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(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 6, 2019

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 6, 2019

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 24th report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, entitled “Bill S-238, An Act to amend the Fisheries Act and the Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act (importation and exportation of shark fins)”.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendments.

I would like to thank all members of the committee and the staff for getting this done so quickly. I would like to recognize Senator MacDonald, who sponsored the bill in the other place, and of course the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam for his tenacity in getting this done in this House.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, entitled “Medical Cannabis and Veterans' Well-Being”.

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

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, two reports from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. They are the 35th report, regarding Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis, and the 36th report, regarding the main estimates, 2019-20.

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to represent the trade committee, but I would also like to say that five years ago I had the honour to represent the House with Mr. Harper and Peter Stoffer at the beaches in Normandy. I thank the House and Canadians for sending me there. It was an honour to be there, and I wish everyone there well today.

This is probably the last time I will rise in the House to represent our international trade committee by presenting the 17th report of the committee, entitled “Canada's Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Federal Support for their International Trade Activities”.

I thank the clerk and the analysts and the great committee we have. It is a non-partisan committee. We work well together for Canadians, trade, businesses and our citizens. I thank them very much for the hard work they did. We did many trade deals and many reports together.

* * *

PETITIONS

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition that indicates Canadians depend upon the economic benefits and the jobs created by Canada's oil and gas industry. Unfortunately, without the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, there are thousands of unemployed Canadians who are worried about their next paycheque and where it will come from, instead of being able to plan for their families' future. With the carbon tax, even life's essentials have become a very costly burden.

Therefore, I table this petition calling on the government to immediately build the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and repeal the carbon tax so we can get this country back on track and create opportunities for thousands of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here a petition initiated by the Elizabeth Fry Society that calls on the Government of Canada to respect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and recognize that some children are being excluded.

These children are facing discrimination with regard to child benefits because their parents are homeless, incarcerated or grappling with addictions or other problems, for example. These children may live with different families and move around a lot. The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to ensure that these children are also protected.

The petition was signed by many people from New Brunswick.

[English]

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The petitioners draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following: Whereas increasing concerns about international trafficking in human organs removed from victims without their consent have not yet led to legal prohibition on Canadians travelling abroad to acquire or receive such organs, and whereas there are currently two bills before Parliament proposing to impede the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent or as a result of financial transactions, and whereas Bill C-350 is in the House of Commons and Bill S-240 is in the Senate, therefore the petitioners urge the Parliament of Canada to move quickly on the proposed legislation so as to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to protect Canadians from travelling abroad to acquire human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction and to render inadmissible to Canada any and all permanent residents or foreign nationals who have participated in the abhorrent trade in human organs.

● (1010)

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners who draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following: Whereas at one time Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan numbered in the hundreds of thousands, but today less than 5,000 remain, and whereas a recent bombing in Afghanistan that killed leaders from both communities demonstrates their ongoing vulnerability, especially since these leaders were on their way to meet the president, and whereas the Minister of Immigration is already empowered by legislation to allow vulnerable minorities to come to Canada as privately sponsored refugees directly from the country where they face persecution, and whereas the Sikh and Hindu communities are ready to sponsor Afghan minority refugees, therefore the undersigned urge the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help persecuted minorities in Afghanistan.

Further, they urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to raise the issue of the persecution faced by these communities with her Afghan

counterpart and strongly advocate for more to be done to protect them.

The Speaker: I remind members that we only have a certain amount of time for petitions each day, and therefore members are encouraged not to read the whole petition but to indicate what the petitioners are asking for in summary.

The hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni.

GEODUCK AQUACULTURE

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and privilege to table two petitions today on the day before World Oceans Day. It could not be more important timing.

The first petition calls on the government to delay the approval of any geoduck aquaculture until alternatively friendly and safe methods and equipment are developed. Plastic debris and micro-plastics pose a serious threat to the health and survival of the world's oceans, as we know, and aquaculture makes highly intensive use of plastic.

The petition is signed by Denman Islanders and Hornby Islanders. I want to thank them for their hard work on that issue.

PLASTICS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by hundreds and hundreds of constituents from my riding of Courtenay—Alberni. They are from Courtenay, Parksville, Qualicum, Port Alberni, Tofino, Ucluelet and the other 31 communities in my riding. The petition calls on the government to follow through with its commitment after the unanimous support of the House for Motion No. 151 to develop a comprehensive plan to combat plastic pollution.

The petitioners are excited about the government's rolling it out this month, and hopefully all of the provisions that are outlined in this petition will be adopted.

PENSIONS

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am here today on behalf of my colleague from Langley—Aldergrove, who is home fighting his battle with cancer. We wish him well today. I am sure he is watching.

I am presenting this petition with 13,740 signatures. The person who initiated it is with us today, Mr. Gerry Tiede. It calls on the Government of Canada to promote and protect earned pensions for all Canadians in the future, to withdraw Bill C-27, and to establish a national pension insurance program to ensure that seniors can live with financial security.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition on behalf of 40 petitioners today on Bill C-350 and Bill S-240. They are concerned about the trafficking of human organs obtained without consent and for financial gain.

PENSIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition signed by dozens of residents of New Westminster—Burnaby, Vancouver and Victoria, who add their names to the thousands of Canadians across the country asking the Government of Canada to withdraw Bill C-27, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

As these petitioners say, before the 2015 federal election, Canadians were promised that defined benefit plans would not be changed to target benefit plans, but Bill C-27 would effectively impact this. It is why the petitioners are calling for the withdrawal of the bill.

I would like to thank the BC Retired Teachers' Association, and particularly JoAnne and Dale Lauber, who have been instrumental in bringing this petition forward. They are present in the gallery today.

•(1015)

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today.

One is in favour of Bill C-350 and Bill S-240, which would amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to prohibit human trafficking in organs and people travelling to get organ transfers.

JUSTICE

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the Government of Canada to cease incarceration of those who suffer from drug abuse and to begin rehabilitation of said victims back into society through treatment programs, as is done in Portugal.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three sets of petitions.

The first set of petitions are signed by Canadians across the country who are gravely concerned with the shortage of quality palliative and end-of-life care available in Canada. These petitioners assert that it is impossible for a person to give informed consent to a physician-assisted suicide if appropriate palliative care has not been made available to them.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to create a national strategy to ensure that all Canadians have access to quality palliative care when they need it.

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next set of petitions are signed by constituents of mine who are concerned with the efforts to restrict the rights of farmers to save and plant seeds from their crops. They are calling on the

Routine Proceedings

Government of Canada to affirm, through legislation, their right to freely save, reuse, select, exchange, condition, store and sell their seeds.

PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition I am presenting today is signed by constituents in my riding who are concerned about the accessibility of sexually explicit material to children. These petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to ensure that meaningful age verification is used on pornographic websites to better protect underage children from violent and explicit content.

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here to table a petition launched by the Elizabeth Fry Society about ending discrimination against children in Canada because their parents are in difficult situations with drugs, incarceration or homelessness. Dozens of good citizens from British Columbia and New Brunswick ask the government to fulfill what is in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition signed by hundreds of my constituents. They are calling upon the House of Commons to support Bill S-214 and ban the sale or manufacture of animal-tested cosmetics and their ingredients in Canada.

[Translation]

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise to present this very important petition on the awful subject of the trafficking of human organs removed without consent or as a result of a financial transaction.

