with a Conservative senator, Linda Frum, to bring the bill forward. This constructive bi-partisanship in a small way symbolizes what the bill can achieve by bringing people together in recognition of an important contribution here in Canada.

I would also like to recognize former member Irwin Cotler, who first introduced this idea through a motion. It is always rewarding when members of Parliament from all sides come together in support of a common cause. It is something that does not always happen, particularly last week, but it is nice to see it here tonight.

On a slightly different note, I would like to recognize the good work of many Jewish Canadians in my region who operate the Okanagan Jewish Community Centre. This unique facility helps promote an inclusive atmosphere of understanding and respect in the Okanagan.

• (1845)

I would like to personally thank all the Jewish Canadians who graciously invited me to attend events in other parts of British Columbia. These meetings have always been meaningful to me. They have been very rewarding, insightful, and helpful in my work as a member of Parliament. In particular, I value the positive, welcoming, and non-partisan relation that has been formed.

Some of the best conversations happen around a dinner table or in a living room, and as I mentioned earlier, with disagreement and challenging opinions. Some of these conversations that I have had have been very helpful to me here in this place.

I know that an inclusive, respectful, and tolerant approach is how we can contribute to building a stronger Canada. This bill shares in those values, which is why I am pleased to support it and to stand up tonight to speak about it. I encourage all hon. members, if they cannot speak to it, to stand up for it when it is put forward in a vote, and see it go straight through this place.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have this opportunity to stand in support of Bill S-232 which would establish May as Jewish heritage month. In 2006, a similar bill was passed in the United States to celebrate the contributions of the American Jewish community and Ontario established May as Jewish heritage month in 2012.

Bill S-232 is an important statement of recognition for the Jewish community of Canada and its many contributions. In London, Ontario the Jewish Community Centre provides adult Jewish education for those wishing to learn about philosophy, art, culture, and the history of Jewish Londoners.

Charitable giving is sponsored by the London Jewish Community Foundation, a community garden behind the Shalom Synagogue welcomes local gardeners. Come in Out of the Cold hosts lunches and clothing donations for those in need.

Each year, there is a Hanukkah party for families to celebrate the Festival of Lights. There is also a seniors complex adjacent to the community centre and a friendship club for seniors to share in a stimulating variety of educational and recreational activities.

As I reflect on the importance of the Jewish community to the fabric of our country, I must also reflect on another reality. It is not so long ago that Canada had an unofficial anti-Jewish immigration policy of “none is too many”. Anti-Semitism in Canada's immigration policy ultimately led to the refusal to admit Jewish refugees between 1933 and 1948.

While anti-Semitism goes back centuries, it is important to recognize its existence in Canada. Historian David Rome, wrote:

The reluctance of the Canadian government to admit Jewish refugees...was a fair reflection of public opinion. ...the Canadian Jewish Congress was prepared to sponsor the coming, and guarantee the financial support of 10,000 Jewish refugees to Canada. Yet the government of Canada rejected this proposal. The reason was simple: not only was immigration unpopular in the context of the Great Depression, but, as well, anti-semitism was rife in Canada.

The end result was that many who could have been saved, perished in the Holocaust.

In May 1939, the *St. Louis*, a ship carrying 907 German Jews, was refused permission to dock in Halifax because of pressure from high-ranking Canadian politicians and 254 of the Jews turned away by the Mackenzie King government did not survive the genocide.

It is the sincere hope of many in the House that passing this declaration and promoting the month of May as Jewish heritage month will allow us to ensure never again. The tragedy of the Holocaust is part of our Canadian heritage.

Private Members' Business

I do not believe we can have this discussion without understanding the tragedy of the Holocaust, the Shoah, a dark time in our collective history. In remembering those events, we can recognize the strength and resiliency of Holocaust survivors and the need for a Jewish heritage month.

In London, Ontario, the Jewish community commemorates survivors of the Holocaust each spring with its Shoah project, Voices of Survivors. The survivors and their descendants tell the stories of those who somehow miraculously escaped the slaughter.

Nearly 11 million innocent people were murdered during Nazi Germany's reign of terror. Hitler's final solution, a plan to systematically rid the world of Jews, resulted in the deaths of six million Jews.

In the years following World War II, nearly 100 survivors found their way to London, Ontario, seeking a place to live without fear or discrimination. London was their refuge and provided them with opportunities to contribute to the community. Many of these survivors became active in the life of London as business leaders, doctors, academics, retailers, developers, and political activists. They also developed religious organizations, corporations, and charities.

