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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Friday, December 7, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 7, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

CORRECTIONS AND CONDITIONAL RELEASE ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-83, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another Act, as reported (with amendments) from the committee.

* * *

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-83—MOTION NO. 17

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the notices of motion that were tabled for the report stage amendments. They are government amendments, since royal recommendations were made.

More specifically, I would like to draw your attention to Motion No. 17. I want to begin by saying that my intention here is not to point the finger at the Journals staff or the translators. We know that last night, at ten to midnight, they were very quietly given some government amendments to a bill that was criticized by all of the witnesses who appeared in committee.

With regard to Motion No. 17, we see that, contrary to usual practice, the French and English versions of the motion do not match up at all. That makes members' work more complicated, particularly the work of members who are bilingual like me, because we want to ensure that the French and English versions match and that everything is consistent. The fact that the two versions are not the same interferes with the work that needs to be done. Once again, I am saying this with the utmost respect for the translators. It is particularly shameful that the government did not submit these notices until last night at 10 p.m., knowing that the debate was taking place today.

I would therefore like to draw the Chair's attention to the government's amateurism since it prevents me, as a bilingual francophone MP, from properly examining the amendments tabled. I would like the Chair to consider this matter and issue a ruling to

prevent this type of thing from happening again. I would also like the Chair to verify the admissibility of what is being presented today, of course.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I want to thank my colleague for raising the issue. The government is, in fact, aware of it and is working to make sure that we can resolve it in a satisfactory fashion. I just want to emphasize that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting the government acted in bad faith, but we are debating these motions today, so when we are told not to worry and that the government is aware of the situation, that is hardly satisfactory. This is what we are debating today, so the whole situation is utterly deplorable.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague brings up an important point. When we get improper text and are expected to debate it within a couple of hours, it is probably not a point of order. It is almost a point of privilege.

Therefore, I want to share my concerns about the sloppiness of what the government has done, whether it was intentional or not, and the significant challenges it places on a member to ensure proper debate when there are only a couple of hours.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, just to further expand, there is nothing mischievous being planned. We have a subamendment to address the issue that has been raised. If we continue, we will see that the subamendment brought forward will address the concerns of the House.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I am very torn. I would say that normally, I would want to accept what the hon. parliamentary secretary said. I have an amendment at report stage. I am prepared to speak to it. However, I do not think the rules of this House would allow us to proceed with an imperfect amendment placed before us at report stage. I do not think we can say that we will proceed and hope it all turns out all right, as much as I would like to. I think it would violate our rules to proceed in such a fashion.

Point of Order

•(1010)

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles would like to speak to the same point of order.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-83 has been problematic from the start. Committee members even moved a motion to stop this bill. The witnesses were unanimous in their assessment that it does not work. We wanted the government to take the bill back and re-evaluate it, but the government refused.

This morning we were provided with a very sloppy French version that was all wrong, and this in the context of a conversation about how profoundly important official languages are in Canada. The government goes on and on about how it is fighting for this, and it keeps accusing the Conservatives of not being pro-French, but that is totally false.

I am the public safety critic. I am a francophone and a Quebecker. When the government hands us a document like this, as my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly said, we do not blame public servants. We blame the government for forcing everyone to do things too fast because it cannot get its own act together.

I do not think we should debate this today. It does not work.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, we are at a crossroads right now with regard to making the situation better or worse, and by continuing, we will make it worse. I would like to point out that this was predictable in the sense that the government is making these amendments and changes at the last minute. This was entirely brought on by its own course of action. This was not the responsible action of the people behind the scenes that make this place work. This was brought about because the Liberals did so at such a late time that it caught up to them. At this point, are we going to make things worse or better? I would suggest that we make them better by deferring.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, if I decide to read a bill or some amendments in French only, and my anglophone colleagues are not reading the same thing, that is completely unacceptable. It infringes upon my rights. It infringes upon my colleagues' rights.

What exactly will we be debating? For that reason, I think it is totally unacceptable that we continue debating these amendments, since we will be talking about two completely different things, depending on whether a member is anglophone or francophone. That is unacceptable in the House.

The government has a duty and a responsibility to protect our official language rights. In proceeding this way, the government essentially wants us to trample on the rights of Canada's two official language communities.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I would also like a review of the comments made by the parliamentary secretary who tried to reassure us by saying that a subamendment is coming and will likely be presented by my colleague in her speech on the amendments.

We have not seen those subamendments. That in itself is also problematic, since the government is announcing this to us without us having seen them, saying that this will fix an issue that has nothing to do with today's debate.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, where is the fire? Under the Standing Orders, we are scheduled to sit until Friday of next week. Therefore we still have lots of time to organize our parliamentary business to ensure that the work is done properly.

Right now we are seized with amendments. When we look at amendments we get into the details. As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details". If we want to do serious, thorough work, if we want to ensure that Canadians have confidence in our democracy, our parliamentary system and our work as elected members, then we have to do things properly.

Since we are nearing the final stage and getting to the end, we have to make sure that everything is done properly because once this bill is passed, once we move ahead with this, there is no turning back, or there will be delays.

The House is sitting until next Friday, so let's take the time to do things properly.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): After hearing all the points of order, I will take a few minutes to look at all this. I will come back quickly on these points of order.

I now have to move on to debate. I will come back with my ruling shortly.

•(1015)

[*English*]

There are 27 motions in amendment standing on the Notice Paper for the report stage of Bill C-83. Motions Nos. 1 to 27 will be regrouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[*Translation*]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 27 to the House.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—Lake Centre—Lanigan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With respect to your most recent ruling, correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that since we are in orders of the day, the correct procedure would be to continue with the bill before the House rather than with a point of order. I would certainly take your guidance on this matter, but I would suggest that we consult with our clerks and procedural experts to ensure that we are going down the right path this morning.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the member for Haldimand—Norfolk rising on the same point of order?

Point of Order

Hon. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am. As I understand it, there is a protocol and procedure that would affect this. If the amendments are to be debated subject to a point of order, then the point of order needs to be discussed and decided upon before proceeding with the amendments. I am sure the experts at the table would be able to verify that for you.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to point out that this matter has already been brought to the attention of the House. If hon. members could give me two or three minutes, I will come back and share my ruling on how we will proceed.

[English]

There are precedents that have been set on that.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly on a point of order.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I am seeking clarification about the precedents you just mentioned.

As I understand it, once you have finished reading the amendments at report stage, we will begin debating those amendments. I do not see how we can backtrack if the Chair deems that the points raised by members are valid.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): To answer the member, there are 27 amendments. We are able to start the debate and come back with the decision the Speaker will bring before the House.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I suggest that we suspend until we can resolve this, or we can move the opposition motion, but the government motion should be dropped.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion the member has just proposed is really challenging the Chair. I have made my decision, and we are going to proceed. I will be back shortly with the decision.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly on a point of order for the last time.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I would like you to clarify the clarification.

The amendment in question is about 3,000 words long. If we move on to debate at report stage when the amendment is a problem, the government will not be able to move it again.

I would like clarification about the procedure.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is the hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola rising on the same point of order?

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. I would point out that the government says that it is all about protecting the language rights of minorities. In putting forward duelling motions that say different things and expecting us to proceed with them in proper order, the government is kidding itself. I think you should immediately say that this is not in order and that we should not be discussing this until the government can figure out what it wants us to discuss.

• (1020)

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I will recognize one last speaker.

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent. After that, we will continue.

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Madam Speaker, once the toothpaste is out of the tube, it cannot be put back in. That principle applies to parliamentary work, especially to the fact that if we start our work immediately, that is, if we begin debating proposals, and then we realize that they are not properly coordinated, we cannot backtrack.

A very simple solution is to suspend the business of the House until you make your decision.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unless a member has something new to add, I will continue.

[English]

Does the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands have additional information to add to this point of order?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Madam Speaker, I have looked carefully at this amendment from the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington. As we debate this legitimate procedural point, we should not lose sight of the fact that it is very important that the substance of this matter not be overlooked. This is an important amendment that should be included at report stage.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member for Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix have new information to add to the point of order?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, and we must never receive a text that is not exactly the same in both languages.

That is exactly what we are talking about in this debate. The two texts do not match and do not mean the same thing in the two languages.

Although I respect your role, I do not understand why we are continuing a debate on texts that are not identical and that we cannot debate in the House, in French or in English.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate your patience with this; it is important.

Statements by Members

At committee, members have the right to refuse and ask for translation. I would ask for some consistency in this place as well, especially when notice is to provide it. That is the tradition and tenure of the House, and this would be out of order with that procedure.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier want to add something that has not already been said?

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, yes, absolutely. With all due respect, and I have a lot of respect for the institutions, I think we had a worthwhile suggestion earlier.

As parliamentarians, we want to do our jobs well and to have the tools to do so. We are lacking information here. As a francophone from Quebec, I think it is important to have accurate information in both of Canada's official languages.

I humbly suggest that you suspend the sitting, which would recognize the work we do as parliamentarians and prevent us from wasting time with back and forth, so that we can then proceed more effectively.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I believe some of the points being raised have already been covered.

Does the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable have any additional information that has not been mentioned already?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, I think you can see that the House is almost unanimous on the importance of having documents in both official languages.

I am certain that if you seek it from all my colleagues in the House, you will find unanimous consent to suspend the sitting so that you can look into this matter.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will hear from one more member, and then I will have something to add. The hon. member for Joliette.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I also believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent of the House.

If we start working before you come back with your ruling, that means we will have to rely on the English version.

To the Bloc Québécois, that would be completely unacceptable. It would mean that the House is relegating French to second place, which would be an intolerable outrage.

You are the guarantor of our rights. Personally, as a Bloc Québécois member and a Quebecker, I will never agree to let the English version take precedence, even temporarily.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I thank all members for their input.

I direct that all motions except Motion No. 17 be read.

I will come back with my decision on Motion No. 17.

●(1025)

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent of the House to suspend the sitting until you are ready to give your ruling.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the member for Joliette have the unanimous consent of the House to suspend the sitting?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker: Okay.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 10:25 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 11 a.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

●(1100)

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is certainly with a sense of moment and history that I rise this morning for what will be my last statement in the House before this chamber closes and we return after the new year to a different place. I first took this very seat seven and a half years ago, and I have not moved since. I love this place. I would not mind moving up a bit, but I love this place.

I also leave with the bittersweet awareness that I am leaving a week before the House rises, because I am going to the climate negotiations at COP24. When we think about time, we think about time slipping through our fingers, and our chances to ensure our children and grandchildren have a livable world slipping through our fingers.

[*Translation*]

Time is short. It is not too late, but there is not much time left to save human civilization.

[*English*]

We need to do more, and I ask all members to join me in prayer that more happens at COP24 than what is currently planned.

* * *

SIGNING SANTA

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Christmas time is a special time for many children, but inclusion looks different for some children at this time of year. For deaf and hard of hearing children, something as simple as telling Santa their Christmas wish can be a barrier. In my riding, at Funhaven, I joined hundreds of children to see the "signing Santa". Santa Claus communicated with the children in American sign language and Quebec sign language.

[Translation]

Santa also took off his hat to show the children his cochlear implant. One little boy began to cry and signed that Santa Claus was just like him.

[English]

I also had a chance to phone Santa, through SRV Canada, a video relay service that interprets voice to signing.

I thank the volunteers at Quota International, Ontario Hands & Voices and SLIAO for making this day so special and making a world of difference, where every child is included.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hear you have a direct line to Santa Claus, so Santa, I have a Christmas wish from all Albertans.

Albertans have always been good to Canada. We are friendly and we produce the energy that powers this country, but we are not greedy this Christmas. We want a few simple things from Santa's sack of goodies: some pipelines would be nice, and the jobs that come with them; scrapping the carbon tax would help; and we would like new governments in Alberta and Ottawa.

We have been good, Santa, just like the elves, but we do know there are some people on the naughty list. Some have been downright dopey and "gropey". They have dressed up funny on trips to India, they have wasted all kinds of money, and they are bringing in a carbon tax to punish all the good boys and girls out there. Like the Grinch himself, these people deserve a big lump of coal.

Santa, naughty or nice, I want to wish everyone well. I wish merry Christmas to all of peoplekind.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, did you know that 34% of indigenous persons in Vancouver are homeless? Many of them are youth.

For over a decade, the Lu'ma Native Housing Society in B.C. has provided a safe haven for homeless indigenous youth in the province. From its medical centre to its community lodge and its housing program for aboriginal youth, Lu'ma is a shining example of what a community can do when it is allowed to create its own culturally appropriate solutions.

Now the federal government is providing Lu'ma with funding through the national housing strategy. This will allow Lu'ma to make significant strides toward solving homelessness among urban indigenous youth. Lu'ma is a shining best-practice model for urban aboriginal programs in Canada. I look forward to seeing more of its innovative work.

* * *

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday, many people stood in this House to

Statements by Members

acknowledge the beautiful women taken from the world much too soon 29 years ago.

In my riding of North Island—Powell River, several events happened to acknowledge these deaths and violence against women. In Powell River, the Community Services Association, Powell River & Region Transition House Society and the RCMP partnered with the Powell River Library to host a day-long event called the "Shoe Memorial". The seventh one held in Powell River, this event had members of the community bring in a pair of shoes with a short biography of a woman or child who died due to violence or is missing under suspicious circumstances.

In the Comox Valley, the Comox Valley Transition Society partnered with Honouring Our Sisters and the Comox Valley Art Gallery to hold a vigil where they laid roses, sang and had speakers. This event acknowledged the national day of remembrance. It also focused on the many indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or who were murdered. This event continues to draw attention to those who are too often forgotten.

We remember.

* * *

•(1105)

YOUTH COUNCILS

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to recognize the incredible passion of Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam and Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge youth councils. Last month, these youth councils squared off in a debate.

Debating solutions to the opioid crisis, these highly-engaged Canadians showcased their dedication and talent. Council members spent weeks preparing. They made thoughtful and well-constructed arguments.

We are fortunate for the input of these youth to guide our work on Parliament Hill. I thank them for their valuable insight. We know that when Canadian youth share their ideas, the possibilities are infinite.

The Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge team won this debate, closely pursued by my team. We are looking forward to a rematch in the new year. The gauntlet has been thrown. We are coming for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge.

* * *

NEWS MEDIA INDUSTRY

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, within the next year there will be a national election. One of the first things corrupt regimes around the world do to hold power is to undermine, bribe or pay off the media. Canadians have never expected that to happen here.

Statements by Members

However, 10 days after Torstar Corporation, one of Canada's largest media conglomerates, appealed for federal subsidies, a \$355,000 sole-source contract was awarded to pay Toronto Star reporters to attend and report on public meetings of the Commons finance committee and the Senate banking committee. The Liberals did this, despite the fact that committee meetings are monitored by 43 other media organizations on Parliament Hill.

Really, did those Liberals not see a conflict in gifting an inflated contract to the largest newspaper chain in the country in an election year? Then again, it is the same government that is handing out \$595 million in taxpayer money to media outlets. How far will the Prime Minister go to buy the next election?

* * *

[*Translation*]

MARIE-ÈVE DICAIRE

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on December 1, an athlete from my riding won a world boxing championship. Marie-Ève Dicaire, a 32-year-old native of Saint-Eustache, took on a Uruguayan boxer in a fight at the Montreal casino.

Her coaches said the fight was one of her best ever, and she took home her first world boxing championship title. She is actually the first Quebec woman to win such a title.

Before she took up boxing, her first athletic pursuit was karate, which she started learning at the age of six. She is now a 5th dan black belt and a world champion in that discipline.

Marie-Ève is an inspiration to girls and young women in our region and across Canada. The energy she puts into promoting her sport is admirable. I am proud to have an athlete like her and a rising star in the world of boxing in my riding.

Congratulations, Marie-Ève, and happy holidays to my colleagues.

* * *

CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on November 10, I had the honour of attending the fourth annual Gala de Talia.

Talia Nahabedian is an inspiring girl and so full of life. Diagnosed with a severe form of tetralogy of Fallot, doctors expected her to live just a few years. She has definitely exceeded that expectation: we celebrated her 16th birthday at the gala.

[*English*]

Since 2012, \$240,000 were raised for the Clinique d'investigation neuro-cardiaque at the CHU Sainte-Justine. This clinic assists children born with complex congenital heart disease who require surgery during their early years.

[*Translation*]

Congratulations to bright and bubbly Talia and to her family for their boundless love and support.

Congratulations to the people at the clinic for the work they do and the support they provide to families.

Congratulations to all those little hearts that keep on beating every day.

* * *

SAGAMITÉ RESTAURANT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Madam Speaker, on Sunday, the indigenous community of Wendake awoke to shocking news.

The Sagamité restaurant had been seriously damaged in a terrible fire. Sagamité is more than just a restaurant. It is a symbol of the strength of the Huron-Wendat business community, an example of openness between nations, and a positive and pleasant way of discovering indigenous culture.