The petitioners are calling on this government and this Parliament to pass Senate Bill S-240.

[English]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is one that I am very happy to say is related to supporting my bill, Bill S-203, to ban the keeping of whales and dolphins in captivity.

These petitioners are hoping the House will pass this bill before the end of June. Thanks to the kind auspices of the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley—and I also want to thank the member for Courtenay—Alberni and the hon. minister of fisheries—the good news is that this bill will come before us on Monday for the second hour of report stage. I am thankful for the opportunity to present this petition, and I hope we have good news soon.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be tabling nine petitions today.

Government Orders

The first is in support of Bill S-240, which is a bill that some members may have heard of before. It is a bill currently before the Senate. It deals with the issue of forced organ harvesting. Hopefully, we will be able to get this done in this Parliament.

•(1020)

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is in support of persecuted minorities in Afghanistan, in particular the Hindu and Sikh minorities. The petitioners call on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship to use the powers granted to him to create a special program to help those minorities to be sponsored directly from Afghanistan. They also call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs to be actively engaged in this issue with her Afghan counterpart.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The third petition, Mr. Speaker, is also in support of Bill S-240, currently before the Senate, dealing with the scourge of organ trafficking.

CANADA SUMMER JOBS INITIATIVE

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition deals with the application of section 2 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the context of the Canada summer jobs program.

The petitioners are concerned about the way in which government policy has negatively affected the rights and freedoms of Canadian organizations who wish to access the Canada summer jobs program on an equal basis. They call the attention of members to the protection of freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and freedom of belief as fundamental freedoms in the charter.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): The fifth petition, Mr. Speaker, is also in support of Bill S-240 on organ harvesting.

HEALTH

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the sixth petition calls the attention of the House to the fact that the World Health Organization defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The petition calls for greater awareness and study of the impact of self-care options, including natural health care products, and in particular urges Parliament to instruct the Standing Committee on Health to undertake a comprehensive study of the impact of uninsured self-care products and wellness services and of the barriers that exist for those wishing to access them.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, petition number seven is in support of Bill S-240 on organ harvesting.

AFGHAN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Petition number eight, Mr. Speaker, is also about the issue of

Afghan minorities, especially the Hindu and Sikh communities in Afghanistan. The petitioners are calling on the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take action in their respective domains in support of these communities.

HUMAN ORGAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ninth and final petition is in support of Bill S-240, which is on organ trafficking. The bill is currently before the Senate. We hope to see that bill passed as soon as possible.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2019, NO. 1

The House resumed from June 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: When the House last took up debate on the question, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan had two and a half minutes remaining in his time. Therefore, we will go to him now.

The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the points that are being made by our Conservative colleagues in the context of this debate are very important. They are that Canadians want to get ahead. Maybe they are getting by, but they are struggling to get ahead.

Under the current government, that struggle is made more difficult by the piling on of new taxes and the clear promise that the direction that the Liberals are taking this country with uncontrolled spending, if it is not controlled in the near future, is going to lead to tax increases. We have to act now to replace this government with a government that will be committed to living within its means and to managed, prudent spending.

We have to act so that we do not go down the path that the Kathleen Wynne Liberals and the Rachel Notley New Democrats took their provinces, which then required a strong correction after the fact. Rather, the alternative is for us to replace the government now with a government that will make sure the wasteful spending stops and will cut taxes and provide tax relief in so many different areas.

Government Orders

I spoke as well about the issues around the media bailout. We have a government here that is giving hundreds of millions of dollars to media organizations. The Liberals say this is in defence of independent media, but in fact they are delivering those funds and setting definitions around who is and who is not media through a board that includes someone who is explicitly partisan and is planning on campaigning for the Liberals in the next election.

We hear from journalist after journalist, from leading commentators in Canadian politics, about how this policy and approach create a threat to the independence of the media. Those who believe in independent media, including those within the media, are strongly opposing this policy. Some of the corporate barons who own media companies are happy about this policy, but individual journalists who are responsible for covering our politics on a daily basis, the voices that Canadians read and trust, are overwhelmingly critical of this policy.

Let us oppose this budget and replace this government with a government that has a new fiscal approach that allows Canadians to get ahead, that cuts our taxes, that genuinely protects the independence of the media and that moves us forward in so many other domains.

•(1025)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the member's last point about the media, the Conservatives proposed a motion to do exactly what he said and they could get only 32 of their members to vote for it.

Last night, around midnight, the member made a good point. He said that Liberals had solved every problem with a program. I thank him very much for the congratulations. Just as a doctor or airplane mechanic solves every problem, we are happy we have done it.

We solved the problem for low-income seniors by increasing the GIS and the amount they could keep. We doubled the student jobs program and reduced the interest on student loans. We created programs for people with disabilities. The child tax credit helped families. A million unemployed people now have jobs, so they are paying taxes to help pay down the debt. There was a problem with housing for the homeless. We made investments in housing. We lowered taxes for small businesses. We created the working person tax credit for low-income people and the training benefit for all Canadians.

The total for all of this is \$20 billion in unexpected increased revenue to help pay down the large deficit the Conservatives left us.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I sure hope I did not misspeak in the midst of the post-Raptors game euphoria late last night. What I intended to say, and what I think I actually did say, if we check the record, is that in response to every challenge that exists, the government proposes a program as a solution. I would never say it has been effective in its proposition of solutions to problems. Rather, the government's response to every challenge the country faces is for it to say bigger government, more spending, more interference of people's lives is the solution. We do not believe that on this side of the House. We believe that empowering individuals by cutting their taxes and allowing them to keep more of their own resources is often the best way to move our country forward.

The member spoke about our opposition day motion, and I was very proud to speak in favour of it. The Conservatives were prudent and realistic about our chances of succeeding in that vote, given the current configuration of this Parliament. However, I take the member's point that we need to do all we can to change the configuration of Parliament to ensure that in the future, we can pass common sense motions like that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing the Conservatives talk about the media platform we put together to support and protect local community newspapers and radio and television stations as some sort of massive cash transfer. The three pillars of the program are a tax credit to Canadians who subscribe online to print media. No dollars go to the media. The dollars actually go to Canadians. What does go to the media is an increase in subscription, something which is chosen by individual Canadians and not by anybody on any panel. Individual Canadians will make the choice of which media platforms to support and then get a tax credit for doing so. It is an incentive.

Also, we are setting up the capacity for independent media to set up charitable foundations to support independent journalism. There again the tax credit does not go to the media organization. Canadians have to donate through free will to a news organization, then they get a tax credit for doing it and the government costs that out as forgoing tax revenue.

The final piece of the puzzle is simply that if the media hires new journalists, new Canadians, give them jobs in the private sector, we provide the media with a tax credit for doing so. In other words, there is no dollar transfer to the media to buy opinion; there are dollar transfers to Canadians to choose and support Canadian media.

Why does the member not want those local media organizations to survive?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, surely the member cannot be as unaware of the arguments that people have been making, including in the media, about the reality of the effects of this, at least as unaware as he may have been about the process that Bill C-81 followed in the House.

Eligible media organizations are precisely the hinge point in this issue. It is the government, through this panel, that will determine who should be considered eligible to access this funding and who should not. Yes, we are talking about something that involves a cost to government of \$600 million.