The Shoah project launched in 2006, by the Jewish Community Centre at the annual Yom HaShoah, the Holocaust remembrance day commemoration, sought to record and preserve the personal stories of those survivors. The objective is to raise awareness and allow Londoners to hear about the wartime hardships of London's survivors and all those who perished. It encourages understanding and the hope that the Holocaust will not be forgotten. The stories are heartbreaking and they remind us to never forget the reality of Auschwitz, Sobibór, and Babi Yar.

The voices of survivors are heard in London, Ontario, their stories haunting.

● (1850)

Eva Dykstein said:

Today is my worst nightmare. I had already lost friends, my father's entire family, and our life had literally been bombed out of existence. But today is more difficult than anything I have ever had to face. Today, I have to say goodbye to my home, my village, my mother and my father. They are being sent to Uzbekistan while I am being sent to Siberia, deep in the bowels of Russia...my mother pulls my precious eight month old daughter...from my arms.

Is there anything more cruel than this?

Bill Nightingale said:

My brother David and I were summoned for selection. They had already taken our other brother away and we never saw him again. Now they came for both of us. David told me to go to the end of the line and just “disappear”. I slipped away from the end of the line and ran back to the House to hide in the attic. I saw them take David away with the rest of the group. I'm saved, but for how long?...until they call my name again and I follow, like a sheep, to my slaughter?

Jerry and Fanny Goose survived the ghetto and death camps.

Private Members' Business

I taught Holocaust literature in my English classes in London for 25 years and I did so because I had discovered that many of my senior students had no idea about the Holocaust. I was very concerned that ignorance of those horrific events could prevent my students from understanding the consequences of prejudice, hatred, and racism. I wanted them to be informed so they could reject and push back against the ugliest of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, ageism, misogyny, and homophobia. We must work to end racism and xenophobia because the truth is that we are not always the kind and tolerant nation we believe ourselves to be.

The recent horrific killing of six Muslim men during evening prayers at their Quebec City mosque speaks to the reality of racism in our midst, and while thousands of Canadians attended vigils and sent messages of goodwill, there is still that fear of 'The Other'. We need to come to terms with that as surely as we have to realize that as long as women are susceptible to violence because they are women, and indigenous peoples are denied the recognition of their contributions and key role in our nation, and the LGBTQ2 community is looked upon with fear and suspicion, we have not created the nation we should aspire to build.

In 2018, one might ask what action can we take today. First and foremost, we must remember the contributions of those who are members of our multicultural communities.

I mentioned the civic involvement of the Jewish community in London and wish to also mention the charity of others.

Zakat is a special charitable donation that Muslims give every year before Eid al-Fitr prayers. It is given on behalf of every member of the family to ease the suffering of millions around the world.

Many in our communities contribute to women's shelters and programs to help women fleeing violence. The LGBTQ2 community holds Pride festivals across Canada to remind us of our common bond of citizenship and support for each other.

If we truly wish to acknowledge that we will not stand by in the face of another genocide, we need to honour our international obligations and prioritize the resettlement of those who are faced with genocide today. People targeted for their race, religion, culture, and sexual identity continue to be vulnerable. It would be a great mark of respect for the survivors of the Shoah and their families if all violence were removed from our society and we were to make every effort to combat anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, misogyny, racism, and homophobia in Canada.

We must be aware of the reality of hate crimes and the need for the training of police forces, so when there is a hate crime, it is recognized, reported, and acted upon.

The Jewish community, like so many others, has beautiful customs from which we can learn. In a rich and diverse multicultural society like ours, it is truly our good fortune that we have the opportunity to learn from our communities. As a parliamentarian, I have seen the resiliency and compassion of Canadians.

I, along with my NDP caucus, will vote in favour of recognizing May as Jewish heritage month in Canada. We believe this will give Canadians an opportunity to reflect on the great contributions of Canada's diverse communities.

The passage of Bill S-232 will provide us with the opportunity to reflect on our history and redouble our efforts to ensure "never again".

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my turn to join those of my colleagues who have had the pleasure of speaking to Bill S-232. My regards to the member for York Centre, who is sponsoring this bill in the House seconded by my colleague from Thornhill.

The bill designates a Canadian Jewish heritage month, and what a rich heritage it is. When asked if I was interested in speaking to Bill S-232, I said yes right away. Then I realized I would have to read up extensively on that heritage.

Unfortunately, I have only 10 minutes to speak in favour of this bill, even though there is so much to say about all of the good things the Jewish community has done since arriving in Canada.

I will try to focus on what happened in Quebec and the Jewish community's contribution to that province. I think there is a lot to say, and I plan to say a lot.

I was both proud and impressed as I read about their fascinating history. I hope this bill will give all Canadians and Quebecers a chance to learn more about Jewish history in Canada.