I held many meetings there. Whenever I was hosting elected officials, diplomats or journalists, I took them to Sagamité.

About forty people work in that restaurant, which was established 20 years ago by an experienced businessman and loving father, Steeve Gros-Louis.

Steeve is very proud of his Wendat nation and culture. He also directs the Sandokwa dance troupe.

In a voice choked with emotion, Steeve said that, while it was possible to save the indigenous artifacts from the fire, he lost something very dear to him, the antlers of the first moose he hunted with his son.

The Grand Chief of Wendake, Konrad Sioui, was on the scene Sunday and said, "The nation is in mourning, but we will recover. We are strong and we are able."

I know the Wendat people very well, and I know they will succeed.

Good luck, my friends.

* * *

•(1110)

[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the Howe Sound Women's Centre and community partners, the Sea to Sky Community Services, the Sea to Sky RCMP and the Stl'at'imx Tribal Police Service. Together, they have announced that they will provide the third party reporting option to all adult survivors of sexual assault.

This means that survivors can remain anonymous, while having the circumstances of their sexual assault reported to the police, assisted by trained third party reporters. This will ensure that disclosures of violence are heard, reported and that perpetrators are caught and held responsible. Above all, third party reporting protects the person who has been sexually assaulted.

Statements by Members

Yesterday we recognized the 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique Montréal who were brutally murdered 29 years ago, simply because they were women.

In the spirit of taking action on violence against women, it is fitting to recognize the Howe Sound Women's Centre for helping to protect women and seek justice.

* * *

KANATA—CARLETON

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Kanata—Carleton, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with tremendous pride that I rise today to celebrate the people and communities in my riding and right across our great country.

From Canada's largest high-tech park in Kanata to the tremendous farming communities throughout West Carleton, Kanata—Carleton is truly home to some wonderful people of compassion and generosity.

I want to thank our first responders for their expertise and professionalism and the many other people for the outpouring of support for tornado victims in Dunrobin. All came together when each other needed it the most.

It does not matter if we say “Joyeux Noel” or “Merry Christmas”, it does not matter which special holiday we choose to celebrate, but what does matter is that we do it together. Together we can give thanks for the gift of this beautiful country.

May everyone's celebrations be filled with love, joy, laughter and togetherness.

* * *

CANADA SUMMER JOBS INITIATIVE

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Madam Speaker, last year the Liberals implemented their values test for Canada summer jobs. They tried to make their values Canadian values by forcing charitable organizations to sign their values attestation.

In January, we met with faith leaders from the Muslim community, the Hindu community, the Sikh community. We met with Baptists, Pentecostals, Catholics and many more. Their unified voice is what the Liberal government has failed to listen to.

Every organization I met with said the same thing. They had to cut summer camp for underprivileged Canadian youth. There were fewer people available at soup kitchens and homeless shelters across the country. There was less health care support for seniors below the poverty line.

The socio-economic impact the Liberal values test had on Canada's most vulnerable citizens has been catastrophic. Now, with an election looming, they have no choice but to reverse course. One thing is clear: The Liberals cannot be trusted to protect Canadians' fundamental freedoms. A last minute change in time for the election will not repeal the damage done to Canada's faith communities.

●(1115)

MOHAWK CODE TALKER

Mr. Marc Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on Tuesday the House rightly honoured the last living Mohawk code talker and hero, 96-year-old Levi Oakes, Bear Clan, of Snye, Akwesasne.

Technician Fourth Grade Oakes enlisted at the age of 18 in the United States army and served with honour and distinction for six years with B Company, 442nd Signal Battalion, active in the South Pacific, New Guinea and Philippines theatres.

For his service, he was awarded the Silver Star, the third highest military combat decoration of the United States. For his services as code talker, he was awarded a United States Congressional service medal.

Indigenous code talkers are known the world over as having the only unbroken code in history. In respect of his service, Levi kept utter silence until a couple of years ago and only upon receiving written confirmation that he would be allowed to discuss it.

Indigenous languages served our country and our allies at a time when we needed it most. For this, we are eternally grateful. As Mr. Oakes repeated to me when I visited him in his house in May, “*Tsi nika'shatste ne onkwawenna*”, “The language is strong”.

Niawen'ko:wa Levi.

* * *

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is the time of year when the shorter days and colder weather bring our friends, our families and our communities closer together. The Christmas season is also a particularly wonderful and magical time for children, at least it is supposed to be.

Unfortunately, in a country as wealthy as Canada, far too many children will not be enjoying this holiday season. In recent years, UNICEF has rated Canada 17th out of 29 wealthy countries due to child poverty and 26th out of 35 for overall child inequality. These are shameful statistics.

In 1989, the House voted unanimously to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000. As former NDP leader Ed Broadbent has said, “For too long we have ignored the appalling poverty in the midst of affluence.” Our children are this country's most valuable resource. When they grow up in poverty, they have their futures robbed from them.

We can do better. We must do better.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, in April, three kilometres of the West Fraser Road in my riding was washed out. It has been eight months and nothing has been done.

Oral Questions

I am shocked at the inaction of our provincial government, in particular the minister of transportation and infrastructure, and I am disappointed in the Minister of Infrastructure. Their inaction on this file has stranded 250 families and placed both indigenous and non-indigenous families in economic hardship and forced them to commute on what is essentially a logging road, at times in near perilous conditions.

If emergency services were needed, it is very likely access to these families would not be possible. Further disappointing, the Buckridge community has been told that it may be up until 2021 before any action is taken.

Children going to school in Quesnel are forced to be on the bus for a minimum of four hours every day. In fact, the first child, who is 5 years of age, is picked up at 6 a.m. This places her, at 5 years of age, on a bus for five hours per day. How is this acceptable for any government?

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface—Saint Vital, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know negotiation over litigation is the best way to right historical wrongs and settle past grievances. The mistreatment of indigenous children is a tragic and shameful part of Canada's history.

Yesterday, it was announced that an agreement in principle had been reached in the McLean class action, bringing us one step closer to finding lasting and meaningful resolution to the legacy of Indian day schools.

As we know, in addition to compensation for past wrongs, negotiated settlements are able to achieve forward-looking investments in healing, commemoration, wellness and culture. I am pleased to say that this agreement will be investing \$200 million into such initiatives.

Our government is committed to reconciliation and we will continue to work with survivors toward righting historical wrongs and laying the foundation for multi-generational healing.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was reported this morning that Quebec is demanding that the federal government pay it back nearly \$300 million for providing care for illegal migrants. In case the Prime Minister has not realized it yet, his government urgently needs to take action once and for all to resolve all the problems he himself created at our border. If he fails to act, the bills will just keep piling up.

When is he going to take action, and what is he going to tell the Quebec government, which should not have to pay for his mistakes?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we committed an initial \$36 million to help Quebec address

immediate housing needs, and we are also fast-tracking work permits so that asylum seekers can support themselves while waiting for their case to be decided.

Canadians expect all orders of government to work together to meet our legal obligations and maintain order and security, and that is exactly what we are going to keep doing.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is very clear that the provinces must be respected. It was the Prime Minister who decided to do nothing. He is the one who created the problem in January 2017 and he is the one who is currently doing nothing to fix it. Quebec has a \$295-million bill for 2017-18. Quebec should not have to pay for the Prime Minister's mistakes and failures.

Will the government immediately reimburse the Government of Quebec?

• (1120)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is imperative that people claiming asylum here can go through a regular process in accordance with the law. Claiming that the global migration of tens of millions of people was caused by a single tweet is nonsense.

The Minister of Border Security recently met with Quebec's justice minister and we recently had a productive meeting with Quebec's minister of immigration, diversity, and inclusion to discuss this further and reiterate that we already committed an initial sum of \$36 million to help Quebec carry out—

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer pegged the cost of the Prime Minister's illegal border crossing crisis at a staggering \$1.1 billion. Today, Quebec confirmed that the crisis has cost its taxpayers \$300 million since last year. This is in addition to the \$200 million that Ontario is demanding to cover its costs—cost estimates that the PBO concluded are completely reasonable.

Why has the Prime Minister failed to take concrete action to end this crisis by not closing the loophole of the safe third country agreement?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as the member ought to know, the safe third country agreement is a bilateral agreement between ourselves and the United States. There have been ongoing discussions between our two governments with respect to improving and enhancing the existing agreement. While those discussions take place, we can maintain our commitment to ensure that the Canadian law is upheld, the security of the country is maintained and that we are working closely with the provinces that are impacted by this influx.

Oral Questions

I also want to acknowledge the excellent work done by officials of the City of Montreal and the City of Toronto.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, what the minister ought to know is that this is a problem that his government created. It is not fair that taxpayers in Ontario and Quebec must foot the bill for a crisis their governments did not create and do not have the power to fix. It is not fair that this crisis is causing years' long processing delays at the Immigration and Refugee Board for the world's most vulnerable, who are fleeing violence and persecution but who choose to enter Canada legally.

When will the Prime Minister take action to restore fairness and order to Canada's asylum system that he has broken?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would simply point out that there is a global migration of literally tens of millions of people, who are fleeing war and persecution around the world, and every country is being impacted by this.

In addition, the suggestion that a tweet has impacted an international phenomenon is, quite frankly, absurd. I would encourage the member to perhaps become better informed of this issue around the world.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the last time we checked, there was no war going on in upstate New York. This is a failure of epic proportions, a social and financial debacle that is damaging Canada's reputation as a safe refuge for the world's most vulnerable, with a fair, compassionate and orderly immigration and refugee system. The Prime Minister needs to fix this mess he has created, but in the meantime, he cannot keep downloading the costs of illegal border crossers onto the provinces.

When will the Prime Minister take some responsibility? Why should the taxpayers of Ontario and Quebec pay for his crisis?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will tell the member what we will not do.

We will not do what the Conservatives did during their tenure when 230,000 people came to this country seeking asylum. What did they do? They cut the budget of the CBSA and the budgets of those agencies and departments responsible for managing this migration. Then they went a step further. They cut health care for those same individuals, for those families and their children. It was a move that our courts described as cruel and unusual.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, today the UN Committee Against Torture released a report confirming what we have known all along. Indigenous women continue to be coerced into sterilization in Canada. This is sickening.

While the Liberal government continues to speak its empty talking points, indigenous women in this country are still subjected to the harm of ongoing colonialism and systemic discrimination. This is simply wrong.

When will the Liberal government put a stop to the savage act of robbing indigenous women of their dignity, health and humanity.

• (1125)

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the coerced sterilization of indigenous women is clearly a violation of human rights. Our Minister of Indigenous Services met with one of the senators yesterday to further discuss this issue.

To date, our government is ensuring that every mother knows that she is entitled to an escort during childbirth. We are investing in services, such as the maternal child health program, to support healthy pregnancies and healthy births. We are investing for the first time in midwifery and we are implementing all of the TRC's calls to action.

We will continue ongoing work with all of our partners to improve access to culturally safe health care services and support—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, that is not all. Here is some more bad news.

Yesterday, the Liberals rejected a resolution passed by the first nations chiefs to amend the Criminal Code to outlaw sterilization. How can this be truth and reconciliation?

The UN Committee Against Torture has confirmed that Canada is guilty of torturing indigenous women by forced sterilization. Do the Liberals not understand that this is a stain on our country, a stain on every one of us in the House? Why are the Liberals tolerating forced sterilization of indigenous women?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, forced sterilization of any woman is absolutely unacceptable. Our government believes firmly that everyone must receive culturally safe health services, no matter where they live.

The coerced sterilization of indigenous women is a serious violation of human rights and completely unacceptable. We are taking a public health approach to this issue, as outlined by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services. We are investing in public health approaches in indigenous communities. The existing provisions in the Criminal Code do capture a broad range of criminal behaviour, including coerced sterilization.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government boasts about its record, but the facts tell a different story.

The United Nations Committee Against Torture released a report confirming that indigenous women are still being forced into sterilization, here, in Canada, in 2018.

The Prime Minister keeps talking about what he calls his most important relationship, yet nothing is being done to truly protect these women.

Oral Questions

Instead of boasting about its record, will the government take action that will put an end to these appalling and dehumanizing practices?

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the forced sterilization of some indigenous women is a human rights violation.

We know that indigenous patients face systemic barriers such as racism and discrimination. We all have a role to play in ensuring that indigenous patients receive quality care without being subject to prejudice, primarily by ensuring that health care professionals receive cultural competency training, as set out in the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to address the parliamentary secretary's response to my colleague.

The Liberal government just said that it was satisfied with the existing provisions in the Criminal Code. The existing Criminal Code provisions clearly do not work, however, since this appalling practice is still going on in Canada.

The Liberals rejected the resolution passed by first nations chiefs yesterday, on Thursday. We cannot, in good conscience, remain silent in the face of this injustice.

When will the government listen to the chiefs, address this problem and put an end to this unacceptable situation?

Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we completely agree with the party opposite that the situation right now is completely unacceptable, not only to indigenous women, but also to all women in Canada.

As I said, the existing provisions in the Criminal Code capture a broad range of criminal behaviour, including this situation.

[English]

That includes the situation vis-à-vis coerced sterilization with respect to indigenous women, which has been highlighted, which needs to be addressed and will be addressed.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week the Minister of Natural Resources questioned the intelligence of anyone who thinks that it was the Liberals who killed northern gateway. Of course it was the Liberals. They killed it with a shipping ban and a ministerial order. The Prime Minister always opposed northern gateway in opposition, and when he became Prime Minister, he killed it. Now the Liberals want to kill all future pipelines with the no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69.

Will the minister apologize for questioning people's intelligence and kill Bill C-69?

• (1130)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us share some good news about what is happening in Alberta today. Alberta gained 36,500 new full-time

jobs in the month of November. This month was the largest single month for full-time job gains in Alberta on record.

As far as northern gateway is concerned, it was the Federal Court of Appeal that overturned the decision made by the previous government under the flawed process it followed.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-69 heaps additional regulation and uncertainty on Canada's resource and energy sectors. The policies of the Liberal government are driving investors completely out of this country. They have had a devastating effect on investor confidence, especially in my province of Saskatchewan and next door in Alberta. When will the Liberal government stand up for the Canadian energy sector and kill Bill C-69?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are focused on fixing the flawed process that led to a number of pipelines not moving forward.

Ninety-nine per cent of Alberta's oil is sold to one single customer, which is the United States. That was the case under the previous government, because it failed to build a single pipeline to non-U.S. markets, because it had a process in place that was so flawed. We are going to fix that. The focus of Bill C-69 is to do exactly that: put a better process in place so we can move forward on building pipelines.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Madam Speaker, my constituents are sick and tired of the current Liberal government. They are sick and tired of exploding deficits. They are sick and tired of tax hikes. They are sick and tired of attacks on our way of life. How much further are these Liberals prepared to go to alienate Canadians before they realize the damage they have done? When will they kill Bill C-69, the bill that will kill energy development in Canada?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is moving forward with a plan that is going to help protect the environment and grow the economy at the same time. That includes an overhaul of our environmental assessment process to restore the confidence that was lost under 10 years of Stephen Harper's government. During that 10 years, 99% of the resources that were extracted in our natural resource sector were going to the U.S. After 10 years, it remains that way today.

We are moving forward with a plan that is going to incorporate key feedback from indigenous peoples and protect our environment. I note in particular that the Assembly of First Nations just gave a ringing endorsement to this approach.

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals have had four years to get the job done, and they have not done anything on pipelines. Today in my riding, families are struggling to make ends meet, food banks are running low, and this month, families will choose between making their car payments or heating their homes.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister said that Canadians are better off under his plan, but his no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69, is a threat to the livelihoods of Canadians who work in the energy sector. When will the Liberals finally put families first and kill Bill C-69?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me take the opportunity to correct the hon. member. We approved Enbridge Line 3. That is under way now. That will add 370,000 barrels per day of capacity to get our resources to the U.S. On top of that, we are moving forward in responding to the court's decision on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in the right way. We are making sure that we are responding to the issue of marine safety. We are making sure that we are responding, in a meaningful way, to engage with indigenous communities to deal with their concerns.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, 1.2 million barrels each day are flowing through pipelines approved by Conservatives. It is zero new barrels for the Liberals.

Today the Prime Minister is meeting with the premiers. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick all want a west-to-east pipeline to bring Canadian oil to Canadian refineries and exports to Europe, but the Liberals' no-more-pipelines bill is standing in the way and will harm the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Canadians.

Will the Liberals finally at least listen to the premiers and scrap their no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69?

• (1135)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take this question on today of all days. I note, in particular, that Statistics Canada reported this morning that the Canadian economy has added 94,000 new jobs in just the past month. One of the reasons we are seeing this is because we are implementing smart economic policies, because we recognize that we can grow the economy and protect the environment at the same time. That is why we are moving on an overhaul of the environmental assessment process to ensure that projects move forward in the right way.