Government Orders

Therefore, there is a cost, and it only applies to eligible media organizations. The member knows that who fits into that box and who does not will be decided by a panel that includes Unifor. I did not just make that up. It was not an invention of the opposition. Anybody who reads the papers or consults the independent media about which he speaks will know that the government has created this panel, it does in fact include Unifor and that many of the leading journalistic voices in the country have criticized it.

• (1030)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am enormously grateful that my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan chose to put some focus on the media bailout, because I was not able to get in on the debate when that was before the House squarely.

I voted against the Conservative motion last night. My vote might be considered to be support for the approach of the government in its entirety. Unfortunately, the Conservative motion included deleting tax treatment for energy efficient vehicles, probably inadvertently, in a series of amendments that were about the media bailout.

I am concerned about the media bailout. The media does need support. We need independent journalism. I would have been more impressed with a commitment that zero government dollars would go to advertising in digital platforms and would concentrate government advertising in the newspapers that were struggling.

I would also be more impressed if the group that was deciding who got the money did not include recipients of the funding. One reason I could not vote for the Conservative motion on its own was it singled out Unifor. Sun Media is sitting on it. The point, as made as journalist, Andrew Potter, is this. Why would the recipients of the funding form the group to decide who gets the funding?

Those are my concerns. The are not full-on opposition to the government's approach, but I would like to see it tweaked.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I guess we agree that it should be tweaked, but we might disagree about the degree of the tweaking.

The member makes an interesting point about looking at other members of the panel. In the context of our motion, our observation would be that the Unifor case is particularly egregious. Nobody else, in the context of that panel, has publicly tried to define itself as “the resistance” to not only a particular party, but to a particular individual who leads one of those parties. Obviously it is the tone and the rhetoric in explicit support of one party and in explicit opposition to another party.

It would be obviously inappropriate that anybody else in a government-appointed administrative role that was supposed to make these kinds of determinations would show such favouritism, such partisanship.

The member may have other points about other individuals on the panel, but it is quite clear that the case of Jerry Dias is particularly egregious in this context.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a question that the member for Yukon put forward.

The Conservatives have attempted to make a big issue out of this, and theirs is the only party in the House that has really taken the position it has. However, when it came time for a vote the other night, it was interesting to see that only 35, about a third of the Conservative caucus, voted for the opposition motion. That speaks quite strongly about the Conservatives' sense of commitment on this issue, let alone supporting the member's statement.

Could the member indicate why so few Conservative voted in favour of their opposition motion?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, as a matter of order, I would question the discussion about the presence or absence of members. I would be happy to engage in that conversation. Of course I would not comment the relatively small number of government members who are in the House now or, for example, the fact that we had successful quorum calls during this budget debate. A quorum for the House of Commons is only 20 members, and in debating the government's own budget, somehow we fell below quorum. Again, does the member want to go down this road?

Some of our members were busy campaigning in Winnipeg North at the time of that vote. I know the government always has to have enough members here to ensure they win the votes, and we do not win very many votes in the opposition. However, the Conservatives are also very successfully engaged in beautiful ridings, like Winnipeg North, talking to voters there.

I look forward to seeing the fruits of both the arguments we make in the House on the issues and of our many visits to ridings like that of the member.

• (1035)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my esteemed colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque.

I am proud to rise today to speak in support of Bill C-97. This budget goes the next step in accomplishing the goals the Liberal government set out four years ago. It lifts Canadians up with an economy that supports them and a government that makes investments to make their lives easier. This is a change from the previous Harper Conservative government that cut important investments in infrastructure, health care and social programs.

In four years, our government has created over one million jobs, the unemployment rate is at the lowest point in years and Canada has the fastest-growing economy of all G7 nations. We have lifted 300,000 children out of poverty. Billions of dollars have been invested in affordable housing and infrastructure investments throughout Canada.

I want to thank the residents of Surrey—Newton for giving me the responsibility of delivering this real change in our community.

Government Orders

As members of Parliament, our purpose is to make a positive difference in the lives of our constituents. In all my terms as an MP, that is what I have sought to do. Whether it is making my personal cell number available to my constituents or going to as many community events as possible, I do this so my constituents can get the timely help they need and are able to share any issues or concerns they may have.

I am proud to share with everyone that since our first budget, our Liberal government has made important investments that have strengthened Surrey—Newton.

Since 2015, we have invested over \$7 million to build more classroom space at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, as well as \$125 million to build a new sustainable energy and environmental engineering building at SFU Surrey campus.

To help people get to where they need to be more efficiently, we are investing over \$1 billion to expand the SkyTrain in Surrey. This comes after delivering 106 new buses and replacing the aging SkyTrain cars so they are more reliable for commuters.

Through a \$600,000 investment in the Newton Recreation Centre and the Surrey Art Gallery, we have ensured that families have strong community centres for them to gather at.

Above all, the Canada child benefit is helping nearly 14,000 families, with an average monthly benefit of \$630 a month. That is \$8.7 million every month that is helping parents and children lead strong, healthy lives.

The Canada child benefit helps families with everything from groceries to child care to sports and recreation activities for our youth.

Because of this benefit, 300,000 children in Canada have been lifted out of poverty. That is something of which each and every member of the House should be proud. It is the single largest decline in poverty in the country's history. It happened because of the vision and leadership of the Prime Minister, the hon. member for Papineau. He promised real change and he has delivered.

● (1040)

When the finance minister delivered budget 2019, he spoke about the choices we have made in this budget to make life easier for Canadians.

To help young families buying their first home, we have created a new first-time homebuyer incentive, which will lower monthly mortgage payments by providing funding of 5% or 10% of the home purchase price for existing or new homes, respectively. This program is expected to help approximately 100,000 Canadians buy a home they can afford.

We have also increased the homebuyers' plan withdrawal limit for the first time in a decade. This would provide first-time homebuyers with more access to their RRSPs to buy a home.

Budget 2019 also lowers the interest rate for Canadian student loans to the prime rate, helping close to one million students who are repaying their student loans and saving the average student approximately \$2,000 over the time of the loan. The interest payments during the first six-month grace period after graduation

will also be waived, which will help approximately 200,000 students every year transition successfully from their studies to the workplace.

Canadians can now purchase the prescription drugs they need without having to worry about the costs. We are putting a plan in place to implement a national pharmacare plan that will help lower prescription costs. Through this plan, Canadians will save \$3 billion each year.

To help more seniors retire with dignity, we are enhancing the GIS earning exemption from \$3,500 to \$5,000 while also automatically registering seniors aged 70 or older for their retirement benefits.

Finally, to ensure that our communities are stronger, we are investing an additional \$2.2 billion to support local infrastructure priorities.

These are just some of the many highlights from budget 2019 that are going to directly help Canadians.

After 10 years of neglect by the Harper Conservatives, our government's investments are strengthening Canada. Opposition members have said that if they were back in government, they would not make these choices. What they would do is take us back and cut investments that are so vital to Canadians.

These investments, whether for seniors, child care, reducing income tax for small businesses or helping with infrastructure projects, are the real investments that change the lives of Canadians, particularly when it comes to Surrey—Newton. This is a very diverse community, socially and economically, and these policies for the middle class have helped over the last four years. I am certain that the 2019 budget will help even more so they will be able to do even better.

I am thankful for this opportunity to share my words.

● (1045)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned housing, which is one of my favourite subjects right now, especially in the budget, with the 100,000 so-called first-time homebuyers who will be helped. However, neither CMHC nor the Department of Finance could point me to the document where the numbers actually came from. They each said that the other one knew how they got to the number. It is interesting that the member thinks that it would help that many people, because there are no details about the program available.