Before I begin, I want to quote something that Shimon Fogel, CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, said before the Senate regarding the creation of a Canadian Jewish heritage month. When I read what he said, I thought to myself, this is exactly what the bill seeks to achieve. I cannot say it any better than he did:

The concept of heritage months offer a proactive approach to peeling back the ignorance that really serves as the engine or driver of the kind of intolerance that all of us would wish to see diminish and eradicated. It is in this context that I think they play an important role in helping other Canadians appreciate the shared values of specific communities....They bring down that sense of suspicion and hostility that is born from a sense of ignorance about other faith communities.

I think that what he said perfectly encapsulates why Bill S-232 has my full support.

Canada is not the first country to create a Jewish heritage month. In 2006, President George W. Bush and the U.S. Congress passed a resolution proclaiming the month of May as the time to celebrate the contributions of the American Jewish community. In Ontario, Jewish heritage month was established in 2012.

Let's talk about Quebec. I have read quite a bit, and there is one book in particular that caught my attention. The book, edited by Pierre Anctil and Simon Jacobs, is entitled *Les Juifs de Québec: Quatre cents ans d'histoire*, or 400 years of Jewish history in Quebec City. I will read a few passages from the book because Jewish history in Quebec is the Jewish history in Canada, and hon. members will see why:

In 1738, a young woman by the name of Esther Brandeau arrived in Quebec City. She was officially the first person of Jewish descent to set foot in Canada. She arrived ashore [believe it or not] disguised as a young man and was [quickly] exposed and handed over by the authorities to a religious group, with the clear intention of [having her convert].

She stood her ground and may have been the first person to be deported from Canada as a result. According to our research, she was in fact the first Jewish woman to settle in Quebec City.

I will read another excerpt:

In 1761, Aaron Hart settled in Trois-Rivières and over the next few years convinced members of his own family to join him, or to lay down roots in other small towns along the St. Lawrence. Aaron Hart's son, Ezekiel, decided to run in an election to represent Trois-Rivières in the Parliament of Lower Canada. Hart was elected twice, in 1807 and 1809, but was barred from the House of Assembly because he was Jewish.

To think that a Jewish man would allow others to control his destiny is to underestimate the Jewish people. Ezekiel took legal action. Members of the community took legal action. They continued to fight. In the end, their efforts paid off.

● (1900)

In 1832, the Parliament of Lower Canada enacted legislation granting Jews the same rights and freedoms as the rest of the country's citizens, including the right to sit as a member of the legislative assembly. When the law was enacted in 1832, there were only about 20 Jews in Quebec and fewer than 100 in all of Canada. This goes to show that they were very influential and very determined to carve out a place for themselves here in Canada.

I could go on at length because the book is full of examples. I recommend that all my colleagues put this book at the top of their reading list for the first Canadian Jewish heritage month. The books is *Les Juifs de Québec: quatre cents ans d'histoire*, edited by Pierre Anctil and Simon Jacobs.

Montreal's Jewish population grew in the early part of the century and again later. At 90,000, it is now the second-largest Jewish community in Canada and the fifteenth-largest in North America.

In the 1930s, the government did not have a comprehensive social welfare system. Religious communities were responsible for managing institutions such as hospitals and orphanages. The Jewish community took charge of its own affairs and developed its own support network that included schools, hospitals, and community support clinics. The Jewish General Hospital is known to all Montrealers and Quebecers. Over 70% of the patients treated there are not Jewish; they are Quebecers. They are people like us, ordinary citizens who benefit from an institution created by our fellow citizens of Jewish origin.

The Jewish community actively and proudly participated in the development of Quebec and Canada. I am going to read out some names, and I know I will forget some because there are so many. My colleagues will immediately realize that these members of the Jewish community had a major impact on Quebec: Leonard Cohen, who is a household name; Sonia Benezra, a television host; Alan B. Gold, the first Jew to be appointed chief justice of the Court of Quebec in 1970 and chief justice of the Superior Court in 1983; Dr. Victor Boldbloom, the first Jew to be appointed to a cabinet position; Maurice Pollack, every Quebecer of a certain age knows Pollack's department store, an institution in Quebec City; Marcel Adam, from Quebec City, a pioneer in the shopping centre world; Sam Steinberg, the businessman who headed up the Steinberg food empire; and the Reitman family, owners of the largest women's clothing chain in Canada, to name a few. Of course there are others I could name, and

Private Members' Business

I apologize to all those I did not mention. There is also the first MP, as my colleague noted. There are so many, that the first 10 minutes I have for my speech would not be sufficient to name them all.