After 10 years of governance under Stephen Harper, Canadians lost faith that the environment would be protected and rejected development projects on that basis. We are moving forward with a plan that is going to see our economy grow and our environment protected.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources, and he should answer my question.

The fact is that almost half a million barrels per day flow to new markets through pipelines approved by Conservatives. More than 8,000 kilometres of pipelines were built under Conservatives, while these Liberals have already blocked 7,000 kilometres of pipeline, and they have not added a single new inch. The Bank of Canada governor says the value of Canada's oil and gas sector has shrunk by 42% since the Liberals were elected. That is a crisis they created, and their no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69, will cripple the industry.

Will they scrap the no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I think it is appropriate that the member should know that one of the pipelines she cited as being built under the Conservatives' tenure was actually built in 1976. All they did was reverse the flow of the pipeline. If that is their record, that clearly demonstrates how they have failed to get anything done.

We are moving forward on building pipeline capacity by approving Enbridge Line 3 as well as moving forward on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion in the right way.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, according to a Department of Public Safety report, fully 86% of participants agreed that the government should completely wipe out, not merely suspend, criminal records for minor offences, particularly convictions for cannabis possession. Half a million Canadians have criminal records for this. They continue to face significant barriers to employment and housing for an activity that is now entirely legal. These Canadians deserve freedom, not forgiveness.

Will the Liberals commit to expunging criminal records for cannabis possession?

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his advocacy on this issue. Removing the stigma of a criminal record for people who have shown themselves to be law-abiding citizens and encouraging their reintegration enhances public safety for all Canadians.

Individuals who were previously criminalized for simple possession of cannabis should be allowed meaningful participation in their communities, good, stable jobs and to become fully contributing members of society. That is why the Government of Canada intends to offer specific recourse, allowing individuals to immediately apply for pardons after completing their sentences and making it free to apply.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday I stood in Parliament with leaders from the John Howard Society. They said pardons do not provide enough protection for people with criminal records. They said this:

If people's convictions are expunged, rather than pardoned...they will be able to respond 'no' to any questions about their criminal history—no matter how the question is phrased.

The government admits that black and indigenous Canadians have been disproportionately burdened with criminal records for possession. The application of this law has been fundamentally unjust, so will the government do what is just by erasing their records?

Oral Questions

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a pardon is a very effective tool. It is cheaper, it is faster, there is no fee, there is no wait time, the record is sealed and segregated and it can be reopened only in extraordinary circumstances, such as committing another offence. The effect of a pardon is protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act.

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CARBON PRICING

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government has given Canadians a wage cut. The data out just today shows that inflation is rising twice as fast as wage growth, and that is before the average tax increase of \$800 for a Canadian family. Then, in January, the carbon tax will take effect. That will add, in the short term, 11¢ a litre to gas and \$250 to a home heating bill.

Will the government tell us what will be the full price of the carbon tax when it is completely implemented in the year 2022?

● (1140)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the report to which the hon. member refers actually points out that 94,000 new jobs were added to the Canadian economy just last month. That brings the total of full-time jobs up to almost 700,000 since we took office. At the same time, we are growing the economy, we are moving forward with a plan to protect our environment that will put a price on pollution, the details of which are transparent and are on our website, that will actually leave middle-class families better off. If the hon. member does not accept the answer from me, I suggest that he talk to Stephen Harper's former director of policy, who can confirm that this is the case.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the report he talked about today shows that wages only went up 1.2% while inflation is 2.4%. In other words, the cost of living is rising twice as fast as wages, which is a real wage cut for Canadians. Furthermore, the carbon tax will add additional costs onto Canadians. The government admits that it will bring in a new carbon tax price in the year 2022, only a few years from now. How much will that tax cost in higher gas and home heating prices for struggling families?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have watched the hon. member for months try to trick Canadians into thinking there is going to be an increased cost as a result of our plan. We are implementing a plan that will actually result in a net benefit to middle-class families. When we are moving forward with a plan, it is actually a feature of our federal law that this money goes back into the pockets of families. I will watch very closely in the next campaign when the hon. member campaigns on a commitment to take that money from the families in his community.

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AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, auto companies will build the electric and autonomous cars of the future, but sadly, not in Oshawa. Twice this week, Liberals refused to let

MPs study this very important issue. Twice this week the Prime Minister was asked to release his plan for affected auto workers in Oshawa. Again, nothing. It has been two weeks, and the Prime Minister still has not even bothered to call Oshawa's mayor to offer his support.

For the third time this week, will the Prime Minister release his plan for affected auto workers before Christmas, yes or no?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as we have mentioned a number of times in the House, our sympathies go out to the workers in Oshawa and everyone else affected by this closure. We are disappointed in the closure, but we have assured the people of Ottawa that we will look at every possibility and work with General Motors and any other company moving forward.

As far as investments in the auto industry go, as far as the car of the future goes, the future for Ontario is bright and promising. GM has invested in Markham, and we will continue to work with all automakers and everyone in industry and the artificial intelligence industry to ensure the auto of the future—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Innovation has had nearly two years to review EORN's broadband network proposal. Twenty-five per cent of eastern Ontario homes and businesses cannot access broadband services. Business investment and retention, job creation, education, health care, and basically the overall quality of life of residents in my riding, depend on access to reliable, high-speed Internet and cellular service.

Will the minister confirm that rural broadband and cellular service is a top priority, and what is he doing to work with the province to ensure that this gets done?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, broadband connectivity and cell connectivity remains a top priority for this government. Through our connect to innovate program, we have invested \$500 million across Canada, and that leveraged other investments in that industry. We have managed with 180 projects to connect more than 900 rural communities across Canada. That is many more than the 300 communities initially targeted, including 190 indigenous communities. We invested \$10 million in eastern Ontario to connect 21 communities, including one indigenous community and 38 institutions. We are living up to our promises of—

Oral Questions

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[*Translation*]

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[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Liberals promised compensation for farmers. Lo and behold, yesterday they announced additional compensation in the form of a lottery. As today's demonstrations show, that is clearly not enough. That is nonsense.

On top of that, how can farmers hope to be pre-selected when they do not even have access to high-speed Internet? Only between 1,000 and 1,500 projects will be approved, when 6,500 farms in Quebec and 17,000 across the country have been seriously affected. The Liberals simply do not get it.

Will they finally take real action to meet our farmers' needs, yes or no?

• (1145)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has introduced \$350 million in support for dairy producers and processors across Canada. These programs have already begun helping producers and processors increase their productivity and their competitiveness, and adapt to the economic and trade agreement with the European Union. We have delivered more than \$129 million to 1,900 dairy producers across the country so far. Applications for the second phase of the program will be accepted beginning in the new year.

[*English*]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, last week the Liberals promised they would not agree to the U.S. oversight clause in the USMCA, but sure enough they signed the agreement with the clause included. American oversight of our Canadian dairy system undermines our food sovereignty and betrays our farmers.

This is the third time the Liberals have signed an agreement giving away access to our domestic dairy market, and now Americans can dictate our dairy policies. Is the government unable to keep its promises, or do the Liberals just not care about our farmers, producers and supply management system?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government has defended our supply management system from strong American attempts to see it dismantled. We have worked hard to advance Canadian agricultural interests at the table. We understand there will be impacts on our farmers and we are committed to fully and fairly supporting them to help them continue to succeed.

The dairy working groups have been announced. They will develop strategies to fully and fairly support producers and processors and ensure that the sector can innovate, grow and remain competitive and be sustainable for future generations.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2015, after 10 years of cuts, Canadians had a clear choice: continue with the austerity that cost jobs or continue with the tax breaks that helped only the wealthy. That was what the Conservatives were offering. What a disgrace.

[*English*]

However, we offered Canadians a better choice. We invested in hard-working Canadians to support and create opportunities for the middle class and those working every day to join it.

[*Translation*]

Could the parliamentary secretary inform the House of our plan's many benefits for Canadian workers?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hull—Aylmer for his question.

Indeed, under 10 years of Conservative rule, our country posted its worst economic performance, virtually across the board, in many decades.

The Conservatives still do not have a plan for our economy, but we can see our plan is working. For example, just this morning we got some very encouraging employment figures.

[*English*]

Since 2015, over 600,000 full-time jobs have been created in this country, and the unemployment rate has fallen to 5.6%, the lowest level ever recorded. More Canadians are working. Our economy is the strongest in the G7 and because of our plan, the average Canadian family will have \$2,000 more—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, another day and another ally is taking a stand against Huawei, with the news that Japan will ban it from government contracts. BT in the U.K. is also removing all Huawei tech from its existing mobile network.

For months, we have been asking the government to stand with Canadians and protect their cybersecurity. Why do the Liberals keep refusing to do the right thing and ban Huawei from our next generation of 5G technology?

Oral Questions

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government takes the security of Canada's telecommunications networks very seriously. We have invested more than \$725 million to fund a new national cybersecurity strategy to ensure secure and resilient cyber systems and to encourage innovation.

The Communications Security Establishment has provided advice on the 4G network and will continue to do so on the 5G network. Together with Canadian and international partners, Canada's national security agency is constantly working to identify threats, and we will continue to listen to its advice.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Madam Speaker, if the Liberals want us to believe they take the cybersecurity of Canadians seriously, they should just simply take action and ban Huawei. Chinese law demands that this company co-operate with the Chinese government and spy on Canadians. How many more allies and experts have to raise this as a crisis before the government does the right thing and bans Huawei from our 5G network?

• (1150)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, let me reiterate and reassure everyone in the House, as well as Canadians, that we will never compromise our national security. We will listen to our national security agencies. We will take their advice. We will move forward.

Balanced with that is the fact that we are investing in telecommunications services, which we promised Canadians we would do to improve the quality of coverage and services no matter where they live. 5G is an important part of that picture.

We will take the advice of our national security agencies, who will give us the same kinds of advice on 5G that they did on 4G.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, in June, the House voted in favour of our motion to label the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist entity.

It has been reported that one of the IRGC commanders had been ordering hit squads to kill politicians in Iraq that the Iranian regime disapproved of. At the same time, they are holding a Canadian permanent resident in a notorious prison, despite the regime's own acknowledgement that there is no evidence.

Why have the Liberals not listed the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist entity?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we will always defend human rights and hold Iran to account for its actions.

In any of the discussions we have with the Government of Iran, we are ensuring that we maintain the focus on human rights and making sure that those citizens who are unjustly detained are returned.

Our government is committed to holding Iran to account for its violations of human and democratic rights.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, last week I had the pleasure of visiting Abitibi. I heard from a number of stakeholders, including the cities of Rouyn-Noranda and Val-d'Or and several members of the tourism sector, that they are worried about Nav Canada's plan to eliminate air traffic controller night-shift positions in this area.

I would like the minister to reassure the people of Abitibi and clearly tell them that the government will not let Nav Canada entrust the safety of the public to robots just to save a few dollars.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The safety and security of our transportation networks is our top priority. Transport Canada is working with Nav Canada on this file to ensure the safety of operations at these two airports. Nav Canada is conducting a second round of consultations on this issue in the community. No decision has been made, but no one is talking about cancelling night flights.

* * *

[English]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, the CRTC has launched proceedings to create an Internet code of conduct to protect consumers.

The problem is that without warning and little notice, it has put the public and experts on an impossible timeline to contribute meaningful input. Even worse, the CRTC is withholding crucial information to allow experts to do their job. The CRTC's irrational approach has become a debacle.

Are the Liberals really serious about consumer protection, or is this process smoke and mirrors? Will the minister extend the deadline to allow the public and experts reasonable time to make submissions to the CRTC and ensure that a code of conduct is done properly?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the CRTC has a long track record of consulting Canadians and working well within the areas of its jurisdiction, including telecommunications and consumer protection.

We have every confidence that it will continue to do so. The minister is aware of this process, and we will continue to watch it.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a specific question. Yesterday the leaders of the NDP, Bloc Québécois and Green Party met for the purpose of reaching out to the rest of the House, because it is time we recognized the absolute urgency of climate change. There is no time to argue. We need to set aside partisan politics and launch no less than a war effort to combat climate change. No one party can meet this challenge alone. We need to come together. Taking a non-partisan approach is a message that will make all the difference.

Would the Prime Minister agree to participate in a non-partisan effort and convene a summit of all party leaders to combat climate change?

Our children are watching us.

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that this past week, I had the opportunity to join him and others from different parties at the all-party climate change caucus meeting. As well, I note in particular that we are sending a delegation to Poland with representatives from different parties.

While we are establishing a way to move forward, we are working on a plan that is actually going to protect our environment for future generations. We are phasing out coal more than 30 years ahead of schedule compared with the last government's plan. We are putting a price on pollution. We are investing in clean technology, making historic investments in public transit, and implementing over 50 measures that will make a meaningful difference, so we can ensure that our environment is protected for our kids and grandkids.

* * *

• (1155)

ETHICS

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister admitted that he knew in advance about the arrest of a Huawei executive. In other words, he was briefed, but the Prime Minister expects Canadians to believe that he had no idea the RCMP were conducting an investigation into one of its own MPs, an MP whose name turned up on wiretaps regarding terrorist financing and drug-money laundering.

Will the Prime Minister come clean and admit that he failed to act after being briefed on an MP within his caucus being linked to organized crime?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member, as well as all other members, has been informed that the RCMP works independently of government. Government does not direct the RCMP or security agencies to take on investigations. We appreciate its independence and the work it does.

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's claim that he was not aware of any

RCMP investigation into one of his Liberal MPs regarding drug-money laundering and terrorist financing simply does not hold up.

Since the Prime Minister says he had been informed of the imminent arrest of Huawei executives, when was he informed of the investigation into the member for Brampton East?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have already answered this question. As the member should know, the RCMP operates independently of government. We on this side of the House respect its work and its independence.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are making good use of parliamentary immunity to avoid answering simple, legitimate questions. Canadians expect government members and ministers to be immune to attempts of corruption.

How are the trip to India, the real estate company, the minister and the member for Brampton East connected, and is the Prime Minister's Office at the centre of it all?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member is confusing matters and he is doing it on purpose. That is not the right way to do things in the House. The member is well aware that the RCMP operates independently. The minister has answered these questions too.

It is easy to tell when Conservative members are asking genuine questions and when they are just making stuff up, because they do not say the same things outside. This should all be even clearer because the Leader of the Opposition withdrew comments he made outside the House. Even so, they continue to do it here because they are protected.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Gudie Hutchings (Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that working collaboratively to renew the relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership is key to achieving reconciliation and moving forward on self-determination for our indigenous people in Canada. The assertion of jurisdiction over education is just one step towards self-determination, and it is vital for communities to be able to teach their children in a way that underscores the importance of their culture and their language.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations update the House on the efforts to accelerate self-determination for indigenous people while closing the unacceptable education gap in our indigenous communities?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government is committing to advancing self-determination and ensuring that first nations students have access to culturally appropriate, high-quality education that meets their needs.

Oral Questions

The evidence is clear that first nations-led education systems achieve better results for students. This week, the minister was honoured to sign an agreement in principle with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which represents a major step forward to greater self-determination and a brighter future, mostly importantly, for their students.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal answer to European cheese being imported to Canada is a sort of milk lottery where the winner gets \$1,000, \$5,000, up to \$100,000.

Here is how it will work. Producers' names will be put in a hat and lucky winners whose name is drawn will be entitled to money from the federal government. Those who were eligible for a consolation prize in the first round, too bad, better luck next time.

All the producers are affected by the concessions. Luck has nothing to do with it.

How could the Minister of Agriculture accept such a stupid and unfair program?

● (1200)

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have put in place a \$350-million aid package for dairy producers and processors across Quebec.

These programs have already helped producers and processors improve their productivity and competitiveness and adjust to the agreement. So far, we have allocated over \$129 million to more than 1,900 dairy producers across the country, including 876 farmers in Quebec for a total of nearly \$50 million. The second phase of the program will be open for applications early in the new year.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this week, during National Safe Driving Week and in the Operation Red Nose season, the Conservatives are saying that there is nothing wrong with having a few beers and some chicken wings before getting behind the wheel of a car.

As the Christmas season is upon us, can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety inform the House of the measures our government is taking to prevent impaired driving?

[English]

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Laurentides—Labelle for the outstanding work he and his entire office perform with Operation Red Nose.

Tragically, impaired driving remains the leading criminal cause of injury and death in Canada and yet it is very clear that not everyone has gotten the message. That is why it was particularly disappointing

this week to hear the member for St. Albert—Edmonton actually defending drinking and driving.

Our government is taking real action against impaired driving with the introduction of tough new measures, which have the support of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, three kilometres of the West Fraser Road in my riding have been washed out and impassable for eight months. Over 250 indigenous and non-indigenous families are being put at risk. Children as young as five years of age are spending up to five hours per day on a school bus, because the government cannot get funding out the door.