Perhaps the member could tell me if there would be a special fee assigned with the government purchasing equity in a person's home, because the government would then own a share of the home. Will the homeowner be able to buy out the government's share early, before selling the house? Will there be any other terms and conditions associated with the shared equity mortgage? Does the member know that the Mortgage Brokers Association said that it would take eight to 10 months to set up the IT system to enable the rollout of this program? Is the member aware that the chartered banks have similarly said that it would take much more than two months to do so? Will there be a special premium on the shared equity mortgages?

I would like to hear from the member on this matter.

Government Orders

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary Shepard should be aware that, for 10 years, the Harper Conservative government, which the present Leader of the Opposition was a part of, did nothing to address the issue of housing affordability, but rather pushed home ownership further out of reach. Our government is investing so that ordinary working Canadians can afford a house.

The member also asked about our strategy. Once we roll out this plan, we will have those details and the member for Calgary Shepard will be able to have them.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member cite a number several times in his speech, a number I have heard before in the House, about lifting 300,000 children out of poverty. My colleague from Saskatoon West has asked the government for a breakdown of how that number was calculated. We have not been successful so far in getting any information on how that number was arrived at. I am wondering how that number was arrived at.

If the hon. member does not know where that number came from, I am interested to know where he got it from and on what authority he is using it here in the House.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, Ken Dryden brought in a landmark child care policy, signed with 10 provinces and the territories. Who was responsible for bringing that policy down? It was the NDP, when it voted with Conservative members to bring the government down, and the child care benefits were gone. Kyoto was gone. That is their record on this.

This is our record on this. In my riding of Surrey—Newton, 14,000 families are benefiting from an average \$630 every month, with \$8.7 million flowing into Surrey—Newton. I am certain that a lot more is flowing into that hon. member's riding.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will go back to the last question from the Conservative Party. When the Conservatives talk about affordable housing, all they talk about is affordable home ownership, as though that is the be-all and end-all of affordable housing.

I am wondering if the member for Surrey—Newton can talk a bit more about how he sees affordable housing impacting the lives of the most vulnerable, and in particular those in his community. Does he think that the national affordable housing strategy will have an impact in creating good, new opportunities for people in his riding?

• (1050)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, our government is proud that the minister rolled out \$40 billion over the next 10 years to deal with the housing strategy.

The hon. member asked about my constituency of Surrey—Newton. Part of that funding went into Surrey—Newton. I was there with the minister to put shovels in the ground, and now the building is almost ready. Seventy-three families will benefit from that.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is really appropriate to be splitting my time with the member for Surrey—Newton, because he is on one coast of Canada and I am on the other, and just like this budget, we cover the country from coast to coast.

It gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-97. This bill does what we set out to do in 2015, building on our series of budgets to

grow the economy, so needed after the disastrous decade of the Harper years. The measures in Bill C-97, to be implemented by the budget implementation act, would do what Liberals do best: investing wisely and working with the private sector, the provinces and communities to strengthen the social and economic fabric of this country.

The prudent investments in this bill build on the fall economic statement, which I think could have been called a business budget. Part 1 of the budget implementation act relates to that fall economic statement.

The fall economic statement strengthened the very core of the business community's ability to compete by challenging head-on the U.S. tax reforms. It did many things, but I will name three: one, allowing businesses to immediately write off for tax purposes the full cost of machinery and equipment used in the manufacturing and processing of goods; two, implementing a new accelerated investment incentive, an accelerated capital cost allowance across all sectors of the economy; three, launching an export diversification strategy. That really assists our businesses in terms of being able to retain capital, attract investment, invest in new equipment, machinery and technology and be competitive in export markets. That just touches on three of the points in the fall economic statement.

From strengthening business opportunities in the fall economic statement, this bill seeks to give greater opportunity to Canadians and communities. In fact, I think this section of the bill could be called "the people's budget". For my province, Prince Edward Island, over a four-year term in government, major federal transfers of equalization, the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer, have increased by \$93.4 million to \$647 million.

Of course, colleagues know from the smiles they see on people's faces in their communities and their ridings that the legacy program of the Canada child benefit has made a huge difference for families all across the country. Nine out of 10 families are better off. On Prince Edward Island, for families with children, the Canada child benefit has meant \$100 million over the last year tax-free to those families. That is investing where the money needs to be invested. The money that goes into those families' pockets is spent in the local economy. It assists their children in child care and education, and it makes a much more progressive economy. Money is actually then spent in the community.

However, this Liberal government did not stop there. We know that early learning and child care are critical to give children the best start in life. Therefore, the Government of Canada and the Province of Prince Edward Island have signed an agreement that allows for the transfer of \$10.6 million over three years for regulated early learning and child care, to give children their best start in life.

Government Orders

•(1055)

Let me turn to the other end of the age spectrum, to seniors, who have been so instrumental in building this country we are so fortunate to call home.

The budget provides additional funding, increasing the funding for the new horizons for seniors program by \$20 million per year. It is an excellent program. It works in every riding. I encourage seniors groups and others to apply for that funding, because not only is it an expenditure spent in the local economy, but also it assists seniors with the programs they need. This program has a solid record of improving the quality of life of seniors and promoting their participation in communities and the workforce.

The budget implementation act goes further and proposes a series of measures to help Canadian seniors keep more money in their pockets by ensuring they receive the Canada pension plan benefits they are entitled to and stay active and be a valuable asset in their community. This builds on the concrete steps we have taken to improve the retirement security of Canadians.

I will turn to the budget. I know there are members on the other side who love to read this almost daily.

With respect to retirement security, page 62 lists measures that will really help seniors.

The government is enhancing the Canada Pension Plan, which will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit by up to 50% over time. It is restoring the eligibility age for OAS and GIS benefits to 65. It is increasing guaranteed income supplement top-up payments by up to \$947 per year for single seniors, and introducing legislative changes so that couples who receive GIS and allowance benefits and have to live apart for reasons beyond their control can receive higher benefits based on their individual incomes.

Investing in the lives of seniors has been the focus of this government's emphasis, with the Prime Minister appointing a minister of seniors to ensure that programs and services are designed to respond to the needs of seniors.

I will quote from page 70 of the budget document itself, for those who wish to refer to the page.

These further investments amount to \$40 billion for the 10-year national housing strategy, which will help ensure that vulnerable Canadians, including low-income seniors, have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford; \$6 billion over 10 years for home care, to allow provinces and territories to improve access to home, community and palliative care services; \$77 million in additional funding for the enabling accessibility fund, to improve the safety and accessibility of community spaces; making it easier to apply for employment insurance caregiving benefits, and introducing a new employment insurance caregiving benefit of up to 15 weeks to support individuals who are providing care to adult family members. That is important to do.

For communities directly, this budget tops up the federal gas tax refund by \$2.2 billion. It doubles the amount for most communities, large and small, and is money they can invest in infrastructure, business and to make their communities more economically

sustainable. In P.E.I., that amounts to \$16.5 million in added investments for communities.

Basically, Bill C-97 touches all segments of the economy, as well as people and tax measures that allow our businesses to be more competitive. It challenges, head on, the tax reform in the United States.

•(1100)

This is a budget implementation act that is building on the foundation we have already put in place as a government and putting our country in a place where it can be prosperous and successful in the years to come.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of travelling with the hon. member on one or two occasions while serving on the finance committee.