I will conclude with another quote, this time from Michael Mostyn, the chief executive officer of B'nai Brith Canada:

This act is most welcome. It will recognize the many achievements of Canada's Jewish community, the members of which faced many hurdles from the outset of Canada's original existence as a colony and yet were able to greatly contribute to the fabric of Canadian society. Despite facing systematic racism, our community has never seen ourselves as victims, viewing roadblocks as opportunities rather than obstacles. It is because of our perseverance and our willingness to stand up to adversity and better ourselves that the Jewish community was able to help build this country up, despite our small numbers.

In light of the Jewish community's significant contribution to the development of our country, it is crucial that we emphasize how important the Jewish community's heritage has been to Canadian society by designating May as Canadian Jewish heritage month. I join my colleagues in supporting Bill S-232.

I hope that the House will come to an exceptional consensus so that we do not need to wait until May 2019 for our first Canadian Jewish heritage month. I hope that we can proceed as quickly as possible to make May 2018 the first Canadian Jewish heritage month.

● (1905)

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to conclude the debate on Bill S-232, the Canadian Jewish heritage month act.

It has been an honour to sponsor the bill in this House, and I would like to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for their strong support. I also want to thank Senator Frum, who co-sponsored this bill with me and guided it through the other place.

Since its introduction in December 2016, this initiative has been welcomed by members of the Jewish community from across the country. None of this would be possible, though, without the groundwork laid by the former member for Mount Royal, the hon. Irwin Cotler, who originally introduced the substance of this bill in 2015.

I have thanked Professor Cotler each and every time I have spoken to this bill, and I have dedicated my efforts in his name. I do not do it just because he is my dear friend and mentor, but because he is an inspirational leader who exemplifies the very best of what it means to be a Canadian and a member of the Canadian Jewish community. I would like to spend my time remaining honouring and paying tribute to this exemplary man.

Professor Cotler is one of the world's pre-eminent international legal minds and human rights advocates. For 26 years, he was a law professor at McGill University and the director of its human rights program. During that time, he served as counsel to prisoners of conscience from around the world, including Natan Sharansky, Nelson Mandela, and Jacobo Timerman. He was a member of the international legal team for Chinese Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, and he serves as international legal counsel to imprisoned blogger Raif Badawi and Venezuelan political prisoner Leopoldo López.

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Irwin has been described as “counsel for the oppressed” and “freedom’s counsel”. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

In 1999, when lesser persons would have begun thinking of retirement after an esteemed legal career, Professor Cotler ran for office. For 16 years, he served Canadians as the Liberal member of Parliament for Mount Royal. He brought his insatiable appetite for justice and human rights work to his work in government. During that time, we were privileged to have him as our minister of justice and attorney general.

Among many accomplishments, he initiated the first ever comprehensive reform of the Supreme Court appointment process; crafted the Civil Marriage Act, the first ever legislation to grant marriage equality to LGBTQ Canadians; and quashed more wrongful convictions in a single year than any prior minister.

He did not slow down in opposition or lose his drive to advance Canada as a beacon of justice and human rights. He advocated and oversaw the creation of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights, which I am now privileged to chair. He chaired the Inter-Parliamentary Group for Human Rights in Iran and the Justice for Sergei Magnitsky Inter-Parliamentary Group, and I should add that he was a driving force behind Canada’s adoption of a Magnitsky act.

As colleagues in the House who worked with Irwin well know, he was less a politician than a parliamentarian scholar. He was among the most very respected members of this House, and his legacy is felt across party lines to this day.

Now, despite his supposed retirement in 2015, it turns out that Irwin’s political career was more of a sabbatical from his real job: the defence of human rights around the world. Without pause, at 75 years of age, he returned to the struggle for international justice as the founder and chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights. He now travels and works just as hard as he ever did as a member of Parliament.

Last September, he was appointed to the OAS independent panel of international experts on possible crimes against humanity in Venezuela, and he has not stopped or slowed his unmatched advocacy for prisoners of conscience around the globe.

Why does his story matter? It is because for over a half century, Professor Cotler has been bringing great pride and honour to the Canadian Jewish community. On a personal note, I am constantly inspired by the example he has set. My own journey as an MP, including my work on human rights and this bill, are entirely due to his ongoing legacy. Let my closing words on this bill be a thanks to Irwin for all of his contributions and to the great pride he brings to the Canadian Jewish community each and every day.

● (1910)

I am thankful for the opportunity to close the debate on Bill S-232. I look forward to this May being the inaugural Canadian Jewish heritage month, when we can all celebrate together.

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay

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

And five or more members having risen:

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 28, immediately before the time provided for private members’ business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise on a question I asked last week about the UN mission in Mali, to which the Prime Minister announced we would be going. I would like to point out that in the question I quoted some Liberals who had raised some major questions.