How is this acceptable for any government?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for bringing this matter to our attention. Obviously, we are going to be looking at it through our historic plan for investment and infrastructure. I was in B.C. recently, in Sicamous. We have been investing in British Columbia. We will continue to invest.

I would invite the member to send me a note. I am quite happy to follow up with the member. The people of British Columbia know we care for them. They know we care for the children of British Columbia. We will do a follow up on that to provide him an answer.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the government has lost its marbles. Right in the middle of COP24, where the whole world is preparing to fight climate change, the Prime Minister is talking about purchasing 7,000 railway cars at taxpayers' expense to export more oil from the tar sands.

According to the lowest public estimate available, this will cost \$840 million. Quebeckers do not want to spend one cent on buying trains for oil companies, which make massive profits at our expense.

Will the government reverse course?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we know that because of the price differential we are facing in Alberta, there is a very dire situation with which we need to deal. We are exploring all options that are in front of us. We will continue to make sure that whatever action we take, we do it in the most safe and responsible way, keeping the safety of the communities in mind as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, that is going to look really good at COP24.

According to the lowest estimate, it is going to cost taxpayers \$840 million to gift these trains to the oil companies, which are the richest in Canada.

In the meantime, the Government of Quebec spent \$300 million on the migrant crisis and the federal government is letting that situation deteriorate.

Does the government realize that the compensation Quebec wants for handling the migrant crisis is less than half the minimum cost of these trains?

Will it compensate Quebec instead of giving presents to the oil sands industry?

• (1205)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is important that we, as a federal government, work in close collaboration with our provincial counterparts, and that is just what we are doing with the Quebec government regarding the situation with asylum seekers.

We have already committed \$36 million to the Quebec government, and we are going to continue our discussions so we can ensure that asylum seekers have a system where they can get a decision in accordance with the law.

That is what we are committed to doing with the Quebec government.

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, sure, they will just write another cheque then.

After buying a pipeline on the taxpayers' dime, the government wants to buy the oil companies trains for Christmas.

Meanwhile, our dairy farmers are driving to Montreal on tractors to explain to the Prime Minister how the last three trade deals are going to cost them \$450 million a year.

Does the government realize that that is half the amount it wants to waste on trains for oil companies?

Instead of spoiling the rich, will it compensate our farmers instead?

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are committed to fully and fairly supporting our supply-managed sectors to help them succeed.

That is the mission of the working groups formed with dairy farmers and processors and with egg and poultry farmers and processors.

Together, we are going to help our farmers and processors in supply-managed sectors innovate, grow, and stay competitive and sustainable well into the future.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, just as the world realizes that we have to leave fossil fuels

Routine Proceedings

in the ground, the Trump administration has its sights set on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Something about those words should have given Trump a hint that we are not supposed to drill there. It is the place that is essential for the porcupine caribou's birthing and calving grounds. It is essential for the Gwich'in people on both sides of our border.

What has the Government of Canada done to stand in the way of Donald Trump and his blind rush to develop the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as always, it is a pleasure to discuss these issues with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. To start, it is important we flag the priority that is nature and conservation. I note that in budget 2018 we have set aside \$1.35 billion, a historic investment for our country, in nature and conservation.

With respect to the National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, the regulatory process has not started yet, but Canada will take part and our submissions will be a matter of the public record. In particular, we have established measures to protect the porcupine herd on our side of the border, including the creation of two national parks. We are moving forward with a plan to save the caribou for future generations.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In responding earlier to the question from the member for Oshawa, I inadvertently misspoke and said "Ottawa" for "Oshawa". I would ask that the record be corrected, and I apologize.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise on a quick point of order to remind people in the House that we should be respectful in communicating. Referring to indigenous populations as "our indigenous people" or "our indigenous communities" continues the colonial perspective. Therefore, I encourage members to refer to their notes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights concerning Bill C-78, an act to amend the Divorce Act, the Family Orders and Agreements Enforcement Assistance Act and the Garnishment, Attachment and Pension Diversion Act and to make consequential amendments to another act. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

* * *

• (1210)

[English]

PETITIONS

FISHERIES

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by 2,657 Canadians regarding more sustainable fishing practices in British Columbia.

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition initiated by Councillor Teri Towner of Coquitlam, British Columbia. Teri's petition was supported from coast to coast to coast and calls upon the Government of Canada to recognize the value in service within search and rescue communities by establishing a national search and rescue day.

The petitioners say that a national search and rescue day would honour living past and present search and rescue volunteers to whom Canadians owe an immense debt of gratitude; that search and rescue personnel are unpaid volunteers who drop whatever they are doing, any time of day or night, to search for and provide aid to people in distress or imminent danger; that more than 12,000 search and rescue volunteers throughout Canada have trained thousands of hours to provide search and rescue services in the air, on land and waters within hundreds of established search and rescue teams; and that search and rescue volunteers are unsung heroes who assist citizens in distress and are credited with saving lives.

CAMBODIA

Mr. Ron McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am also proud to present e-petition 1759 pertaining to election monitoring in Cambodia.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of southern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, who are petitioning the government over the use of the marine environment as a parking lot for freighters under the interim protocol. Many freighters are spending longer periods of time with more frequency and it is having an impact not only the very fragile

and sensitive marine environment but also coastal communities' well-being.

The petitioners ask the government to come up with a plan to discontinue the use of the southern Gulf Islands of B.C. as a parking lot for freighters.

[Translation]

CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL PRODUCTS

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from my constituents in Alfred-Pellan. They are concerned and would like to see innovative solutions adopted to better regulate the consumption of alcohol products, particularly beverages with high sugar and alcohol content.

[English]

Thus, citizens ask the government to impose reclosable cans as a new standard for alcohol products to ensure the health and safety of all Canadians.

KILLER WHALES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions.

The first petition, from members of Saanich—Gulf Islands, calls for urgent action to protect the southern resident killer whale population. As we know in this place, its population is down to 74 animals and they require urgent protective measures.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the second petition goes to the issue of the ongoing crisis of violence against women, particularly as it affects indigenous women. These petitioners from Saanich—Gulf Islands call for shifting current cultural attitudes toward women and gender minorities and require structural changes in our education system.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, the last petition I present this afternoon goes to the issue of ending the horrific practice of organ trafficking. There have been many petitions in this place on this point. The petitioners call on this place to accept Bill C-350 in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 in the Senate.

OPIOIDS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to table a petition on behalf of constituents from Courtenay. They have stated that over 4,000 Canadians died in 2017 and over 2,800 in 2016 due to preventable opioid overdose resulting from fentanyl-poisoned sources. The number of preventable deaths has surpassed the total number of deaths in all public health emergencies in the last 20 years, including SARS, H1N1 and Ebola.

Those who have died as a result of a preventable overdose from fentanyl-poisoned sources were valued citizens of this country: our children, siblings, spouses, parents, family members, clients and friends.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to declare the current opioid overdose and fentanyl poisoning crisis a national public health emergency under the Emergencies Act in order to manage and resource it with the aim to reduce and eliminate preventable deaths and to reform current drug policy; to decriminalize personal possession; and last, to create with urgency and immediacy a system to provide safe, unadulterated access to substances so that people who use substances experimentally, recreationally or chronically are not at imminent risk of overdose due to a contaminated source.

•(1215)

PHARMACARE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, hundreds of residents from Winnipeg North have signed a petition in regard to a national pharmacare program. They are calling upon the Prime Minister and all members of this House to recognize the importance of a national pharmacare system, asking that Ottawa work in co-operation with the different stakeholders, in particular our provinces and others, to ensure that some day we can have a unique national pharmacare program for prescribed medicines.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 2004, 2006 and 2010.

[Text]

Question No. 2004—**Mr. Mark Warawa:**

With regard to Canada-Taiwan relations and reports that the Government of China is requiring Canadian private companies, including Air Canada and the Royal Bank of Canada, to label Taiwan as part of China: (a) has the government discussed this issue with the Government of Taiwan and, if so, (i) on what dates was it discussed, (ii) what message was conveyed, (iii) what was Taiwan's response; (b) has there been a change in the government's policy with respect to Canada-Taiwan relations and, if so, what was the change; and (c) what is the status of negotiations on a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement with Taiwan?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada supports Taiwan's democracy and continues to have strong and growing trade and people-to-people ties with Taiwan within the framework of Canada's one China policy. Canada is committed to expanding these ties, including on the basis of shared values and a large diaspora. Canada is pleased to note that there has been steady growth in tourist visits, international student exchanges, and bilateral merchandise trade between our two markets.

Canada opposes any actions taken to alter the status quo or raise tensions across the Taiwan Strait. While private companies are responsible for the content of their websites, Global Affairs Canada has made firm representations to the Government of the People's Republic of China expressing Canada's strong disappointment that China is involving private industry and obliging them to take a position on political issues. Global Affairs Canada has made clear to Chinese officials that Canadian companies should be able to operate their websites without political interference. Canadian officials have

also met with Taiwanese authorities to inform them that there has been no change in Canada's longstanding one China policy.

With regards to a possible foreign investment protection agreement or arrangement, FIPA, with Taiwan, Canada is giving consideration to the matter.

Canada is committed to continuing to strengthen trade and investment relations in the Asia-Pacific region, including with Taiwan.

Question No. 2006—**Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to government expenditures on personal wellness, spiritual experts, yoga instructors or other similar types of services during the 2018 G7 Summit in Charlevoix: what are the details of all such expenditures, including (i) vendor, (ii) date, (iii) services provided, (iv) amount of contract or expenditure, (v) for which individuals the services were provided?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Global Affairs Canada's summits management office had no expenditures related to personal wellness, spiritual experts, yoga instructors or other similar types of service that were used during the 2018 G7 summit in Charlevoix.

Question No. 2010—**Mr. Peter Kent:**

With regard to the decision by the Minister of National Defence to hire James Cudmore as a Senior Policy Advisor in late 2015 or early 2016: (a) on what date was Mr. Cudmore offered employment in the Office of the Minister; and (b) on what date did Mr. Cudmore begin his employment in the Office of the Minister?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the Privacy Act and the principles set out in the Access to Information Act. With respect to the details of an individual's employment, a response could disclose personal and solicitor-client privileged information. Therefore, the government must respectfully decline to respond.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Furthermore, Madam Speaker, if the government's responses to Questions Nos. 2005 and 2007 to 2009 could be made Orders for Returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is it the pleasure of the House that the foregoing questions be made orders for returns and that they be tabled immediately?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

[Text]

Question No. 2005—**Mrs. Kelly Block:**

With regard to the impact of a carbon tax on the airline industry, what projections does the government have on: (a) the increase in the number of Canadian travellers who will fly out of airports in the United States as opposed to Canadian airports as a result of a carbon tax being imposed on Canadians; and (b) the impact of a carbon tax on the Canadian airline industry?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2007—**Mr. Todd Doherty:**

With regard to government contracts with Seaspan and its companies signed since November 4, 2015: (a) what is the total value of all contracts; and (b) what are the details of each contract, including (i) vendor, (ii) original contract value, (iii) final contract value if different than original, (iv) contract ceiling price, if applicable, (v) date, (vi) duration of contract, (vii) description of goods or services provided, (viii) file number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2008—**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:**

With regard to costs associated with the Prime Minister's trip to Tofino, British Columbia, in the summer of 2018: (a) what was the total amount of expenditures related to the Prime Minister's trip, broken down by type of expenditure; and (b) what were the total costs incurred by the Canadian Coast Guard in relation to the trip, broken down by type of expenditure?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 2009—**Mr. Matt Jeneroux:**

With regard to the Canada Infrastructure Bank: (a) what is the remuneration range for its Board of Directors and its Chief Executive Officer; (b) what are the details of all travel expenses incurred by the Bank since its inception, including for each expenditure the (i) traveller, (ii) purpose, (iii) dates, (iv) air fare, (v) other transportation, (vi) accommodation, (vii) meals and incidentals, (viii) other, (ix) total; (c) what are the details of all hospitality expenses incurred by the Bank, including for each expenditure the (i) individual, (ii) location and vendor, (iii) total, (iv) description, (v) date, (vi) number of attendees, including government employees and guests; and (d) will the Bank's travel and hospitality expenditures be subject to Proactive Disclosure and, if not, why?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CUSTOMS ACT

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (for the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness) moved the second reading of, and concurrence in, the amendment made by the Senate to Bill C-21, An Act to amend the Customs Act.

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in support of the legislative

amendment to Bill C-21 that has been proposed by our hon. colleagues. The legislative amendment we are debating today is reflective of similar concerns expressed by the House in its consideration of the bill, namely that the personal information collected under Bill C-21 be retained for a period of 15 years. The Senate, in consultation with the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, has provided additional wording to ensure that the Canada Border Services Agency would only be authorized to retain the data it collects for a period of not more than 15 years.

Privacy protection is part of the very design of the entry-exit initiative. For one, agreements would have to be established with the CBSA and other government departments for the sharing of information. Included here are requirements for the completion of privacy impact assessments to identify exactly how collected information would be used, as well as the measures taken to protect privacy before the new system becomes operational.

Importantly, when Canada's Privacy Commissioner appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, the parliamentary committee that examined this bill, he noted that, "...there are important public policy objectives that this initiative is trying to address and that the personal information in question is not particularly sensitive." In the Senate, the Privacy Commissioner further expressed his general satisfaction with the bill and the extent to which his office had been consulted throughout the process.

Our government understands the need to provide Canadians reassurance that information-sharing initiatives have proper safeguards and review. Through Bill C-59 Canadians have seen that the government is serious about ensuring effective review of Canada's security agencies. We would be more than meeting the expectations of Canadians with this new degree of legislative review, and importantly, this scrutiny would align us with our Five Eyes counterparts that already have such measures in place. The entry-exit initiative has broad public policy benefits, as the Privacy Commissioner acknowledged. Bill C-21 would benefit Canada in many ways, the most important being that it would enhance the security and effectiveness of the Canada-U.S. border and in so doing, increase the safety of our citizens.

Let me first remind the House how information is exchanged today. Canada currently collects basic biographic information on people coming into Canada, such as who they are, where they are from and how long they are staying. This information helps our officials identify and respond to potential threats. However, when it comes to those leaving the country, we collect information on only a small subset of these people, meaning that at any given moment we have an important information gap. While we know who enters Canada, we do not have a full picture of who is leaving.

The main problem with this information gap is that we might miss the exit from our country of individuals escaping justice or seeking to join radical groups abroad, or of known high-risk travellers and their goods, such as human or drug smugglers or exporters of illicit goods.

Government Orders

With this in mind, I will review briefly what Bill C-21 would do. When someone enters the U.S. from Canada at a land border crossing, basic entry information such as name, date of birth, citizenship, passport number and time and place of entry, the kind of information that is already collected from everyone entering the U.S., would be transmitted from the U.S. to the CBSA. In this way, the record of a person's entry into the U.S. would become a record of the person's exit from Canada and vice versa.

This would be new. Currently, at land ports of entry the U.S. and Canada exchange exit information on only a subset of people, including third-country nationals, non-U.S. or Canadian citizens; permanent residents of Canada who are not U.S. citizens; and lawful permanent residents of the U.S. who are not Canadian citizens.

● (1220)

With this bill, the data collected would be expanded to include all people exiting Canada by land.

The bill would allow a similar situation for a person leaving Canada by air. When someone enters the U.S. by air, his or her basic information would need to be provided to the CBSA. This information would be transmitted from the airlines to the CBSA so that the agency has information on everyone exiting Canada by air.

The benefits of this expansion of data pertaining to individuals exiting the country are many. For example, it would help our officials to respond quickly, and sometimes pre-emptively, to the outbound movement of known high-risk travellers and goods. It would identify individuals who do not leave Canada at the end of their authorized period of stay. It would verify whether applicants for permanent residency or citizenship have complied with residency requirements and would deliver faster client services for permanent residency and citizenship applications. It would allow us to respond more effectively in time-sensitive situations, such as amber alerts. It would allow us to stop using valuable immigration enforcement resources to find people who have already left Canada. It would allow us to provide reliable information in support of those making admissibility decisions and those carrying active investigations related to national security; law enforcement; or immigration, citizenship or travel document fraud. It would allow us to better interdict the illegal export of controlled, regulated or prohibited goods from Canada.

All told, the entry-exit initiative is another example of how Canada is keeping pace with the rest of the world and living up to its emerging position as a leader in border management.

In closing, I would like to say a few words about the CBSA and how Bill C-21 would help its officers better carry out their important work.

As all members know, the CBSA plays a key role in protecting Canada's physical and economic security by detecting threats at the border. Operating 24-7 in a risk-management environment, the agency relies heavily on information, including data on who is coming, who is going and when.