He talked about improving the manufacturing sector in general based on this budget. The debate has always been about the productivity level in Canada. I am sure the hon. member is aware that we are way behind compared to other nations, such as Germany and the United States.

How can we claim we are working on enhancing the manufacturing sector, when productivity should be an important element in making sure we are competitive enough in international markets? How can we make that claim when the government has been raising payroll and other taxes to the disadvantage of our businesses? How can the manufacturing sector compete in the conditions that the government has been creating since day one?

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a great pleasure to be on the finance committee and travel the country with the member. We were in his hometown in Alberta at one point, where people talked about many of the issues that the member raised.

The fall economic statement is where the measures were put forth in terms of the accelerated capital cost allowance and being able to expense investments in new equipment for manufacturing and processing. That is where we see the measures in place that will keep the business community competitive even given the kinds of tax reforms that have taken place in the United States.

In terms of the other measures that the member mentioned, employment insurance payroll deductions have in fact declined. That is one thing this government has done on a consistent basis. The CPP is an investment in retirement. It should ensure that employees will have some security. They know they will have more security in their retirement years.

All the measures we put together are good for the business community, and I am proud of that. On productivity, yes, we need to do more.

Government Orders

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when irregular border crossings began in earnest, the Conservative Party was calling for the entire Canadian border to be treated as an official point of entry, so that people crossing the border could be turned away wherever they crossed, without being able to make an asylum claim in Canada. The government at that time was very critical of the Conservative position.

There are provisions in this budget bill that would effectively mean that all borders will be treated as official points of entry, in just the same way the Conservatives recommended.

It is not clear to me, so I wonder if the member would care to elaborate on the ways, if there are any, in which the changes proposed in this omnibus budget differ from the Conservative proposal.

• (1105)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, that question relates to a critical issue, but we have obligations. When people cross the border, they are immediately arrested and checked to ensure they are asylum seekers, and that is important to do. We meet our international human rights obligations as a government, and we enhance that in this particular budget by making clear what the rules are. We have also increased the funding to enable border agents and the RCMP to take the measures they need to in order to ensure that our country is secure and that the human rights of those entering the country are protected.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Courtenay—Alberni.

This is probably my last chance to express my opinion about this government.

I listened to my colleague from Malpeque, and I know his heart is in the right place. He talked about the new horizons for seniors program, which is a very good program in many of our ridings. It is indeed a success.

However, I listened to my other colleague who spoke before him about the government's social housing initiatives, and I had to work hard to keep from shouting. The truth is that places like Longueuil—Saint-Hubert need social housing. We do not spend enough time talking about that. Sadly, the poverty rate in the City of Longueuil and its two suburbs is incredibly high. Over a third of the children belong to families living below the poverty line. I know for a fact that we need social housing. The Longueuil housing office's waiting list now has over 2,000 names on it. We need this kind of initiative, but the Liberal government has never done more than talk about it.

Once again, we are seeing their obsession with always calculating the very best time to announce some big carrot they want to dangle in front of people right before the election. That is what they did. Even though that was two years ago, they told us they were investing \$10 billion in social housing. What they have put on the table so far is really just peanuts. What will we get later? It will be a nice gift. We will see if Canadians are smart, if they have realized that they have to trust the blue bloods in the Liberal Party of Canada. Now we

will get small carrots here and there; we will get what is to be expected. It is appalling.

The media industry is now in crisis. How are the Liberals going to support the media? They are offering more carrots. No changes were made to the legislation.

Getting back to the people of Longueuil, what did the government do right away? It eliminated the tax credit for public transit passes. That is fantastic. It is almost as good as pipelines. Let us encourage people to take the bus. Congratulations, that is fantastic. I will not even mention the subway, since we obviously still do not have our subway extension.

Quebec has a lot of needs and a lot of ambition, and we can be proud of that. People in Montreal and the rest of Quebec really want to use public transit. Are we going to get some support from higher up? I sure hope so. I would love to see some big announcements before the election. They had better be good, and the Liberals would do well to keep their word and not lose the election. I hope members on that side can really understand how things are for the people of Longueuil.

Longueuil has had the same metro station since 1967. It is 52 years old. Nothing has been built since. God knows we need more. The bridges in my riding, especially the Jacques Cartier Bridge, are constantly congested. When people need to get to Montreal, they do not even consider taking public transit because it takes two tickets to cross the river and the return trip costs \$13, so they drive their cars.

In fact, that is why I am so passionate about electric cars and the electrification of transportation. The people in my community were early adopters because it seemed like we were always stuck in traffic. Many drivers ended up going electric. Again, we got peanuts for the electrification of transportation. The Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development at least had the vision to support a few good projects, but the Department of Transport has not offered up a penny, for Pete's sake. How pathetic. Electric cars are nothing new. Tesla reinvented the car years ago, but Ottawa is asleep at the wheel.

Being here among the 338 MPs who represent the people of Canada is an incredible opportunity. It is time to wake up. We see a lot of apathy, especially on the other side of the aisle. I have said over and over how ashamed I am that this Parliament cannot stand up and make sure e-commerce is properly taxed, at least at the same rate as our own businesses. Peter Simons has opened a store here on Rideau Street, and what a store it is. It was not that guy from Amazon who did it; it was Peter Simons. He got people involved by investing his own money and hiring employees.

• (1110)

Taxes are to be expected, since they fund our services. Paying a tax is not a shame. Roads and hospitals do not pay for themselves, nor do the boats that keep us safe on the water.

Government Orders

The government is letting web giants into the country. Does Amazon, a competitor to Simons, for example, pay taxes? I am not so sure. People are always surprised to hear that someone who ordered a product on Amazon did not pay tax. This cannot work. We are not in a little village in 1812. This is 2019 in a G7 country. I am trying to refrain from swearing.

This is shameful. Why is the media in a crisis right now? The government thinks it is complicated and that it is a new paradigm. I remember I had an eBay account about 20 years ago. This is not a new paradigm, and that is not an excuse.

It is a fact that the Conservatives ignored this for 10 years. The Liberals are even worse. They have been calling this situation appalling for four years, but they are not doing anything. The truth is that the media sector is in one hell of a mess right now and has lost 16,800 jobs since 2008, and the Liberals are partly at fault, since they had four years to do something.

We do indeed need to amend legislation, but the government should have done it sooner. When the Liberals were elected in 2015, they said that they were going to change this because it is important. They said that they would consult, but they did not manage to get everyone together. A government is meant to be able to unite people. Did this government do so? Absolutely not. I do not want to sound alarmist, but that is the truth. Anyone in the culture industry would tell you that.

Currently, we are talking a lot about the 75th anniversary of the brave heroes who defended our democracy in the Second World War. That is what we call patriotism, correct? The person who made a documentary on the Second World War—I forget the name of the production company, but no matter—sold one million copies of his DVD. Three years later, or around four years ago, they made another documentary, this time on the First World War. I can see how people could have found it a little dated and would not have been as interested, but that is not the point. They sold 100,000 copies of this documentary.

The band Alfa Rococo received \$16,000 in public performance royalties for one of their radio hits, which makes sense, given that the radio was playing their song. During the same period, they only got \$11 from Spotify. Clearly, this is the kind of thing that influences the decision of whether to go into music or not. That said, we are all happy to have music.