General Roméo Dallaire said back in 2016, “I wouldn’t touch Mali with a 10-foot pole.” He is talking from experience. This is a general who went on UN missions to places like Rwanda, witnessed the atrocities, and had to deal with the UN bureaucratic chain of command and very restrictive rules of engagement.

On top of that, Aileen Carroll, a former Liberal member and minister for international co-operation stated, “Mali is wrong-headed and a folly” and “There is no peace to keep.” I could not agree with her more and her assessment of the mission in Mali.

It is also important to point out that over two years ago the Liberals, the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence made a promise they would increase the number of UN peacekeepers that Canada would provide on an annual basis. They said that there would be 600 troops and 150 police officers deployed around the world on multiple UN missions, carrying the flag and being used as political pawns for the Prime Minister’s aspirations and self-ambition to have a seat on the UN Security Council.

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However, it is important to note that the number of actual troops deployed on UN missions around the world today stands at only 22, the lowest level we have ever had. As much as the government likes to say the Conservatives let the UN mission slide under prime minister Stephen Harper, that number was never below 130. We are at 22 troops today. That is a huge embarrassment for the government. I think that is one of the reasons why the Liberals are rushing this announcement, without having lined up all the details of this mission. They are trying to turn the page on their disastrous trip to India, on the complete folly we are seeing with respect to so many files on the foreign affairs front, and on the number of peacekeepers, which are down to only 22 Canadian soldiers on missions around the world.

We are also seeing a complete inability and lack of articulation of exactly what our troops will be doing on this mission to Mali. How many troops will there be? We have heard that there will be an air task force, four Griffin helicopters, two Chinook helicopters, medevac transport and logistics, maybe special operations forces, and maybe some close combat support. However, we have not heard exactly what anyone will do and when they will leave. There is talk that it may be sometime late summer.

The Prime Minister has yet to explain to Canadians, and to members in the House of Commons, how the UN mission in Mali is of international interest. Why is there no peace to keep? Why would we put our troops into a situation, as we have done in previous UN peacekeeping missions, where they go into a mission and there is no peace to keep? They will be among two warring factions. They essentially will have to sit on their hands and only shoot back if they are shot at themselves. That is the type of restrictive rules of engagement they have. They cannot proactively take out the threat. They cannot really fulfill their responsibility to protect civilian people and prevent casualties among the population. All too often soldiers who are on UN peacekeeping missions come back dealing with PTSD and other operational stress injuries. They have witnessed the types of atrocities like they saw in Serbia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia.

• (1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is committed to building a safer, more prosperous world. Our government is proud of what it accomplished at the 2017 UN ministerial conference on peacekeeping held in Vancouver.

At that conference, we committed to increasing the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in a number of ways. At the event, we announced the Vancouver principles on peacekeeping. The principles include taking a firmer approach to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers in peacekeeping operations. Those principles came together in large part thanks to the hard work of General Roméo Dallaire.

Another initiative supported at the Vancouver conference was the Elsie initiative. As part of that initiative, Canada will work with its partners to provide assistance and offer incentives in order to increase the proportion of women deployed in UN peacekeeping operations and expand the essential role women play. It has been

proven that conflict resolution happens faster and peace lasts longer when women are involved.

The Prime Minister has been clear about his commitment to gender equality and the participation of women in missions.

We will ensure that Canada contributes to achieving the UN Security Council's objectives by increasing the number of women deployed in peace operations.

Building on the achievements of the Vancouver conference, last week our government announced Canada's second joint commitment, namely to deploy an air task force for the UN mission in Mali for a 12-month period.

I want to point out that this is a deployment to a francophone country where the bilingualism of our forces members will be an asset. We promised Canadians that we would renew our commitment to peacekeeping and that is exactly what we are doing.

Last week, at the request of the UN, we announced that Canada will provide an air task force comprising two Chinook helicopters and four Griffon helicopters that will provide much-needed transportation and logistical capabilities, as well as escort and armed protection capabilities. The deployment will also include a certain number of Canadian Armed Forces members. This is another example of our government's commitment to engage in the world.

Of course, safety and security during these operations and the well-being of the women and men of our armed forces are of the utmost importance. Although we cannot eliminate all risk, we will always work to mitigate risks facing members of the Canadian Armed Forces during their operations. Our forces will have the appropriate equipment and will receive the necessary training for their missions. We promised Canadians that we would renew our commitment to peacekeeping, and this is exactly what we are doing.

This is another example of our government's commitment to getting involved around the world, and I am proud to say that we are continuing on this path. Tomorrow, the Minister of National Defence will address the United Nations Security Council regarding combined efforts to improve the UN's peacekeeping operations.

Canada is once again showing leadership in global security, whether it is by leading the NATO enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Latvia, providing military training in Ukraine, or contributing essential assets to the UN's peacekeeping operations.