Currently, border officers know who is coming into Canada but do not know who has left. This is a blind spot that could prevent officers

from tracking potentially dangerous Canadians as they head overseas, such as human traffickers.

Without a doubt, for all Canadians, the men and women of the CBSA need to have the proper basic tools, and that includes information, to deliver on their mandate of maximizing our safety and security.

For this, and a host of other reasons, I encourage all hon. members to join me in supporting this amendment and this important bill.

● (1225)

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-21, an act to amend the Customs Act.

Our caucus is supportive of the bill, and I am pleased to rise to renew that continued support. However, I cannot help but look at Bill C-21 and compare it with another bill before the House, Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. There are significant differences between the two. The question of differences especially comes to mind with the recent passing of former United States President Bush and the eloquent eulogy offered by former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney. The friendship and skill of these former leaders stands in contrast to our leader today.

Bill C-21 was the product of two former national leaders, former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper and U.S. President Obama. The legislation was based on an effort to improve security and trade. The two leaders were noted for making history. One re-crafted Canadian Conservative politics while the other re-crafted a new vision for American presidents. Neither could be found making the kind of erroneous tweets or statements of their successors. Despite ideological and cultural differences, they improved trade and worked together to deal with challenges, like the global economic crisis. The difference between our former leaders and the new one today could not be more stark. For me, these two bills tell a similar story. Bill C-21 is based on the work of a predecessor.

At committee, we heard numerous people speak to the relevance, importance and balance of Bill C-21. Concerns were raised, but they were manageable and moderate. In contrast, Bill C-83 fails in every way that Bill C-21 seems to succeed. Not one witness provided support for Bill C-83 at committee. The committee could not determine exactly what or how the bill would work, or even if it would meet any of promises the Minister of Public Safety made. Bill C-21, on the other hand, is a bill to implement improved border co-operation and security that would benefit both the United States and Canada. It would boost jobs and opportunity. It would reduce the regulatory burden on honest and hard-working Canadians. It would provide safe and effective borders, and it would support Canadians who follow the rules and respect the law.

Government Orders

In the incredible riding of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner in southern Alberta, which I have the privilege and honour of serving, we have five ports of entry between Canada and the United States. These border crossings are critical for local, regional and national economies. Products, services and people cross the border daily. Unfortunately, despite funding being set aside in 2015 by the previous government, the Liberals have yet to deliver a dime to improve and expand border crossings in my riding. That is yet another example of the way the Liberals have continued to ignore the needs of Alberta's economy.

One of the features of Bill C-21 is the collection of personal entry and exit information at the border. This information will provide better intelligence and understanding of security and trade, and ultimately better security and a stronger economy. Naturally, collection of information in the age of big data does raise concerns. This is the only issue that surfaced during Senate review.

The Senate has offered an amendment to clause 93.1, which reads:

Subject to section 6 of the Privacy Act, information collected under sections 92 and 93 shall be retained for 15 years beginning on the day on which the information is collected.

The Privacy Commissioner was concerned that the original amendment by the public safety committee would not provide enough certainty. I understand that it is the Privacy Commissioner's role to be concerned and to identify what could go wrong and how things could be abused. He stated:

The words "shall be retained for 15 years" clearly indicate that information cannot be destroyed before the end of the 15 year period. Then, there are no words to prescribe what happens after the end of the period.

● (1230)

I would suggest this is a friendly amendment, a minor edit over a concern about the language used to achieve the same objective. I will quote from the Hansard of the Senate. Senator Mary Coyle stated the following about the testimony of the Privacy Commissioner:

...in order to achieve greater legal certainty, section 93.1 should be amended in order to clarify that the data collected under sections 92 and 93 shall be retained by the agency for a period of not more than 15 years, so to a maximum of 15 years. He said:

'It would be desirable...to achieve greater legal certainty to amend section 93.1 to clarify that it applies only to CBSA and that it is a maximum period.'

That is, the 15-year maximum period. I have personally verified with Mr. Therrien regarding the wording of the amendment agreed to by the committee and he agrees it captures his concern regarding the retention period for the CBSA.

She further noted the following:

Bill C-21 gained broad consensus from all parties in the House of Commons and we have heard a similar level of agreement in this chamber.

I would note that it is not surprising that the Senate would find few issues with this legislation. The bill achieves many important objectives for Canada and Canadians.

The better use of information concerning people and goods that enter and leave the country will ensure that the government is better informed. It will also make life easier for immigrants and permanent residents who currently have to prove their time in the country, instead of a clear record being available to government. Informed government is better government.

The bill will support faster and more effective trade between our countries, as trusted businesses will be able to move their goods

more efficiently across the border without barriers. In contrast, border agents will be able to better identify and target problems, focusing enforcement on the issues rather than honest Canadians trying to go about their business.

Like all legislation involving the collection of information, we must be conscious of the collection and use of data. As the Privacy Commissioner noted, the majority of the issues raised are addressed in the bill and the bill strikes the right balance.

Unfortunately, Bill C-21 is still not an answer to many of the issues caused by the Liberal government and faced by Canadians and our country at the border. There continue to be tens of thousands of illegal border crossers, costing taxpayers an estimated \$1.1 billion, including numerous impacts on provinces. For example, the capacity of local and regional social systems are maxed out; there is a four-year backlog in asylum claims that continues to get longer; and resources from communities across the country, including CBSA border officers, RCMP and immigration officials, have been redeployed to Lacolle and other problem areas, leaving communities short-handed.

Provinces have run up massive costs, for which the federal government has offered pennies on the dollar by way of reimbursement. More than two years later, and now with two ministers, there is still no clear plan to secure the border and re-establish an orderly refugee and immigration system.

Trade between Canada and the U.S. continues to be problematic, as steel and aluminum tariffs have put manufacturing and construction jobs at risk. The energy sector continues to be subject to the whims of foreign influencers who are aligned with the anti-energy ideologies of the Liberal government.

I hope the House can move quickly to move Bill C-21 forward. The Liberal government has created a long list of problems, crises, and regional divides that need the attention of members to undo the damage to families, businesses and workers.

● (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In committee, we heard from representatives of the different sectors affected by this bill, including those that manage employment insurance and old age security benefits. We asked them what happens in the event of an error. For example, when two people have the same name, some of the identifying information on their passports is the same. Identity mix-ups happen all too often.

Government Orders

Does my colleague feel reassured that those types of errors will be avoided?

Personally, I did not feel reassured when the program director said that people could lose their EI benefits if they are confused with someone else and thought to have been in the United States when they were not. In such cases, a complaint has to be filed with the Canada Border Services Agency. However, the CBSA does not have an oversight mechanism for such activities as other national security agencies do.

Is my colleague worried about that?

Does he think that some honest citizens who may not even have travelled to the United States could lose their social benefits because of this type of error?

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, the member, as always, has been very thoughtful in his approach to matters in the House. With all due respect, that question would be great for the government to answer. Like him, I sat through witness testimony, and we had questions and concerns about things like the no-fly list. We know there are serious ongoing issues with it, and we all put faith in the current government to fix it, as it said it would. However, yes, as in any record system controlled by individuals, there is the potential for errors. When those errors are identified, my hope is that they would be rectified and not cause any long-term consequences, unlike the no-fly list.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, could my colleague talk a little more about the issues that the Privacy Commissioner raised, and where we need to go from here?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, the commissioner basically referred to information collected under clauses 92 and 93 and the retention period of 15 years. He wanted some clarity about what would happen to that information after 15 years had passed. From what I understand now, from the report back from the Senate, he is now satisfied with the changes made by the Senate amendment. As well, we support the amendment and this bill.

• (1240)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the member about subclause 93(1) of the bill. He lives in a border community, with the U.S. border not that far from where he lives. There is freedom of travel within Canada and the United States, whether by canoe crossing some of the lakes that overlap the border, or vehicles travelling in rural country, or aircraft traversing from Canada to the United States. Under subclause 93(1), there is a requirement that in the case of travel from a point in Canada to one outside Canada, the person in charge of that conveyance must report at the border the names of everyone in that mode of transportation.

Do you feel that is an infringement of the rights of the people in these craft, or is it a strong asset to the security of Canada?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I ask the member to ask the questions through the Speaker and not directly to the members.

The hon. member for Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, the intent behind this legislation was to improve national security, track individuals crossing back-and-forth and to improve trade and commerce so that individuals who pose no risk would be able to freely move back-and-forth. I am of the belief that law-abiding individuals would have zero concerns with subjecting themselves to either United States or Canadian border officials, and answering that simple question of who is in their mode of conveyance. It is a tracking mechanism that would give us greater security in dealing with national security threats.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member did bring up a number of interesting points, one in particular about the provinces that are forced right now to pay for some of these people coming over the borders. We just heard today from the Province Quebec that it is \$300,000 down on immigrants or illegal people coming across the border. Could the hon. member to comment on that, because he mentioned it in his speech, and today it was mentioned that the Province of Quebec is currently out over \$300,000?

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, I mentioned that in my speech today, and I mentioned it specifically to highlight that the bill needs to be passed quickly through this place because there are so many critical issues going on in our country that need the attention and the will of the House to fix. One of them is exactly as the member mentioned, the issue of illegal border crossers and the strains they are putting on the normal, fair and compassionate immigration system that had been in place prior to the current government taking over.

Other issues, such as the economy in Alberta and across the country and job losses in Oshawa, are critical issues in this country. We definitely need to get this legislation through so we can focus on those issues.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, I know the member is fully aware of Bill C-83. I am comparing it with Bill C-21. At committee, we listened to many witnesses talk about Bill C-83, and everyone said it was a bad bill. In fact, no witnesses who came forward said that Bill C-83 was a good bill, except for the minister and his entourage. Bill C-83 is a very important bill in that it is supposed to protect our jail system, the guards and the prisoners, but it is a bad bill. No one agreed that it was a bill that should go ahead, yet we were going to deal with it earlier this morning.

Here we have Bill C-21, which is necessary. It would assist Canadians and Americans travelling back and forth. It would help the security of our country. I wonder if the member would comment further on Bill C-21.

• (1245)

Mr. Glen Motz: Madam Speaker, the differences between Bill C-83 and Bill C-21 are vast. They are at completely opposite ends of the spectrum. It is obvious that Bill C-21 is legislation that is a piece off what was started under the beyond the borders action plan our previous government initiated. The current legislation, Bill C-83, is a dog's breakfast of we are not sure what. It is a mess, and no one supports it.

Government Orders

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-83—MOTION NO. 17—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am now prepared to rule on the point of order concerning the admissibility of Motion No. 17 to amend Bill C-83, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and another act.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly for raising this matter and all of the other members who made interventions.

The question before us is whether the House can proceed to the consideration of a motion when the French and English versions published on the Order Paper are not the same.

In this case, the English version of the motion contains some provisions that are not included in the French version.

[English]

The sponsor of the motion, the hon. member for Oakville North—Burlington, submitted the text of her motion in English. Unfortunately, the French translation that was provided along with the royal recommendation for this motion was incomplete. It is this incomplete French version of the motion that appears in the Notice Paper.

[Translation]

Although members have the right to present motions and amendments in either official language, the Chair understands that it is important for all members to be able to understand the wording of motions and amendments in the language of their choice.

[English]

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, third edition, states, at page 565:

If the Chair finds the form of the motion to be irregular, he or she has the authority to modify it in order to ensure that it conforms to the usage of the House.

I am therefore directing that the French version of Motion No. 17 be corrected and republished in the Notice Paper before the next sitting of the House.

I thank all hon. members for their attention.

* * *

[Translation]

CUSTOMS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion dealing with the Senate's amendments to Bill C-21.

The story of Bill C-21 is long and highly problematic, not to say sordid. I will read some excerpts, but first I would like to say that I am naturally in favour of the Senate's amendment. I will explain why.

[English]

The story of Bill C-21 is an interesting one, because it was a bill tabled almost three years ago.

It is unfortunate. I am thinking in particular of the No Fly List Kids, a group well known to members of this house. It is a group of parents who have children on the no-fly list who are false positives, because they share a name with an individual on this list who has been flagged.

The reason I raise this issue is that when these parents originally came to Parliament Hill and asked the government to respect commitments that had been made to fix this issue, they were told by the government, and the Minister of Public Safety more specifically, that they would have to lobby the Minister of Finance, because it needed money to the redress system. They did that. They talked to the Minister of Finance. It was fantastic. The money was announced in the last budget. It was a non-partisan effort I was proud to be part of.

Then what happened? We heard that Bill C-59 needed to be adopted, an omnibus piece of legislation dealing with a whole slew of national security elements, one chapter of which, in a bill hundreds of pages long, dealt with the no-fly list. Conveniently, we were saying that the bill needed to be facilitated at the time the bill arrived in the Senate, and it was being held up there.

● (1250)

[Translation]

How does this connect to Bill C-21? Allow me to explain. The Minister of Public Safety's press secretary made one thing clear to the media: the money is there, and Bill C-59 must be passed.

As the months passed, Bill C-21, which was introduced in the House nearly three years ago, also got held up in the Senate. A month or two ago, at the same time the parents of the no-fly list kids were lobbying the Senate to quickly pass Bill C-59 and fix this horrible problem, the same spokesperson for the Minister of Public Safety said that Bill C-21 also needed to be passed more quickly. After three years, and one year in the Senate, the bill finally passed.

I do not want to cast doubt on anyone's good faith, but there is a problem, because I see nothing in Bill C-21 to address this scourge, which has been around for too long and makes life hard for these parents whenever they take their kids to the airport. This debate gives me the opportunity to say this to the House, because even though these parents are a non-partisan group, I am a partisan politician, and so I have no qualms about criticizing the government for trying to exploit this problem to rush its legislative agenda through. If it had done its work properly, the bill would not have gotten held up in the Senate the way it has.

[English]

With that point made, I want to address more specifically the amendments from the Senate. I am pleased to see that the Senate has improved on an amendment I presented at the public safety committee that was supported by all colleagues. My amendment was to actually prescribe a retention period for the data Bill C-21 would deal with at the border.

Government Orders

Just to give the background on this, the New Democrats opposed Bill C-21, despite some things in the media I read in June saying that the bill quietly passed in the House. No, we opposed this bill, and we raised some serious concerns about it at committee.

One of the concerns raised by the Privacy Commissioner was the fact that we would be collecting entry and exit data at the border and sharing with the Americans “tombstone” data, as the Minister of Public Safety morbidly calls it. That data is concerning, because what we are seeing in the national security field, and CBSA is no exception, is a larger net being cast over the type of data we collect. The minister listed a bunch of laudable goals for collecting data dealing with kidnapped children in, for example, horrible custody cases, dealing with human trafficking and cracking down on people who are abusing EI and the OAS system. We will get back to that in a moment.

These goals, certainly on paper, sound laudable. However, that should not diminish the privacy concerns being raised, particularly with respect to the current administration we see in the U.S. collecting this type of information. What civil society tells us about these issues is that there is a web of inference. In this large net being cast in the national security field, data that might seem innocuous, collected for legitimate purposes, can be easily shared with other agencies through this information-sharing regime for a variety of objectives that might not necessarily be the intent of the legislation.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

In that context, we heard the concerns that the Privacy Commissioner raised about the data retention period, which was essentially unlimited. The amendment I presented set a time limit of 15 years and was based on a recommendation from the commissioner himself. I read in the media that civil society felt that period was too long. I understand their concerns, but ultimately, we relied on the Privacy Commissioner's expertise.

After my amendment was adopted and the bill was passed by the House, in spite of the NDP's opposition, the Senate heard testimony from the Privacy Commissioner. He pointed out that the wording of the amendment as adopted could be interpreted to mean a minimum of 15 years rather than what we actually intended, which was a maximum of 15 years. He himself said that this might not have been the committee's intent.

The Senate therefore made a correction and improved an amendment that I was pleased to present. I was also pleased to have the support of the other parties on the committee. Obviously, we support the Senate amendment.

The amendment put forward by the government today also supports that amendment. Accordingly, although we oppose the bill, we do support today's motion to adopt the Senate's amendment.

[*English*]

I want to take a moment to address this. I raised some of the concerns at the time on Bill C-21. Earlier I enumerated some of the things the minister said. However, there is another piece, and that is the issue of OAS and EI.

We had the appropriate ministry representatives at committee. They talked about all the great savings they were going to see and about the abuse of the EI and OAS systems. I find it fundamentally offensive to talk about savings in systems and programs that are there to help the most vulnerable in our society. The officials at committee even acknowledged that they believe in the good faith of the people who are claiming EI and receiving OAS.

Here is the problem. I will refer to some news articles that appeared in June of this year. For example, the Canadian Snowbird Association talked about its concern about the kind of information, or lack thereof, being shared, the personal information being shared, in an effort to potentially crack down on supposed abuses. For example, a situation as innocuous as people overstaying a day in a condo they own in the U.S. could mean that they would have their OAS payments or other government programs docked when they came back to Canada, in some cases. On the flip side, with the IRS in the U.S., people are being turned away at the border when they try to return to the U.S. to visit friends or family or to stay in a secondary residence they might have there. Certainly, there are concerns being raised.