The government is well aware of all the problems. This morning I was asked in an interview whether the Minister of Canadian Heritage is incompetent. I said that I believe he is not incompetent so much as powerless. He is powerless before the will of the Prime Minister and he is powerless before the intellectual dishonesty of the Minister of Finance, who, when asked why the GST is not applied to Netflix subscriptions or ads on Google and Facebook, always says that this is very complicated and it should be taken up with the G7 and the G20.

Most of the U.S. states apply a sales tax on accounts like that. Everyone is asked to pay sales tax. For example, when we go to a small-time garage to buy some washer fluid and the employee says it will cost \$4 in cash but he will have to add the tax if we pay by credit

card, we raise a disapproving eyebrow, but that is what we are allowing to happen.

I did the math. GST would cost Netflix roughly 75 cents a month per subscription. That is roughly \$10 a year per subscription. Ten dollars times roughly ten million subscriptions is \$100 million.

Do the Liberals not want that money? Canadians do. We need it. The Liberals have to wake up.

• (1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's focus and relentless campaign to put a tax on Netflix and foreign media streaming services. Our government is in a position to receive a report and act on recommendations to make it consistent with other global platforms.

What I did not hear him talk about were the other things that need to happen for media that do not compete with entertainment streaming entities but are more on the information side. In particular, in journalism we are seeing a transfer to electronic platforms, but people are skirting the paywalls and the firewalls to get free access to these newspapers, small community news organizations and independent journalism organizations. Simply taxing Netflix and providing tax revenue to the government is not going to change that practice, nor is it going to provide direct support to new and emerging organizations. They are the ones having the hardest time finding access to market revenue and sustainable models.

Instead of a tax proposal, I would like to hear the member talk specifically about how those tax dollars should flow to small journalistic organizations and journalism and about the steps we have taken on subscription rates to make sure that dollars spent on these media organizations arrive in the bank accounts of small organizations. How would he actually transfer the dollars he is talking about taxing to make sure that those news organizations survive?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, in my response, I will consider the fact that my colleague is a former journalist and has the utmost respect for that profession, which is very important in our country.

The distribution of government support to the media, electronic or print, must be carried out in the most impartial way. We made several recommendations, such as supporting journalists independently of the platform they use. Naturally, the report was shelved because the Liberals are in the majority and are in charge at committees. I have been an MP for eight years and, unfortunately, most of the time, reports are shelved. That is disgraceful. The report had not even been tabled yet and the Prime Minister dismissed it, as did the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Government Orders

Several suggestions were made, in particular in Mr. Greenspon's report, which was not acted upon. What did the Liberals do? Just before the election, they realized that they needed to do something. They asked themselves who might be involved. They made a choice knowing that that would work to defeat the Conservatives, and told themselves it was not a problem, it would do the trick.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert for defending this cause so passionately and articulately all these years.

I would like to hear what he has to say about the impact on jobs in the regions. There is a lot of talk nowadays about information democracy. In the regions, it is especially important to have independent media outlets that are treated the same as web giants, so they can stay in business. God knows the regions are grappling with a labour shortage.

Could my colleague tell us about the repercussions on jobs in the regions and on young people hoping to get into journalism?

• (1120)

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, my heartfelt thanks to my colleague. I know she is doing a fantastic job in her riding. If anyone can talk about local media, it is her. I know that she writes for a local newspaper, for instance. These newspapers are often free, like the *Pamplemousse* in the riding of my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. I will not make a joke about his riding's name.

Local media need support. Unfortunately, the program that was created specified that they needed to have at least two employees, which is often impossible for local media outlets. They did not get any support at all.

Many reports on this issue have recommended supporting local media in the transition to digital platforms. However, that requires Internet access, which is another thing the regions may not get.

The survival of our information and our culture is vital to our democracy.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill C-97, the budget implementation act.

Yesterday was World Environment Day. Tomorrow is World Oceans Day. We would hope that the government would have some imagination, knowing that we are in a state of crisis. There is a climate emergency happening right now, and if we do not take action, there will be catastrophic climate change, which we are seeing right now.

I am from Vancouver Island. In January, as members are probably aware and have heard me speak about, we had the largest windstorm in recorded history. In February, we had the largest snowstorm in recorded history. In March, we had the largest drought in recorded history.

Here in Ottawa, on the river, in two of the last three years we have had the largest floods in the recorded history of this region.

We are having forest fires on Vancouver Island right now, for the first time in my memory, and I was born and raised on Vancouver

Island. The salmon are struggling to make it to their migration routes. The Cowichan area is at 25% water levels. Members have probably heard from my colleague in Cowichan—Malahat—Langford that the government needs to invest in the Cowichan weir and invest in ways to mitigate the impacts of climate change. However, we have not seen the bold action we need.

We have talked a lot about climate and economic equality. The time for talk is over. We need bold and courageous action. Our leader from Burnaby South has put forward a bold, courageous plan, power to change, to move us forward. It is a plan that includes working together, taking climate leadership, creating good jobs for everyone, improving where we live and work, improving how we get around, powering our communities carbon-free and protecting our land and water.

We talk about getting results. We know we need to reduce emissions by 45% by 2030. There is an incredible movement happening, as we know. Greta Thunberg, a young woman from Sweden, is leading a movement around the world. She is mobilizing youth. Youth are asking to be heard, and we are listening at our end of the House.

I walked with Youth Environmental Action in the Comox Valley. There were 300 young people from George P. Vanier high school and Mark R. Isfeld Secondary and the elementary schools. Grandparents, parents, cousins and aunts and uncles walked with them in support to give them strength and ensure that they are being heard and that we bring their voices to floor of the House of Commons. Just last week, at Wood Elementary School in Port Alberni, the kids walked out and demanded action on climate change. We need to listen to them.

Last week at the FCM, there was a new climate caucus created. Local governments are not seeing action from the federal government. They are calling on us to take further action, bold and courageous action. We need to listen to local governments and their leaders in our communities.

It is a privilege to follow my friend from Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, who is the first electrification critic from any party. We have an opportunity to take bold action and electrify vehicles across this country. It can be done. In Norway right now, 53% of vehicles are electrified. Norway's goal is that by 2025, any new vehicles sold will be EVs. It is happening around the world.

Taking bold climate action is good for the economy. Sweden has reduced its emissions by 25% and has grown its economy by 50%. California has seen its GDP rise by 35%, and it has reduced its emissions by 25% per capita. This is the kind of bold leadership that helps grow the economy, tackles inequality and moves us forward in taking this crisis seriously. This is the kind of bold leadership our country can take. There are models around the world and there are leaders around the world who are doing this. We need to join them.

I am calling on the government to take real action. In their budget, the Liberals committed \$300 million to an energy retrofit program. We wanted to see that. It is something we are happy to see get started.

Government Orders

●(1125)

However, when the Liberals talk about balancing the environment and the economy, there is no balance. They bought a raw bitumen pipeline for \$4.5 billion. We know that if they twin it, that will accelerate to \$15 billion. Therefore, \$300 million and \$15 billion is not balancing the environment and the economy, far from it.

Organizations in my riding, like Hakai Energy Solutions and Synergy Electrical Installations, have been calling for a home energy retrofit program, something that is bold and courageous, and \$300 million across this incredibly large country of ours will not get us there.

I wanted to touch on that, because this is a crisis. There are so many opportunities for us to move forward.

Before I go any further, I would like to take a minute to recognize my colleague, the member for Avalon, who is the chair of Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. He is turning 60 on Saturday. I wish him a happy birthday, and I hope we all can do that. It is always nice to acknowledge our colleagues in the House.