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• (1920)

[English]

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, one thing the government again fails to do is fully explain how this is in Canada's national interest. The UN peacekeeping mission in Mali is the most dangerous UN mission in the world, with over 162 peacekeepers already killed, and there is no peace to keep. It is a hot, active combat zone, and we do not need to put our troops between warring factions that are not interested in peace. We also have to remind Canadians that there are uncontrolled terrorist organizations all through the region, which are also fighting and using blue helmets for target practice.

We know that the Prime Minister is using this to curry favour. He is using our troops as pawns. That is why we have to have a debate and a vote on this mission before we deploy any troops. As Conservatives, we will always put the best interest of our troops first and foremost, and make sure that when we do deploy them they are used in the right way with the right objectives under the right principles, including a chain of command they can respect as well as rules of engagement so that they can protect themselves and protect the population they are going to—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, it was with great pride that we pledged to provide a contribution that would maximize Canada's impact and bring the most value to the United Nations' stabilization force. General Dallaire supports our mission. He says it was a first-class decision to go back to peacekeeping in Africa in a role that will give us an opportunity to come in with a high-technology requirement that is a force multiplier for the UN troops on the ground.

I want to reiterate that the safety of our men and women in uniform is our number one priority. Stabilizing Mali is a key focus for us. By contributing to the UN's efforts to maintain peace and stability in Mali, we are helping to combat emerging threats and ensure the safety of Canadians both here and abroad.

I will close by quoting what Colonel Drapeau said following our smart pledge: this is a substantial contribution that Canada can be proud of.

FAMILIES, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 25, I rose in the House to ask a question about the fact that many of our constituents continue to live in poverty.

In 2018, in the world's 10th largest economic power, a large part of the population still lives in poverty and the government is not taking any real steps to address the problem. That is completely unacceptable. The time for promises has passed. It is now time to take action.

This government promised to help lift hundreds of thousands of seniors out of poverty. The Liberals promised that eligible seniors would be automatically signed up for the guaranteed income supplement, but they have failed almost half a million low-income seniors who are still not receiving that benefit because the reform

applies only to new applicants. Seniors who are eligible for this benefit are therefore not automatically enrolled, and yet too many low-income seniors are still not aware that they are eligible for the GIS.

That is why the NDP has been asking for a long time that all eligible individuals receive the GIS automatically. The NDP is asking the government to make GIS enrolment automatic for all seniors and to further increase that benefit so that our seniors are not living in poverty.

These people have incomes of less than \$10,000. Will the government finally ensure that they have a decent income and grant them the benefits to which they are entitled? With our country's aging population, it is high time that the government made sure that all seniors have a decent income. We need to ensure that no one is slipping through the cracks in a rich country like ours.

The situation is definitely critical. We know that inequality is growing exponentially around the world and becoming more glaring by the day. I believe it is high time that the government took responsibility and put in place ambitious mechanisms to fight this persistent poverty that threatens our country's future. While inequality grows every year in Canada, it seems that no government, to date, has been able to implement a policy to resolve the problem of poverty in this country.

Over the past year, the fortunes of Canadian billionaires have grown by almost \$28 billion. Tax fairness could have helped 4.9 million Canadians who are living below the poverty line. To reduce this poverty that brings shame to Canada, I believe we must be proactive, as recently suggested by the Canadian Medical Association, which believes that investing in social measures would be a more powerful antidote than repeated increases in health budgets.

That is why I am urging the government to listen to the recommendations of organizations, especially Campaign 2000, that are asking it to establish truly progressive policies that can finally eliminate the gap between rich and poor.

My question is therefore simple: when will the government put in place a real concerted strategy to fight poverty? Seniors, families, children, the unemployed, indigenous children, persons with disabilities, refugees, and a great number of Canadians are waiting for the government to take action and put an end to the scourge of poverty.

• (1925)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question and for giving me an opportunity to talk about what our government is doing to eliminate poverty in Canada. This is a very important issue for our government, not to mention for the children of this country.

[English]

This issue is not something we needed to be told to act on. We have acted. We have acted across so many fronts. I will, in my short time, try to get all of those actions into a single speech.

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First and foremost, the Canada child benefit has lifted close to 900,000 kids out of poverty. We did that in our first year in office, and we have indexed that, so it sustains the progress we have made on that front. That lifts countless children straight out of poverty, and does it in a way that is progressive. It has been celebrated by food banks, by anti-poverty organizations, by Oxfam, and by Campaign 2000 right across the country. It is one of the most progressive new policies in my lifetime in this country.