I want to open some parentheses here and say that the NDP certainly understands and agrees that we do not want to see these systems abused, because essentially that would mean money is being stolen from those who actually need it. However, we also have to understand that when we are talking about information-sharing in an effort to crack down, I think there need to be more robust parameters in place with respect to how we are communicating with those individuals who could be affected.

[*Translation*]

Another concern I have obviously has to do with the employment insurance system. I am sure my colleague from Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and my colleague from Churchill—I apologize, but I forget her riding's full name, which is long—can attest to how badly the EI system needs to be improved.

We are talking about the spring gap, the notorious 15 weeks, the problems that still have not been solved despite the government's rhetoric. What does the government do? It sends officials from the department in question to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security so they can boast about all the money being saved by sharing additional information on travellers with the Americans.

I do not mean any disrespect to our interpreters, but I am going to repeat what I said earlier in English. I completely understand that the government wants to stop the abuse of the system and make sure that the money is going to the right recipients. At the same time, I also understand that priorities seem to be a problem for this government.

Government Orders

It is funny that I talked about the no-fly list at the beginning of my speech. The minister was bragging about the fact that very few identifiers are shared in the system that Bill C-21 is proposing. He talked about basic information and said that that information appears on page 2 of the passport. This creates another problem, because when there are not enough identifiers, it can be very difficult to identify an individual in the context of a government program, the Canada Revenue Agency, and so on.

I need to look no further than in my own family. My younger brother's spouse has a twin sister with the same first initial, but a different social insurance number. They have the same surname, the same birth date and the same first initial, but a different SIN. What happens? They have to fight on a regular basis to have their identity recognized when undergoing a credit or background check. They have all kinds of problems with the CRA, government programs and banks. In short, they have had problems in the past. Unfortunately for them, they will continue to have these problems throughout their lives. Still, I hope they will not.

I am pointing this out because having only a few identifiers, as the minister reassures us, can create problems. For example, someone receiving EI who has not travelled to the United States, but who shares the same name and date of birth with another person who has, could be incorrectly identified by the department, which is not even the same one that receives the information. The Canada Border Services Agency receives the information, which it then passes on to the Department of Employment. As members, we work often enough with government agencies to know that mistakes can be made along the way. I say this with all due respect for our great public service.

• (1300)

[*English*]

Those mistakes are even more troubling for a variety of reasons. First, I specifically asked those representatives in committee about EI, OAS and other payments. I asked them what they would do if there was a mistake, or what if people had their EI cut off because they were told they had gone to the U.S., but they had not. The response I got, if people can believe it, was that they would need to take it up with CBSA.

What happens with CBSA? It is the only national security agency in the country that does not have a dedicated oversight body. Is that not convenient? That is extremely problematic and a far from satisfying response when the most vulnerable, who desperately need EI benefits, are cut off all because of a mistake was made in an effort to share even more information with the U.S., at its request. This whole system stems from that.

Moreover, I pointed out that there was a complaint system built into the law, but CBSA needed the proper oversight. The minister has promised that time and again over the last three years, since he has responsibility for this portfolio, and it has not happened.

Bill C-59, for example, would result in the biggest overhaul to our national security in the last 30 years. Despite all the reassurances about the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians, the new oversight body, colloquially called the super-SIRC, would only deal with CBSA in the specific context of national security. CBSA is always deals with national security at our borders. However, the question could be posed whether it is an issue

of national security when people have their EI cut off because of information collected by CBSA. That question remains unanswered. The fact that it is unanswered is exactly why we have a problem, among other things, with Bill C-51.

I want to raise one last point. Representatives of the Akwesasne First Nation came to both to the House committee and the Senate committee. The community lies across border. Representatives explained to us that they had children who were born in upstate New York and then lived in Canada. They had folks who sometimes worked in the U.S. Sometimes they needed to start in Canada, go through the U.S. and come back to Canada just for the commute home because of the geography of their location. I am pleased to hear they can cross those borders, because those borders should not be imposed on them as the first peoples of this land.

They already deal with certain difficulties, based on the information CBSA shares with appropriate ministries for different government benefits, with receiving the benefits to which they are entitled. Therefore, we can imagine that under a regime like that proposed in Bill C-21, those problems could be exacerbated. Unfortunately, there is no special dispensation for folks like that in the legislation, and that is also a concern.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

In conclusion, I am glad I was able to reiterate the reasons for which the NDP opposes Bill C-21. We understand the desire to improve the flow at the border, work with our allies, and ensure that nobody abuses our social programs. However, we believe that Bill C-21 allows for yet more information sharing, despite inadequate protection for citizens' rights and privacy.

We should all be particularly concerned about the fact that Bill C-21 is the first stage of what could become a more extensive information sharing regime in the coming years. The Prime Minister and the U.S. President committed to enhancing border co-operation, but this is not going to make things better. This is about fingerprinting people, searching cell phones, and possibly even having our officers and theirs work in the same space. That came up during talks between the U.S. President and the Prime Minister.

Government Orders

All of these plans are still in their very early stages, and I do not want anyone telling me I am getting worked up and scared, but we have every reason to be concerned, especially considering how the current U.S. President behaves and how we protect our citizens at the border and on our own soil when they need social programs they are entitled to.

The bill's intentions are honourable, but the execution is poor. We support the Senate's amendment, but we still oppose Bill C-21.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member was concerned with U.S. officials being in Canada, as is set out in our joint border agreements. That has been in place for a considerable length of time in Vancouver International Airport and I believe in some of our other international airports, and it seems to be working quite well.

I travelled through United States to Mexico last year. I had to go through one of those facilities. It was very efficient, very friendly and was not intrusive at all. Would the member comment on that? It already is in place.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I apologize to my colleague; I want to ensure I am understanding correctly. I believe my colleague is talking about pre-clearance, which is another issue. Bill C-23 and Bill C-21 are sister legislation in the sense of the agreements that have been signed between the Government of Canada and the United States government with regard to the border.

On my colleague's point, the issue is one where we do not want one bad apple to poison the whole basket. On pre-clearance specifically and Bill C-23, we certainly had issues with that. We were proud to oppose it, given the unprecedented powers we were giving to American agents on Canadian soil and even when it comes to Bill C-21 and this type of information sharing. My colleague raises that issue. I do not run into any issues when I am at the border and I am certain many of my colleagues here do not.

However, we are fighting for that. We are talking about individuals who get profiled and once their names are in the Department of Homeland Security database, God only knows what will happen after that. Let us face it, when we look at kids and the no-fly list, a disproportionate number of them are Muslim. Why is that? It is because of the names are on the no-fly list, an American no-fly list in many cases. That is our biggest concern. As Canadians, with the charter and our values, our priorities, despite the U.S. being a friend, ally and neighbour, and I do not want to discount that, we can sometimes be a little different, particularly in this day and age when we see the comportment of the U.S. administration.

When we oppose legislation like this, it is because we do not believe, with this widening national security net, even for innocuous information sharing, the robust safeguards required to protect Canadians' charter rights and their privacy are not in place. It is particularly true when it comes to our dealings with the Americans who have different legal safeguards in place, many if not all of which do not apply to Canadians.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is somewhat concerning. The Liberal Party brought in the charter. We are a party of the charter. We understand

the rights and freedoms and how important those are. We also understand the economic and social impacts of the long border between Canada and the United States. There is some responsibility to monitor the flow.

I was surprised by the degree to which the NDP have opposed pre-clearance and some of the things we have done on pre-clearance. For many individuals, and the Winnipeg airport is a good example, a great benefit is derived from pre-clearance procedures. We need to work with different stakeholders.

When I look at the legislation, it would help facilitate travel and trade in the future, both which are of critical importance to virtually every Canadian.

Why do the NDP members not recognize the importance of trade, commerce and travel between Canada and the U.S.? Why do they not believe it is necessary to change with the time? Time causes and dictates a need for change.

• (1310)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I love this, "We are a party of the charter" and then he talks about business.

That is the issue. We get it. We understand the importance of that relationship. The Liberals cannot just brandish the charter, or brandish creating supply management or other things that have happened historically and think it is their get-out-of-jail-free card.

It does not allow the Liberals to escape their responsibilities for how they draft legislation. I do not have a problem with pre-clearance, despite what the member is heckling.

What I have a problem with is legislation that would allow American border guards to carry firearms on Canadian soil. I have a problem with legislation that would allow American border guards to detain, indefinitely, people who will likely be profiled for their religion and the colour of their skin.

I have a problem with the fact that while we have hard-working men and women in the CBSA, that somehow we feel we need to give these extra powers to American agents and we will look the other way.

The Liberals tell us that we do not have to worry, that they are the party of the charter and nothing will go wrong. That is just not something we find acceptable.

I am surprised the member, who likes to accuse the Conservatives and New Democrats of always seeing the world in black and white, is saying that we are against pre-clearance. We are not against pre-clearance. We are against giving Americans unfettered rights to operate on Canadian soil when we know right now there is a president in the White House who wants nothing more than to see his border patrol detain people just because he does not like the way they look or the religion they practise. For New Democrats, that is completely unacceptable.

Government Orders

I would like the member to explain to me why he believes that collecting tombstone data from page two on passports to make all these great savings for EI and OAS is good for business. It is not for business. It will hurt some of the vulnerable in our society. However, who cares when the Liberals are the party of the charter.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his very passionate and spirited pre-Christmas dissertation.

He asked me a question after my speech. I want to put that question to him. Is the member confident that with this legislation, the current government will address the issues of the no-fly list, including those who could have duplicate names, with the concerns that have been raised? Will those issues be rectified or will we still have a problem and those will continue on even with the legislation the way it is currently written?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I want to take this opportunity to tell him that it is a pleasure to work with him on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. That committee is one of the most collegial of all the House committees, and I hope it stays that way.

To answer his question, I am concerned. I put the question directly to the departmental representative who came to talk to us about the savings that will be made by targeting information from people who move away and no longer qualify for old age security or employment insurance benefits, for example. I asked her what happens if a mistake is made. We know that mistakes can happen, since we are all human. She said that ultimately, the Canada Border Services Agency, not the department, is responsible for the collected data.

Let us put ourselves in the shoes of someone who receives EI benefits. That person has to call the department to say that they are no longer receiving benefits because they allegedly travelled to the United States, but they did not travel outside Canada at all. That person will be redirected to the Border Services Agency, assuming they are directed there at all, which is a whole other problem.

As I mentioned in my speech, of all our national security agencies, the Canada Border Services Agency is the only one that still does not have an oversight mechanism. Of course, the bill does include a complaints process, but I do not think that it is sufficient for vulnerable individuals. I have serious concerns, since those people will be penalized and will not know where to turn to get back the benefits that were unfairly and wrongly taken from them.

● (1315)

[*English*]

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am curious to know whether the member has any thoughts on how we can actually fix the issue that he has addressed, whether it be more amendments or adjustments to the bill before us or other legislation to address the issue of concern that he raises, which is a great issue.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, it is hard to respond to that question briefly. I think we need to revisit how we tailor these agreements.

As I said in an earlier response, we obviously want to have a good relationship with the U.S. and allow activity between us and our neighbour and ally to happen. That being said, integration at the border can be problematic, because the objectives of Canada and those of the U.S. are not always the same. We do not apply some of our laws in the same way, which we are seeing now, whether with the legalization of marijuana, this proposed legislation, pre-clearance, etc., or even with the use of force, for example. There are all sorts of standards that are very different from how the U.S. operates the border. Therefore, I think we need to revisit this.

We can have collaboration, but is integration a response? I do not necessarily know. I think it is a much broader question than I, unfortunately, have time for today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to say something to my colleague from Beloeil—Chambly, who said a few moments ago that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security is perhaps one of the most collegial of all the House committees.

I am pleased to say that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food is also a very good committee, where people of all political stripes work well together.

Unfortunately, as is wont to happen, we sometimes do not agree with our colleagues and things can escalate and become a bit more tense. However, our role, the role of parliamentary committees and the role of the House is to express our views in committee.

I can say that I am very proud of the work my Conservative colleagues do on the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. They do excellent work on all the files. I think that is worth mentioning.

A large part of our work as members of Parliament happens not just behind the curtains, but in rooms other than the beautiful House of Commons. All kinds of things are done in committee rooms for the good of all Canadians, and I think it is worth taking a few moments to mention this work every once in a while.

Bill C-21, as members know, has to do with customs and borders. I cannot start talking about Bill C-21 without first taking a few minutes to talk about the extremely important border issue of illegal migration, which is a problem we are currently facing.

Members will soon see why I think it is appropriate to talk about this issue now, during the debate on Bill C-21.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has released a report on the cost of illegal border crossings. In his report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer provided clarifications on the crisis at the Canada-U.S. border. Since 2017, a total of 38,000 people have crossed into Canada illegally. I say “illegally” because on this side of the House, we like to use the right words.

Government Orders

The signs posted at the border and on Roxham Road clearly indicate that it is illegal to cross the border at that location, yet many people cross anyway. In fact, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, 38,000 people have done so. That is why we, the Conservatives, refer to those individuals as illegal migrants. Since 2017, 38,000 people have illegally crossed our borders. They entered our country illegally, not only at Roxham Road, but that road has seen the largest number.

The Prime Minister has failed to address this crisis, and quite frankly, he is the one who created it. Who can forget the Prime Minister's infamous tweet in January 2017, his welcome to Canada tweet. That tweet had quite an impact around the world, so much so that it resulted in 38,000 illegal border crossings.

There have been other repercussions besides the number of people who illegally entered Canada. The Parliamentary Budget Officer's data show that the cost of welcoming someone who crosses the border illegally is more than the gross annual salary of Canadian workers who earn minimum wage.

By 2020, if the Prime Minister continues to do nothing to address this crisis, it is going to cost Canadians \$1.1 billion, not to mention the hundreds of millions of dollars in additional costs for the provinces.

I am talking about this today for two reasons. First, the premiers and the Prime Minister are meeting today in Montreal. Second, we learned today that the Quebec government estimates that it will have to ask Ottawa for \$300 million in compensation for accommodating the illegal immigrants who arrived in response to the Prime Minister's tweet from January 2017. It is asking for \$300 million.

What answer did we get today when we asked about this request? We were told that \$36 million had been given to the Quebec government to pay for the illegal immigrants' immediate housing needs.

I think the government is trying to play games here. It says it is going to pay the cost of housing illegal migrants, but it knows full well that almost all the social costs of accommodating these illegal migrants fall on the Quebec government.

● (1320)

Since it was the Prime Minister himself who created this crisis, it is inappropriate for the government to try to shirk its responsibilities by saying it has spent \$36 million to address urgent housing needs. The Quebec government has asked for \$300 million. I hope the federal government will provide a prompt and appropriate response to that request. That \$1.1 billion was not included in the budget and will not be used to meet Canadians' needs. This is yet another failure.

This situation shows what a failure the Prime Minister is at taking action on the international stage. The trade deals and the tariffs imposed on our softwood lumber, steel and aluminum prove it. He is also unable to fix the durum wheat crisis. The topic of customs and borders encompasses many different elements and issues. We on this side of the House are working hard to show Canadians that the government is getting everything wrong on the issue of illegal immigration.

Another border-related issue is going to come up next week when the Prime Minister signs the United Nations global compact for migration. This UN initiative establishes standards and international responsibilities with respect to migration. It is worth taking the time to consider the consequences of signing the compact.

The Prime Minister's actions since January 2017 suggest that he does not really like borders. He does not like it when people are prevented from entering Canada illegally. Unfortunately, the UN global compact for migration seems to align with the Prime Minister's approach since January 2017.

Conservatives believe that Canada should control its own borders and dictate who gets to enter the country. That is why we oppose Canada joining the global compact for migration. That is no secret. Canadians, and only Canadians, should decide who enters the country and under what circumstances, not foreign entities such as the UN. I wanted to take two seconds to talk about that before diving into the bill before us today, Bill C-21.

As we debate Bill C-21, an act to amend the Customs Act, I would like to remind members that the Minister of Public Safety introduced the bill in the House on June 15, 2016. This bill will authorize the Canada Border Services Agency to collect biographic information on all travellers, including Canadian citizens, when they leave Canada. The agency would have new discretionary authority and could collect information if it wanted to, but it would not be required to do so.

The law would authorize officers to require goods exported from Canada to be declared, despite exemptions, and give them the authority to examine them. Bill C-21 will also add two exemptions for exported goods. First, goods on a conveyance that enters and leaves Canadian waters do not need to be declared. Goods on a conveyance that proceeds from one place in Canada to another place in Canada do not need to be declared.