The government has talked about investing in our salmon and fish. We are in a crisis in British Columbia. Six species, Chinook salmon being one of them, are endangered and six are threatened. This is impacting sport, commercial, indigenous and recreational fishers all across the coast of British Columbia with recent closures.

The government talks a good game. It talks about how it is investing in salmon at record levels. It talks about a coastal restoration fund, \$75 million over five years coast to coast to coast, which is a drop in the bucket. That is \$15 million a year that has been slow to move out and that has not shown up in most of the communities I represent. We are in a state of crisis with our salmon. We know restoration dollars go far. However, our hatcheries have not seen an increase in 29 years.

I just met with the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation. Chief Moses Martin and his council asked me to bring the message to Ottawa, that the government needs to accelerate money in enhancement and it needs to do it right away.

The Liberals announced their new B.C. restoration fund of \$142 million. They understand and say that there is a crisis, but what do they do? They rollout \$17 million for the whole coast of British Columbia. Again, organizations like West Coast Aquatic in my riding have been denied funding from coastal restoration funds. They have been denied money from the B.C. salmon restoration fund. This is not how we deal with a crisis.

Again, this is how the Liberal government continues to respond to crises, whether it be on our salmon restoration, climate crisis or our housing crisis, rolling out a 10-year plan.

The Liberals talk a good game about the oceans protection plan and plastics. We have not seen them invest in mitigating the impact of plastics. We hope this month when the Liberals rollout their response to my motion, Motion No. 151, on a national strategy to combat ocean plastics, there will be money behind it to take on these really important issues and also some regulations to eliminate single-use plastics, like the EU and India have done. It is real action.

I also want to talk about the oceans protection plan. The Liberals had scheduled to spend \$145 million in 2017-18; they spent \$105 million. They scheduled to spend \$263 million in 2018-19; they spent \$217 million. The shortfall total is \$86 million. This is their world-class delay in spending money, not their world-class oceans protection plan.

Again, people in my communities are not talking to their neighbours, saying "Hey, there's a world-class oceans protection plan protecting our oceans". In fact, they are saying that the government is not acting with the sense of urgency we need to protect our oceans.

It is the same thing for housing. Real estate prices have gone up over 50% in my riding over the last three years. The government has been slow in dragging out its funds.

On indigenous languages, the government has been slow in getting money out the door. It does not provide the flexibility that is needed for indigenous languages. In fact, there is a project in my riding for an indigenous languages revitalization pole and the government has no flexibility to fund that, which is very important to the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

A lot of issues and things are not in this budget, such as pharmacare, money for the opioid crisis, and I could go on and on.

I hope the government is listening. I hope we see some urgent action on these issues on which we can work together.

●(1130)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people have to love a party that criticizes another party for having a 10-year housing strategy, when it has just produced a 10-year housing strategy, saying that when producing a 10-year housing strategy, the money should be front-end loaded.

The NDP is not front-end loading the money in its 10-year housing strategy. In fact, if members read the small, few, meek little details that are in the housing strategy, half of that money will come in the last five years of the 10-year program. It is exactly half, because that is the pace at which the housing will be built. This means that 50% of the money does not come in after one election; it comes in after two elections. That is the platform of the NDP, yet it criticizes the Liberals for spending \$7 billion in our first budget, adding \$55 billion and back-end loading the money, because we also have to subsidize those housing programs.

Government Orders

Could the member opposite please explain to me where the subsidy is for those public housing units the NDP would build, how that would not increase over time and therefore would back-end load the dollars, too?

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I could spend another 10 minutes just on the response alone.

We know where we are in our country, where 4% of our housing is non-market housing. We were at 10% in the 1970s and 1980s, before the Liberal government killed the national housing plan at that time.

If the member wants to point fingers, he should look within. The Liberal government got us in this mess in the first place. Europe's non-market housing is at 30%. We are talking about building 500,000 housing units. We have been calling on the government to front-end load the 10-year plan, accelerate it and get half of that money out the door right now.

If the government did what we have asked for, get the money out the door, we would do it. The government has not responded with courageous, bold action, understanding what a crisis looks like.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked vehicle electrification.

An amendment moved by one of the new Liberal MP members on the committee was to go from a 15 kilowatt battery to a 7 kilowatt battery to be eligible for two of the financial measures in the budget. However, by doing so, the Liberals would effectively allow for luxury electric vehicles, \$100,000-plus vehicles, to be discounted on purchase, about \$55,000 off their taxes. I was at committee when officials confirmed this would be the BMW 530e, BMW 330e and the Audi e-tron series of vehicles.

If we are talking about vehicle electrification, would we not first start with transit and vehicles that the regular, everyday person could afford? Could the member speak about that and about the priorities of the government?

• (1135)

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely need to spend historic amounts of money on electrification and investing in public transit. That is what we are calling for in our document "Power to Change". We will talk more about that in our platform. I appreciate the member's commitment to that.

When it comes to electrification, we do not have to look far. We can look to Norway. Fifty-three per cent of its vehicles are electrified. Why are we not looking at models around the world? California has done great work at lowering emissions.

The rebates in British Columbia and Ottawa are making a difference. In fact, we need to incentivize even more to get more people driving electric vehicles.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned a lot of places, Norway and California, and their progression in tackling climate change. We have put an incentive on electric vehicles. Unfortunately, the Province of Ontario has repealed that.

The Liberals went into 2015 saying we would go into a deficit so we could invest in Canadians and ensure we grew our economy.

There has been an increase of one million jobs under Liberal watch, with the lowest unemployment rate in 40 years.

Does the member not see that this plan is working for Canadians and that the Liberal government is investing in Canadians? If the budget were balanced at all costs, we would not see these investments in the environment or the investments about which the member spoke.

Mr. Gord Johns: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague about what is happening in Ontario. The provincial Conservative government is cutting rebates and opportunities for us to take real action, working together. I am as disappointed as the member is on that.

With respect to the whole budgeting process, how we operate our country and the framework we work under, we need a rethink. We need a whole rethink of our taxation system. Billions and billions of dollars are leaving our country through tax havens, loopholes and subsidies to the oil and gas industry. That billions of dollars could be there to balance budgets or invest in clean energy initiatives that would create jobs and move us forward.

We are talking about over tens of billions of dollars. That is not included in the Liberal budget or the Liberal plan. The Liberals are still giving subsidies to CEOs who do not need a break. They are still giving subsidies to big corporations. They are still allowing the shovelling of billions of dollars out of our economy on the backs of everyday hard-working people. The member did not talk about that.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development (Housing and Urban Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about one of the most important achievements of not just this budget implementation act, but also of this government with respect to the right to housing.

The provisions in the amendments that have been tabled and have now been accepted in the first round of voting establishes for the first time in the country's history, a systematic approach to realizing fundamental rights to housing to achieve basic human rights.

The legislation we have put in place proposes three very specific things. I want to talk about how the legislation and how these sets of amendments will make a significant difference, not just in the housing needs of Canadians today but for generations to come.

First and foremost, 40 years ago when Canada signed the U.N. declaration of social development, and close to a decade ago when the sustainable development goals were produced, the fundamental right to access a housing system were part of the international treaties the country signed. Since then, the country has wavered, on a national level, on provincial levels and on municipal levels, in attaining exactly what those covenants should mean, not just to a country but to people who are in need of housing.