After that, we immediately started to double the investments to provinces on affordable housing in our first budget and sustained those as we move toward the national housing strategy that was launched last year. The focal point of that is the Canada housing benefit, which comes into place next year. However, in the interim we started building new housing so that when the subsidies arrive, they will arrive at the same time the new housing arrives. On that alone, through the national housing strategy, 500,000 Canadians will be lifted out of core housing needs, once again, alleviating poverty.

When it comes to seniors, the guaranteed income supplement was boosted. Contrary to the presentation we just heard, Canadians are automatically enrolled, and have been since the start of January. It was one of the changes we made prior to introducing the budget. That automatic enrolment has also been applied to the Canada workers benefit, which is a boost in earnings that will no longer be taxed for low-income wage earners who re-enter the workforce. In order to support their re-entry, the Canada workers benefit, which replaces the workers income tax benefit, WITB, is now also automatically applied to anyone who files their income taxes, if they are eligible. That is going to affect close to 20,000 people and impact close to 300,000 people in the country, and lift even more people out of poverty.

On top of all of that, we have also lowered the retirement age back down to 65. That eliminates the potential for hundreds of thousands of Canadians to fall off the cliff upon retirement and end up in poverty.

Additional dollars have come the way the member opposite has asked for, and it is there. Add to that \$7.5 billion invested in child care in the first provincial, territorial, and federal government agreement on child care the country has ever seen. We did not wait to spend that in the next five or six years, as the NDP promised under its platform. We did not wait for the provinces to come up with their half of the money before we started spending ours, the \$7.5 billion that is being signed in provinces and territories day by day. We only have two provinces left to have the complete package put together. In my province alone, that has delivered 100,000 new, affordable, regulated, and high-quality day care spaces, many of which are in the city I represent.

When we add it all up, whether it is the 900,000 or the 300,000 or the 20,000, or the 70,000 or the 500,000 we have lifted well over a million people out of poverty in our first two years in office, and that is not good enough. Our focus now is getting to the next million and the million after that. Our government will not rest as long as poverty defines too many people's lives in our country, most importantly indigenous kids and racialized people who often bear the most horrific brunt of poverty. We have to do better. We have to make sure every Canadian gets advantaged by the programs we have proudly put in place as the new government.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, the last time I raised this issue during an adjournment debate, my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development said, “as I said, I have no hesitation in welcoming a push by the party opposite.”

With that in mind, let me list a few more things the government could do to reduce poverty. First, it could speed up the introduction of a universal child care system. Too many parents are still paying \$80 a day for child care. Second, let us recognize the right to housing by adding it to the Canadian Bill of Rights. Third, let us make the guaranteed income supplement automatic for all seniors in Canada. Some are still not getting it. Last, let us establish a guaranteed minimum income and implement a national strategy to end homelessness.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, the national housing strategy does place the right to housing within a human rights framework. We are now starting the final consultations before introducing legislation in the next few months that will produce that critically important body of work. I am proud of the work we have done on that.

In fact, let us take a look at what we have done on homelessness. We have doubled the money from our first budget, and now we are spending an extra \$100 million annually on homelessness, as we move to reduce it as much as we can. In contrast, the NDP platform had an increase of only \$10 million a year, which was just not good enough. That is one of the reasons the New Democrats' housing policy did not get them elected to government. It was not a strong enough housing policy. In fact, I would call it “timid”, if I could quote their leader as he describes other people's housing policies. Theirs was worse than timid. It was meek.

On the issue of basic income, I think it is a fantastic idea. We are looking at different ways in which our programs layer up and create the platform to lift people out with assistance and supports. Poverty reduction—

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

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hope the government can agree that forcing a Ghanaian LGBTQ asylum seeker to lose eight fingers because of frostbite in a desperate attempt to cross over from the U.S. to Canada is unjust. I hope the government can agree that forcing a pregnant woman to carry her crying toddler across the border in the freezing cold is unjust. I hope the government can agree that having a woman die of hypothermia in the hope of finding a better life in Canada is a preventable tragedy, and yet the government has done nothing to rectify this injustice.

These are the direct effects of the safe third country agreement. The xenophobic, anti-refugee political climate in the U.S., combined with the inadequacies of the U.S. asylum system such as lack of access to legal counsel, results in genuine refugee claims being denied. So far, the IRB has found that about 69% of these asylum claims are valid. These are the direct effects of the safe third country agreement.

To be clear, so far these are irregular crossers, not illegal crossers. Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act recognizes the principle of international refugee law prescribed in the Refugee Convention, that a state shall not impose penalties on refugees who may enter without authorization. Canadian immigration law clearly stipulates that seeking asylum through an unmarked border crossing is not illegal, and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship should know this. That is why it is so disappointing that the minister has wilfully chosen to ignore this fact and cede to Conservative pressure by using the term "illegal" at a recent committee meeting. Let me emphasize that the words "illegal" and "irregular" are not, as the minister has stated, "interchangeable". As a former refugee lawyer, he should not be ignorant of this fact, especially at a time when irregular crossings are increasing and occurring as a result of the parameters set out in the safe third country agreement.