The bill will also make it an offence to smuggle or attempt to smuggle, whether clandestinely or not, any goods that are subject to duties or any goods the exportation of which is prohibited, controlled or regulated.

There is a reason the Conservative Party will support the bill. We already supported it and we have no objection to supporting the Senate amendment. The reason is that the bill is part of the beyond the border action plan that was announced jointly in 2011 by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and President Barack Obama. That initiative established a long-term perimeter security partnership. I would like to spend a moment on the joint statement. It listed the following key areas of co-operation between the United States and Canada.

● (1325)

The main goal was to identify threats early on so as not to be caught unaware by things that could have been avoided when it is too late. The key areas of co-operation are: trade facilitation, economic growth, jobs, cross-border law enforcement and, of course, essential infrastructure and cybersecurity.

Private Members' Business

According to the action plan's original schedule, the information-sharing initiative was supposed to be implemented on June 30, 2014. In March 2016, after his first official visit to the United States, the Prime Minister announced the agreement with the United States to fully implement a system for sharing basic biographic information.

It is now December 2018. Why has the government taken so long to pass this bill, which just makes good sense to us?

This bill has the authorization, the approval, of both countries' administrations, so it should have been passed more quickly. It is important for keeping Canadians safe and preventing people from here or elsewhere from taking undue advantage of the system and spending their time in warmer climes, under the Florida sun, while abusing our social security system. For all of these reasons, this is obviously a bill that needs to be passed as soon as possible.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Mégantic—L'Érable will have eight minutes and 15 seconds the next time this bill is before the House.

The hon. government House leader on a point of order.

[English]

BILL C-21—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Order 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the consideration of the amendments to Bill C-21, an act to amend the Customs Act.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1330)

[English]

EXPUNGEMENT OF CERTAIN CANNABIS-RELATED CONVICTIONS ACT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved that Bill C-415, An Act to establish a procedure for expunging certain cannabis-related convictions, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise in the House this afternoon to present my private member's bill, Bill C-415. My bill would have the effect of expunging or erasing criminal records for the half million Canadians who have records for the possession of small quantities of cannabis, which became a perfectly legal activity in October of this year.

This is a matter of fundamental justice and I urge all members to support this initiative. I urge government members to keep an open mind and to study the bill and amend it so we can move it forward as quickly and effectively as possible.

As far back as 2012, the Liberal Party passed resolution No. 117 on cannabis legalization and it is curious that it used the words of

elimination of all criminal records for simple possession. I am pleased that the Liberal Party agrees with me that expungement and not merely record suspension is what is required in this circumstance.

According to a report commissioned by the Department of Public Safety, fully 86% of those surveyed agreed that completely erasing criminal records for minor offences, particularly cannabis possession, was the right thing to do. Judging by the enormous outburst of editorial support that I am pleased to have received from coast to coast, Canadians get it. They support this initiative because they are fair-minded people who recognize the unfairness inherent in continuing to burden people with the effects of a criminal record for something that is now legal.

I stood yesterday in the House with a prominent aboriginal leader from British Columbia, with people from the John Howard Society and with Senator Pate, the former executive director of the Elizabeth Fry Society. They all called on the government to get with this, expunge records and not to rely, as I will explain why, on merely criminal record suspension in this context.

I have three fundamental arguments in the short time available that I would like to make. First, I want to challenge the government's assertion that it will be bringing on immediate pardons. The word "immediate" means now and I will explain why that is simply not possible. Second, I want to address the government's apparent argument that expungement is somehow reserved for only one category of past historical injustices and not things like this. Only record suspensions apparently, in the Liberals' mind, are appropriate in this context. Third, it is important to tell Canadians about how the unjust application of cannabis laws in our country has happened. I think it is undeniable that there has been an injustice.

On the first point about the timing, the government has had several years to address this signature initiative on cannabis legislation. Other jurisdictions like California and Vermont, when they brought in their laws, brought this piece in at the same time and automatically expunged the records for people with convictions for a small quantity of cannabis. The Liberals chose not to do that. They said they should wait for record suspensions, sometimes they called them pardons, and that will happen sometime soon, maybe with legislation introduced, I presume, in the spring.

Canadians know there will be an election in October. They know any initiative has to pass through both Houses and be proclaimed in law, so it is likely that this will not take place until 2020, if my arithmetic is right. When Canadians hear the word "immediate", they think of something different. I would urge the Liberals to work with my bill and make it better so we can get on with the task that should have been commenced when we brought in legalization in the first place.

Private Members' Business

The second argument is the arbitrary distinction between expungement reserved for something called historical injustices and pardons for something else. I do not know who is giving legal advice to the Liberals on this point. I have had the good fortune of getting opinions from Benjamin Berger, Professor of Law at Osgoode Hall, and noted constitutional lawyer Professor Kent Roach at the University of Toronto. They see absolutely no distinction in law. I see none in public policy for what the government seems to be insisting upon.

Let me quote from a leading Toronto criminal lawyer, Annamaria Enejor of the Campaign for Cannabis Amnesty. She said, “the government...leaves the impression that restrictions exist on the government's ability to issue expungements for the offence of simple cannabis possession that are beyond its control. This is false. There is nothing in Canadian law that prohibits our government from issuing expungements for offenses that, in their application, unjustly targeted racialized and indigenous communities. It simply chooses not to. This is a policy decision.”

● (1335)

Professor Kent Roach says that “The charter is the minimum not the maximum in terms of our sense of justice. The government's proposed pardon scheme also reveals larger problems with our pardon system which, among other drawbacks, is conditional on future good behaviour.”

There is no distinction possible, although the government wishes to make it. I urge it to keep an open mind so we can do what is right for Canadians.

That takes me to my third point. The application of this law is a historic initiative to address a historical injustice. It is a fact, and I commend the government for acknowledging that black and indigenous people across this country have been disproportionately burdened with criminal records for possessing small quantities of cannabis. That prevents these people, who are often already more marginalized and impoverished than other citizens, from getting their foot on the social ladder. Why? It is because they now have a record. It means they are last in line when they want to rent an apartment. They are last in line when they want to get a job and have to answer “yes” about having a criminal record.

If that record were expunged, as my bill would do, they could honestly answer that they do not have a criminal record. It would be deemed in law that they do not have such a record. Imagine how many thousands of impoverished Canadians we could assist by doing the right thing.

Jaywalking is not an offence under the charter. However, if nine out of 10 people we go after for jaywalking are black or indigenous, then it is a charter violation. Again, I commend the government for acknowledging this data as being valid. If someone is indigenous in Regina, they are nine times more likely to be charged and have a record for cannabis than non-indigenous people; and seven times more likely in Vancouver; and if someone is black in Halifax, they are five times more likely to be charged and have a record; and three times more likely if they live in Toronto. This is wrong. This is Canada. We should fix that, and let these people get on with their lives.

I want to address head-on the government's argument about record suspensions. It chooses to call it “pardons”. It does not do the job. What is the difference between a pardon and expungement? An expunged record is erased; it is completely destroyed. Under my bill, the offences would be deemed in law to have never happened. Therefore, a person whose record has been expunged could truthfully say on a job application that they do not have a criminal record. That makes all the difference.

What about a pardon? A pardon merely reclassifies the record. It may still be released, and even revoked, in the future. Most importantly, with a pardon, an individual can still face those obstacles I talked about. Furthermore, a pardon talks about forgiving, by implication, and not expungement, which would be an acknowledgement of the historical injustice in how cannabis laws have been applied in our country.

For a long time, cannabis amnesty has been a policy of the NDP. Since 2004, we have been calling for amnesty for people with records for cannabis possession. My colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, who has done excellent work on this file, introduced a motion in the House asking the government to immediately pardon all criminal records for simple possession. The government said no.

Let me go to the argument I have heard the government use as recently as this morning. It is wrong. When a landlord or employer asks a person if they have a record, the question they are supposed to ask is whether they have ever been convicted for a criminal offence for which a pardon has not been granted. Now, the government says that if there has been a violation of that requirement, they can go to the human rights branch or the human rights tribunal in their province. I do not know whether the government has dealt with people from the inner city.

● (1340)

I used to do legal aid in downtown Toronto. People who are illiterate and do not speak English have enough trouble already. Do we think they are going to get lawyers, with legal aid in this world being so scarce, and take this to the human rights branch? I do not really think so and neither does Samantha McAleese, who is doing her Ph.D. on this very topic at Carleton. She has worked in the inner city of Ottawa with The John Howard Society for many years. She said that many people struggling with criminal records can often have barriers like literacy or language, making these formal complaints to the human rights codes very daunting. She further said that requiring individuals to muster through a complaint process in order to access employment, housing or any other social domain seems quite ridiculous. People with criminal records already face enough barriers in the community and are often already doing everything they can to get by day by day.

Even if the government is right, why would it not go far enough to complete the job with expungement? Even if there is a legal, technical reason for being right, which I urge the government is not the view of the leading criminal and constitutional lawyers I have consulted, why would it not complete the job?

Private Members' Business

I was so proud to have stood in this House when another expungement initiative took place not long ago: Bill C-66. It was the expungement of what the government termed, and I agree, historically unjust convictions for people convicted in the past for same-sex sexual activity and yet thousands of racialized and marginalized people have also been treated unfairly in the past. I have demonstrated that and the government accepts it.

People have barriers to renting apartments or getting jobs. Mothers from Saskatoon have cried on the phone to me that their child, busted a couple of years ago for having a couple of joints, cannot coach the soccer team because of these vulnerable people initiatives that require that people not have records for reasons we well understand, dealing with children and so forth. Their lives are also affected by this. After years of injustice, why would the government settle for a process that will not fully relieve the burden of a criminal record? The only way to right the wrong and finally give the half million Canadians a fair chance is expungement, to erase the records for simple possession.

The evidence is pretty clear that the argument about pardons may be good in theory, but in practice, people in the real world do not always ask those precise questions that the government says landlords and employers should be asking, "Have you ever been convicted for a criminal offence for which a pardon has not been granted?", that magic incantation. In the real world in downtown Ottawa or Toronto, we were told yesterday, people do not always ask those questions and, therefore, people cannot get on with their lives because they have criminal records, they are already the poorest among us often and they are disproportionately indigenous and black Canadians.

It is simply the right thing to do. Why the government did not do it at the time, like other jurisdictions they modelled their legalization on, I do not know, but it is time to do it now and it is time to do it right. A half-measure is not good enough for Canadians. Expungement is the answer. Record suspension does not do the job. Let us get on with it. I urge all members to do the right thing and support my bill in the House.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with virtually every point the member opposite has made, in particular, the impact on racialized youth and on the black and indigenous communities of this country. They have been policed in a different way and incarceration records prove it, without a shadow of a doubt.

I am considering supporting this private member's motion because this is a significant issue in many of the communities I represent, but the issue is that not every one of the charges is equal. They have definitely been policed differently, convicted differently and managed by the courts differently, but in some cases, the charges are part of a larger criminal process and criminal set of charges, where expunging the record could have an impact on sentencing and public safety.

I would ask the member opposite to consider that if we start pulling out some of the convictions on very serious charges, possession charges being incidental, we may shorten criminal

sentences and certain sentencing provisions and that may create complications around public safety. How would they handle that?

• (1345)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank the member opposite for keeping an open mind in considering support of my bill. I appreciate that very much. His recognition of the historical injustice and the disproportionate impact on indigenous and black Canadians is something on which we both have to work harder, as does the House. This is an opportunity to take a step in that direction.

It is true that often records for small quantities of cannabis go hand in hand with other convictions and the like. There have been such things as plea bargains and all of that, which we need to acknowledge exist in the real world.

In California and other places, the expungement is automatic. People do not need to have these applications. Unfortunately, as a private member's bill, I cannot do that. As members know, we cannot require the government to spend money. If I had my druthers, I would have the government take action and automatically expunge the records for things that are now perfectly legal.

There is a technical issue that can be dealt with, and I am not sure why we cannot do it. The San Francisco district attorney's office has a software program to go through and do this work. I do not see why we cannot figure it out here.

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege of serving on the justice committee with the member for Victoria.

The government has taken the position that it supports a so-called expedited pardon process, but it has not said when or defined what exactly that would look like.

In 2013, the Prime Minister bragged about how he consumed marijuana, yet as the hon. member noted, half a million Canadians have criminal records. Does the member not see a double standard?

Mr. Murray Rankin: Madam Speaker, I think my hon. friend would agree would that we work very effectively on the justice committee. It is an honour to serve with him there. Both of us are vice-chairs on that committee and he is a real asset to it.

An expedited pardon process might come along and the government will tell us that it will be free, that it will be fast and so forth. It does not do the trick. It is under-inclusive. If there is any doubt at all, I do not know why the government would not embrace the right thing and expunge.

As for the Prime Minister's acknowledgement, there is an important point here. There was a stigma at a time for same-sex sexual activity, which is no longer the case. There was a stigma for cannabis possession in the past, which is no longer the case, otherwise the Prime Minister would not have acknowledged he did this.

The problem is simple. That person did not get caught. Thousands and thousands, particularly indigenous and black Canadians, did get caught, and they are suffering. He is not. We are not. We should do the right thing and get on with it.

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth) and to the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-415, an act to establish a procedure for expunging certain cannabis-related convictions.

First, I would like to thank the member for Victoria for his hard work and strong advocacy on this issue. I know he has spoken numerous times with the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction about this issue. It is something we very much appreciate.

It is clear that the member shares our conviction that some changes need to be made with a new cannabis control regime in place. For nearly a century, the criminal prohibition of cannabis failed to protect youth and led to the highest rates of cannabis use in the world amongst our kids. It also led to billions of dollars in profit for organized crime and created an unhealthy and unsafe situation in all of our communities.

That is why we replaced the criminal prohibition with a far more effective and proportional system of comprehensive cannabis control. While there are no turnkey solutions to righting the wrongs that resulted from that regime, there are now steps we can take to address them.

Bill C-415 would create a method to expunge cannabis possession convictions, regardless of quantity, that are no longer an offence under the Cannabis Act. It proposes a no-charge, application-based process that would allow applicants to provide sworn statements to prove their eligibility. It does not, however, require them to prove their attempts to obtain official supporting documents in doing so.

This bill also proposes that expungement must be granted, so long as the review by the Parole Board of Canada does not reveal any evidence that the activity in question was prohibited under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act or any other act of Parliament.

The approach proposed in Bill C-415 is similar in form to another bill this House passed not long ago, but the nature of the convictions proposed for expungement is quite different. Bill C-66, Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act, received royal assent in June of this year. That legislation was introduced on the occasion of the historic apology to the LGBTQ2 community for decades of state-sponsored systemic discrimination and oppression.

It put in place a new process to permanently destroy records of convictions for offences involving consensual activity between same-sex partners that would be lawful today. The government passed that law so that expungement could be available as a tool to correct a profound historical injustice, where the offence had been

ruled unconstitutional or contrary to the Canadian Human Rights Code.

However, there are substantive differences between the nature of those offences and cannabis possession, which courts have never found to be constitutionally invalid. That said, clearly we agree with the member for Victoria that individuals who have previously acquired criminal records for some possession of cannabis should be allowed to shed the burden and stigma of that record.

That is why, when the Cannabis Act came into force on October 17, the government announced its intent to introduce legislation that, once in force, would allow individuals to apply for a record suspension, as long as they had completed their sentence. The five-year waiting period would be waived, and record suspension would be immediately eligible. Finally, the unfair \$631 fee put in place by the Harper Conservatives would also be waived, and record suspension would be available at no cost to the individual.

As my hon. colleague across the way mentioned, these records have had a disproportionate impact on youth from poor communities, racialized communities and, of course, indigenous communities. Many Canadians also have a criminal record as a result of some youthful indiscretions, and now lead otherwise exemplary lives.

This proposed measure would make affordable record suspensions available to those individuals. It would give them the opportunity to remove the stigma and burden on their lives that results from a criminal record.

Here, I would point out that thanks to the motion by the member for Saint John—Rothesay, the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security has been instructed to undertake a study of the record suspension program formerly known as “pardons”.

The idea behind this study would be, first, to examine the impact of a record suspension to help those with a criminal record reintegrate back into society; second, to examine the impact of criminal record suspension fees and additional costs associated with the application process on low-income applicants; and third, to identify appropriate changes to fees and service standards for record suspension, and to identify improvements to better support applicants for a criminal record suspension.

● (1350)

The committee would be able to study improvements that could be made to the process for record suspensions. However, I am pleased to note that the government's announcement of intent with respect to the legislation on record suspensions for some possession of cannabis reflects the desire to reduce the kinds of barriers reflected in that motion.

Protecting Canadians is our number one concern. We do that by implementing evidence-based criminal justice policies that are proven to support rehabilitation, prevent crime and victimization, and keep our citizens and communities safe. The government's announced intent to introduce new legislation is in keeping with that principle.