Despite the government's attempts to turn a blind eye and sweep this issue under the rug, there is no evidence of its going away. The numbers speak for themselves. Sixty-five million people are forcibly displaced globally. In 2016, there were 2,464 asylum claims made by irregular crossers, and in 2017 that figure rose to 20,593. In the first two months of 2018, there have been over 3,000 irregular crossers.

The organizations faced with the daily impact of increased irregular border crossings are left stranded by the government. The IRB faces a backlog of 43,000 cases, with an increase of 2,100 cases per month. Despite this trend, there are 24 vacancies for board members at the IRB.

Mr. Aterman, in his testimony to the standing committee, explained that the lack of funding prevents him from attracting board members to fill these vacancies. He explained that the funding is limited to two years, which means that the organization can offer only short-term contracts to prospective board members.

This is not good enough. The government needs to fund the NGOs on the ground, which are scrambling to address the issue. It needs to support the provinces, which are trying to meet these demands. The government needs to step up and do what is right, suspend the safe third country agreement and ensure that there are

resources for the NGOs and the provinces, which are trying to do all the heavy lifting.

• (1935)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, asylum claims are governed in part by international treaties Canada has signed on to. As such, we have a legal responsibility to assess asylum claims made under these international conventions. That is why the asylum system is fundamentally different from all other areas of immigration, and I will provide some explanations and clarifications on that.

First of all, the Canada-U.S. safe third country agreement is a treaty that was negotiated between Canada and the United States. It is premised on a principle accepted by the United Nations Refugee Agency that individuals should seek asylum in the first safe country they reach.

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act requires the continual review of the U.S. to ensure that the conditions that led to its designation as a safe third country continue to be met. In fact, as we have pointed out on several occasions, the head of the UNHCR in Canada has indicated that the conditions that prevailed at the time of the agreement in 2004 remain the same today.

Consequently, I find it somewhat disappointing to see the NDP once again adopting the same partisan position as the Conservative Party by undermining the credibility of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which includes experts in international refugee law.

This agreement remains an important tool for Canada and the U.S. to work together on the orderly handling of refugee claims made in our countries. That being said, entering Canada illegally between designated ports of entry is dangerous and is a violation of the law. Anyone who is intercepted by the RCMP or law enforcement after crossing the border irregularly is taken before an immigration officer who conducts an examination to establish the person's identity and whether they are admissible to Canada. An initial security screening is also carried out to ensure that the person does not pose a security threat to Canada and to determine whether they are eligible to make a refugee claim.

Our government is stepping up its efforts to educate the public about how Canada's asylum system works. We are working on that in close co-operation with our missions in the United States. We are in regular contact with the communities in the United States and we are posting messages on social media, for example, in Canada and in the United States, in order to provide reliable information.

We have made it clear that entry into Canada between points of entry is not a free pass into Canada. There are very strict immigration and customs rules and we will enforce those rules to protect our communities from security risks. We have also made it clear that by entering Canada and seeking asylum, individuals risk losing their temporary protection status in the United States.

To prove how seriously we take this matter, budget 2018 provides \$173.2 million in funding to border security operations at the Canada-U.S. border and asylum claims processing. This money will help make it easier for our partners to better manage the growing pressure on all aspects of the asylum system, including the interception of people, determination of eligibility for claiming asylum, Immigration and Refugee Board decisions on refugee claims, and removal of claimants.

• (1940)

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, I wonder who is actually catering to conservatives. The Parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship just used the word “illegal” to describe asylum seekers coming from the United States. They are not illegal; they are irregular. Instead of adopting anti-refugee rhetoric by calling asylum seekers illegal or, as the Prime Minister suggested, economic migrants jumping the queue, the government needs to act with courage and recognize the situation.

Lawyers, human rights advocates, NGOs, and the community have been calling for the government to suspend the safe third country agreement. In fact, there is a court case right now against the government on this issue. The government is turning a blind eye to

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this reality, causing people to cross over, risking life and limb. Using words like “illegal crossers” to cater to a conservative point of view is absolutely shameful.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, the safe third country agreement is based on the principle recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. I can understand that the NDP is a bit upset to hear us say that the representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Canada clearly said that the agreement was still being honoured to this day, but it is a bit disappointing to see the NDP get into a debate on the expertise of that agency.

Again, we will do what it takes. Budget 2018 provides \$173 million to deal with the irregular border crossings, as well as other means to prevent them. We will continue to work on this file to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:43 p.m.)

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