Private Members' Business

Aside from the differences in the proposed approaches, I would like to also point out that Bill C-415 is flawed as it is currently written. Under the bill, the acceptance of a sworn statement to prove eligibility without having to demonstrate attempts to obtain official documents would risk that an expungement could be ordered and records destroyed for ineligible individuals, such as those who have been convicted of possession of far more dangerous uncontrolled substances, such as cocaine.

As currently written, indeed most individuals would not be eligible to apply, as the bill would require that the activity be legal today. All cannabis obtained prior to the coming into force of the Cannabis Act was illicitly possessed, and the possession of illicitly obtained cannabis remains an offence today.

I am grateful that many members in this House feel that people who have been previously convicted for possession of cannabis should be allowed to participate meaningfully in society. They should have access to good, stable jobs. They should have access to housing and education and the ability to participate in the community. For far too long, many thousands of Canadians have faced barriers to those necessities simply for having possessed cannabis. However, values have shifted, and we recognize the failure of prohibition. It has now been over a month since we have had legalized and regulated cannabis, and we see the positive impact of that action.

What we do now to make things as fair as possible for Canadians must be done carefully and diligently. I very much look forward to taking the next steps to help people turn their lives around. Once again, I would like to thank the member opposite for his views on how we can do so. I am also thankful for the opportunity to address this issue today.

● (1355)

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on Bill C-415, a private member's bill introduced by my friend the hon. member for Victoria. It is legislation that would expunge the criminal records of Canadians who were convicted for the minor possession of marijuana. The fact that the hon. member for Victoria has had to bring forward a private member's bill around this issue speaks to the fact that once again the Liberals have dropped the ball on the issue of marijuana legalization.

The Prime Minister, during the last election, made it a central platform commitment to legalize marijuana. We on this side disagreed with the position of the Prime Minister, but elections have consequences and enough Canadians voted Liberal and the Prime Minister was elected. Therefore, it was not a surprise that the government decided to move forward with the legalization of marijuana.

It is one thing to have an idea and another to actually implement that idea. What we have seen is time and again the Liberal government has not had a plan when it comes to going about the enforcement and implementation of marijuana legalization. The government had no plan with respect to a public awareness campaign. That was, by the way, a key recommendation of the government's own marijuana task force headed by former deputy prime minister Anne McLellan, and for good reason, because there are serious health risks associated with the consumption of

marijuana, particularly for young Canadians, those 25 and under, in terms of brain development impairment among other issues. Where was the government's early and sustained public awareness campaign? There was no public awareness campaign. The Liberals simply dropped the ball.

Then the Liberals had no plan around keeping Canadians safe from drug-impaired drivers. Sure, they introduced Bill C-46, legislation that amended the Criminal Code to bring in drug-impaired driving laws. It is one thing to pass a law and quite another to give law enforcement agencies the tools and resources they need to enforce the law.

Three years ago, there were about as many drug recognition experts as there are today. This is despite the fact that law enforcement agencies, including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association, among others, have been begging and pleading with the government to provide the resources so that they can hire more drug recognition experts, which are essential to keep our roads safe. However, instead of listening, the government once again just dropped the ball.

Bill C-46 imposed per se limits around THC. The problem with that is there is not necessarily a clear correlation between THC levels and drug impairment. It is a pretty big problem, but instead of addressing concerns that were raised about the government's approach, the Liberals just shrugged their shoulders as they dropped the ball yet again.

● (1400)

Bill C-46 provided for roadside screening devices to detect drug impairment. The problem was that no device was approved until virtually on the eve of the date that marijuana became legal in Canada. So unreliable is this device that most law enforcement agencies across Canada are not acquiring the device. They are waiting for another, more reliable, device to be approved. Again, the Liberals dropped the ball.

Given a record like that, is it any wonder that when it comes to dealing with the more than half a million Canadians who have criminal records for minor possession, the government has no plan. Again, it has dropped the ball.

The government talks about a so-called expedited pardon process, but it has provided no indication when it plans to introduce legislation. The timeline is completely vague. The government has refused to provide details about what that expedited pardon process would look like. In fact, it seems that while making a commitment to move forward with a pardon process, the Liberals would prefer not to talk about it at all if they can get away with it.

It was not until the member for Victoria called on the government to take action that the government announced it would move forward with some sort of undefined pardon process. As the member for Victoria rightly pointed out, other jurisdictions, including California and Vermont did implement an expungement process at the same time that legalization came into effect.

While one could argue about the merits of expungement versus a pardon versus providing no blanket process at all, what is unacceptable is that the government has refused to be straight with Canadians and tell them honestly where we are going. It just does not have a plan.

It is a little rich that the government has dragged its feet and would prefer not to talk about this issue, given the Prime Minister's, personal history, when in 2013, he bragged about how he used marijuana. He relished the attention he got upon making that pronouncement. Of course, the Prime Minister was not caught. He was not charged or convicted. He does not have the burden of a criminal record. He lives a pretty privileged life. However, as the member of Victoria pointed out, half a million Canadians, including many marginalized Canadians, are burdened with a criminal record for committing an offence that today is perfectly legal.

The time has come for the government to be straight, to come forward and come up with a plan. To date, it has done nothing more than drop the ball. Canadians deserve better.

● (1405)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a great pleasure to rise today to debate Bill C-415 by my hon. colleague and friend from Victoria. We both hail from Vancouver Island and I really admire the work he has put into this bill.

It is not very often that one gets to debate a private member's bill in this place that would have such significance in how it would change how we approach criminal law and acknowledge past wrongs. One other private member's bill that I can reference, which I think had a major impact, was Bill S-201, brought in by Senator James Cowan to recognize genetic non-discrimination. The Liberal cabinet was opposed to that bill, but virtually the entire Liberal back bench rose and disagreed with the cabinet and voted in favour of the bill. With the combination of the Liberal back bench, the Conservatives and the New Democrats, we passed that bill and it received royal assent.

I very much implore my Liberal colleagues to look at what this bill attempts to do. I know that some have raised concerns about the bill. They may not think it is perfect, but at second reading stage, we are acknowledging the intent of the bill. I think that if they looked into their hearts, they would find it worthy to be sent to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, where we could hear from departmental officials and expert witnesses, many of whom the member for Victoria has already quoted. That is where we can look at the language and technical jargon of the bill to see if some of the concerns can be addressed. However, let us at least send this bill to committee. I think this is a very important moment.

Last year, I had the pleasure of giving the NDP's response at second reading to Bill C-45, in my capacity as the justice critic then. I acknowledged that the bill was not perfect and there was a lot of fulsome debate on its merits. My colleague, the member for Vancouver Kingsway said it right, that Bill C-45 did not really legalize cannabis; it just made it less illegal. There are some strict limits that if someone steps outside of, the full weight of the law will still come down on them.

Private Members' Business

Nevertheless, I think that even my Conservative colleagues can realize that there has been a sea change in public opinion in Canada with regard to cannabis possession. The public has realized that the continued criminalized approach to cannabis possession is wrong. Far too many people suffered under it and, in fact, the continuation of a criminalized approach would actually cause more harm than the use of the drug itself. They have recognized that.

When looking at many of the arguments that Liberal members made in support of Bill C-45, not the least of which was by the Minister of Justice, one of the reasons they cited was that thousands of Canadians end up with criminal records for a non-violent minor cannabis offence each year. I will quote the minister. In her second reading speech on Bill C-45, the Minister of Justice said:

A majority of Canadians no longer believe that simple possession of small amounts of cannabis should be subject to harsh criminal sanctions, which can have lifelong impacts for individuals and take up precious resources in our criminal justice system. Our government agrees that there is a better approach.

I could not agree more with what the Minister of Justice said last year during that second reading debate on this.

There are roughly 500,000 Canadians who have criminal records for cannabis possession. That means that if one were to take a room of 60 people, one person in that room would probably have a record for cannabis possession. We acknowledge that that has far-reaching consequences. We know that it has affected marginalized and racialized populations disproportionately more than average Caucasian Canadians. That is borne out by the evidence collected in each province and many of our major cities.

Another big issue is that the government came to power with a promise to legalize cannabis. That promise was adopted at the 2012 Liberal policy convention. Therefore, I think that the Canadian public has known for quite some time that this was coming.

● (1410)

As my friend the member for St. Albert—Edmonton said, elections have consequences, and the Liberal government did fulfill that one promise. However, I have an issue with the length of time that it took. We needed the task force to present its report. We then finally had Bill C-45 introduced in April 2017. It received royal assent and came into force only on October 17 of this year. There was plenty of time for the Liberal government to deliberate on the subject and on the consequences that criminal possession has on people's lives. We have this strange binary situation where a person who possessed cannabis on October 16 received a criminal record, but a person who had it on October 17 was perfectly fine.

It is quite amazing what has happened in this country. One can now possess up to 30 grams in public. People can now grow their own plants. Even though there are still very real consequences with the over-consumption of cannabis and whether it is getting into the hands of children, I think we can very much agree that the continued criminal approach to the issue was wrong. It was using up precious resources and it was in no way effectively dealing with the problem.

Private Members' Business

When we look at the intent of Bill C-415, I very much admire the word “expungement”, because it has an air of permanence about it. It is very much different from a record suspension. As the member for Victoria very clearly laid out, a record suspension is simply setting aside the record. It does not protect the individual in any way from having that reapplied sometime in the future. Indeed, the individual would very much have to prove that he or she is worthy of that happening. However, an expungement allows an individual to truthfully answer the question of whether the individual has a criminal record that he or she does not have one, because expungement makes it as if it never happened in the first place.

We can look at the statistics, specifically with reference to indigenous people in Canada. In Vancouver, indigenous people were seven times more likely than white people to be arrested. In Regina, it was as high as nine times. If we are trying to address a historical wrong, a very real case of social injustice, I think expungement is absolutely the way we should be going.

The Liberals have raised concerns. They have said that they wished to reserve expungement for activities that have been found to be unconstitutional. The parliamentary secretary made reference to Bill C-66, which, absolutely, every member in the House was in support of. However, I have to repeat that the member for Victoria clearly outlined that reserving expungement for activities that have been found to be unconstitutional is simply an arbitrary distinction and has no legal or principled foundation. This is basically a government making up its own rules. I would ask the Liberals to point to any specific case law that underlies their arguments for this, because, trust me, they will not be able to find it.

The Liberals would also like to say that pardoning people will work, because they are going to make pardons free and immediate. I appreciate the fact that the application process will be removed and that the fee will be waived, but right now, the only legislation that actually exists on the books to address this issue, at the end of 2018, three years into the Liberal government's mandate, is Bill C-415 from the member for Victoria.

The Liberals also agree that the process needs to be fair, but they have other doubts about the bill. The bill has been consulted on widely with academics and members of the legal community. I again appeal to my Liberal colleagues to not throw the baby out with the bathwater. If they have difficulties with the technical aspects of this bill, with the language, surely they can understand the intent behind the bill and surely they can find it within their hearts to send the bill to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights where we can make the necessary amendments so that it is reported back to the House in a form they can support.

I look forward to voting on this bill. Again, I congratulate my friend and colleague, the member for Victoria, for bringing in this fantastic piece of legislation.

•(1415)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will keep my remarks relatively brief. At first blush it is quite understandable why my colleague has brought forward Bill C-415. When he talked about the difficulties of some being able to express themselves on a pardon as opposed to an

expungement, I was intrigued. In principle, there are many different sorts of criminal activities that take place where a pardon has been issued. I suspect that the same challenges in principle would be there for those other individuals who have a pardon that is already in place.

If one wanted to be somewhat consistent, one could ultimately argue what would be the value of having pardons. I believe there is value to pardons. The minister has talked about issues such as pardons being quick and free with no waiting times. This is a commitment the government has made with respect to pardons. Pardons are, for all intents and purposes, packaged away, put in a box, never again to be reopened unless there is another criminal activity that takes place by the individual in question. At least that is my understanding of the situation.

That is why I was somewhat intrigued by his comments when he talked about the individuals who would find it difficult and he used the example of an application for a job. I am very sympathetic to that argument, unfortunately there were not enough questions and answers. I would have liked the member to provide an answer to me on that point. It is more the principle of the matter.

We have gone a long way in recognizing how far we have come in the last number of years. We have a Prime Minister who saw a significant social issue that affected millions of Canadians. In a very responsible fashion, working through the ministers and most members of the House, we were able to bring forward the legalization of cannabis. Since it has been legalized, I have not had one issue or concern from my constituents related to this.

Given the very nature and the magnitude of the change that has been put into place, I see that as an example of how well the government is working with many other stakeholders, because it is not just the Government of Canada. We have to recognize that there are other jurisdictions, in particular our provinces and territories, and there was a great deal of effort with first responders and many other stakeholders to ensure that the launching of a responsible social policy was done in the fashion that it was. As a society, we have benefited by the legalization of cannabis.

There is a lot more that I would like to say, but I understand there is a member across the way who was hoping to speak, so I will end my remarks.

•(1420)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, to answer the member's comment about a pardon versus an expungement, an expungement can be used, and should be used, when there is a historical injustice in how a criminal record was obtained. A pardon can be used for any criminal record, but an expungement is what we need for a criminal record that came about because of a historical injustice. I will talk about that in my speech.

I would first like to again thank the member for Victoria for bringing this important bill forward. I think it is something Canadians want. He has stepped into the breach where the government has failed to go, even though it had plenty of time to get ready for this, as we have been planning for the legalization of marijuana for many years.

Private Members' Business

I will start off by saying that there are a lot of people in my riding who use cannabis and who used cannabis before it became legal. This is obviously true in many ridings. We all carry out some unofficial polling when we go door to door, and one of the things we notice when we go door to door in my riding is how many people use cannabis. It is quite a popular thing in my riding. It is not everyone who is doing it, but we notice how many people do it. It is not just people of colour or indigenous people, it is everyone. It is business people.

The whole point of this bill on expungement is that in the past, arrests for simple possession of marijuana were disproportionately handed out to marginalized Canadians. Young Canadians, black Canadians and indigenous Canadians are by far the people who have suffered the most for this. That is one of the reasons expungement is much more appropriate than a simple pardon.

As other people have said, many people in Canada have criminal records simply because they were found in possession of marijuana, something we now say is completely fine; it is legal, it should not have happened before, so let us get on with it. We are talking about 500,000 Canadians, and some have suggested that it might be as high as over 900,000 Canadians. This is not something that is relegated to the dark criminal backwaters of Canada. This is the bulk of Canadian society. It has left people with criminal records. They cannot cross the border. They have difficulty finding work, in many cases. They cannot even volunteer. A lot of times, if they want to coach a soccer team for their kid's school, they demand a criminal record check, and they cannot do that. It really affects the lives of Canadians, Canadians who we now say have done nothing wrong.

As I said, the government has had a lot of time leading up to this to prepare its legislation. Other jurisdictions, such as California, Delaware, Vermont, and I think North Dakota, are moving in this direction. They are bringing expungement provisions into their legalization legislation. However, the current government has not. We have been pressing it to have something like this since we began sitting in this Parliament. Now it is saying that maybe next year it will bring legislation that will make it easier for people to apply for a pardon.

I want to go back to the point that it is really marginalized Canadians who have been hit hard. That is why expungement is the way to go. As other people have said, someone who is indigenous is nine times more likely to be arrested for simple possession in Regina and seven times more likely in Vancouver. A black person is five times more likely to be arrested in Halifax and three times more likely in Toronto. These simple possession arrests disproportionately affect people of colour, indigenous people and young people.

I can quote what government members have said with respect to this. The Prime Minister said this:

People from minority communities, marginalised communities, without economic resources, are not going to have that kind of option to go through and clear their name in the justice system. That's one of the fundamental unfairnesses of this current system is that it affects different communities in a different way.

• (1425)

The Minister of Border Security said that “the failed system of criminal prohibition has resulted in the criminalization of hundreds of thousands of Canadians and contributed to an unjust disparity and impact on vulnerable communities.” The Minister of Public Safety said that “the law as it stands today has been an abject failure”. The MP for Hull—Aylmer said, “We do know that black Canadians have been disproportionately charged with and are imprisoned for possession of small amounts of cannabis.”

Much of the cabinet is admitting that this is what has been going on, but this can only be justly dealt with through a simple expungement of all of those criminal records so that these people can get on with their lives and get work or cross the border. In Toronto, 15% of people on social welfare say that their cannabis possession records are a key barrier to their getting work. We all want those people to work and to take part in this economy and society. However, that is the barrier they are facing, and only an expungement would help with it.

I see that I do not have much time left. The government says that it is going to bring in pardons. time. I will just say—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have three minutes left the next time this is before the House. He has about 30 seconds now, if he would like to wrap something up.

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Victoria for bringing this bill forward. I hope that everyone here supports it and we can send it to committee for further study.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have three minutes left when this matter is before the House again.

The time provided for the consideration for 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 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until next Monday at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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