Government Orders

The first and most important thing we did in the legislation was to clearly state that access to a system of housing and a systemic accountability model to produce housing to meet the needs of Canadians so all Canadians would have a safe, affordable and adequate place to call home had to be enshrined in law. This government and future government will have a responsibility to sustain and realize that right and progressively move toward the elimination both of homelessness and a core housing need in all communities for all Canadians.

Enshrining this in law means that before this housing strategy expires, a future government, in much the same way Canada health accords are renewed, will have to sit down with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners, as well as municipalities, and renew the agreement to ensure that the rights of Canadians are not systematically denied ever again. This fundamentally will prevent the argument we often hear from the other side.

Almost 30 years ago, a federal government backed out of providing direct support for housing programs and even though it stepped back in gingerly in the late nineties, it never really fully returned until this government took office in 2015.

We have established a system for housing and a renewal system for the housing accords. We have also produced \$55 billion in funding to realize the housing needs of Canadians, not including almost \$3.5 billion and close to \$6 billion for indigenous housing. There is still much work to be done, particularly in the area of urban and indigenous housing, work that is funded, in part now, but nowhere near the levels needed to ensure all Canadians have a right to housing.

The second thing we have done is set up a housing advocate with an advisory council, which is housed inside the Canadian Human Rights Commission. It will effectively test the government on its commitment, assess the effectiveness of the government delivery of this program and hold the government accountable in a public way through reports to Parliament. It requires the minister to table a response to systemic gaps in the housing system or flaws or delivery mechanisms that are not being effectively applied to ensure all Canadians in all corners of the country get the housing they require.

This accountability model is not housed inside CMHC or inside the ministry. It is housed inside the Canadian Human Rights Commission so it is clear, distinct and independent. It has the ability to identify not just problems with the structure and the system of the housing strategy, but also to look outside that strategy to see where the it does not reach particular communities in particular ways and investigate on its own to ensure those gaps are identified.

On that point, the ability to investigate, to study, to make recommendations and to do independent work as an advisory committee and as the housing advocate means that where there are systemic gaps, the government of the day will be advised of those, will be asked to respond to potential remedies produced by this group and will have to respond to Parliament and to Canadians as to how the remedies will be acted upon. This is a fundamental sea change in the way in which the housing programs are designed and delivered on a national basis. According to the United Nations rapporteur on housing, it sets a global standard not just on realizing

the progress of rights to housing, but also setting that public accountable process.

• (1140)

One other thing that has drawn the attention of housing advocates and activists across the country is the composition of the advisory panel itself. It is going to have people with expertise and people with lived experience to help direct the research, to help direct the findings and to help direct the reporting to the minister.

For the first time ever, people who have lived in precarious housing situations, whether they are women who have had to couch surf, youth who have been gapped out of housing as they age out of care and end up in shelters and struggle to find housing, or chronically homeless individuals who have been on the streets for periods of time and live through the shelter system of this country, will be part of the collective community that provides advice to the ministers to make sure that we get the housing system right.

This is landmark legislation. It is profoundly long overdue. I am extraordinarily proud to be part of a government that has delivered on it. Our government has received accolades from the housing sector. This legislation has received endorsements from key organizations, such as the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, from ministers and from municipal councillors. There was a strong reception of this legislation at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' housing forum just last week.

For the first time ever, Canadians see a federal government that not only has a national housing strategy but that has found a way to project it into the future. It has found a way to hold itself accountable to the most vulnerable people in this country, those with lived experience.

Above all else that has happened in the last four years of this Parliament, this is one of the most profoundly important developments in human rights, which we can all be proud of. It does not mean, however, that there is not more work to do. That is why an additional \$10 billion was invested in the national housing strategy. That is why this government has also taken steps around low-income home ownership and is providing pathways to home ownership, in particular for first time homebuyers. That is why this government is also committed to a distinctions-based approach with indigenous communities to make sure that housing on reserves and in traditional territories is properly attuned, that we get the right dollars and the right programs in place, and that they are self-managed, self-directed and delivered by indigenous communities themselves.

However, the biggest piece of the housing puzzle that is missing is urban indigenous housing. All of us, as we look towards the next election, in the final days of this session of Parliament, have to focus our attention there.

Government Orders

In the province I come from, close to 86% of indigenous people live in urban centres, off reserve or away from treaty lands. Those people, particularly women, are not well served by a housing system that does not recognize a fourth component of indigenous housing, which is urban indigenous people. The Supreme Court has directed us to act in this area. While there are programs available, those programs are nowhere near scaled to the needs that are presented. We also have not worked hard enough to develop the urban indigenous housing sector itself to make sure that whatever we do provide as funding is entirely self-directed, self-designed, self-managed and self-realized by indigenous communities.

I can assure the House that as I look towards re-election, and I will be re-offering in the fall, the number one priority for me, as a housing activist who has come to Parliament to work on these issues, is that the urban indigenous housing file be solved within the next term of Parliament. It has to be addressed immediately upon re-election. It has to be funded to meet the needs of a community that is in dire need.

With respect to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls genocide that was reported on this week, I would argue that we would not have that number of people, women in particular and two spirited individuals as well, if those individuals had safe and secure housing off reserve they could go to. They would have been safe and secure if housing was guaranteed as a human right. They would have been safe and secure if our country had been as invested in housing over the last 30 years as this Liberal government has been over the last four years.

This achievement on the right to housing, this achievement in terms of the sustained investments our government is making in building housing, repairing housing and most importantly, subsidizing housing, is a profound change we have orchestrated in this term of office. That is one of the reasons we have lifted so many people out of poverty. That is one of the reasons we have created so many jobs in so many communities. That is one of the reasons we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

All the challenges faced by the federal government are made that much easier to solve when housing is not seen as a crisis but as the best tool we have to solve the social problems confronting Canada. It is a federal responsibility.

I am proud to be part of a federal government that has not only delivered but has found a way to make sure that future governments also deliver. Every Canadian has the right to have a safe, secure and affordable place to live. This government is going to make sure that happens by 2030. This government is making results on the ground now and will continue to fight for those results in the years ahead.

I hope we have the support of all parliamentarians to realize this extraordinarily important national objective.

• (1145)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, and that of many young people across Canada, the most important issue is the environmental crisis.

The government recognized that there is a climate emergency. Today, a group of young people called ENvironnement JEUnesse is

in Montreal to launch a lawsuit against the federal government for its failure to respect the environmental rights of young people. This group is made up of youth aged 35 and under who want to file a complaint in court.

Even with budget 2019, we have not succeeded in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. On the contrary, they have increased by 12 million tonnes. According to the government itself, we will not meet our 2030 targets for 200 years. We are falling far short, and there is a lack of vision and leadership. We need to take action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 45% by 2030.

[*English*]

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, none of us on this side of the House disagree with the assertion that climate change is an existential danger to our existence on this planet, and that is why this government is so focused on making sure that its investments in climate change adaptation and resiliency, as well as in greenhouse gas emissions, are not made just through the ministry of the environment, the ministry of transportation or the ministry of natural resources. All government departments have a role to play. I am very proud to say that the national housing strategy requires reducing the greenhouse gas emissions of new builds by 25% above the existing building code.

In fact, I was at a project in Hamilton, the refurbishment of a 10-storey, dormant, empty tower that was built in the 1960s. That building will contribute to the energy grid by reducing greenhouse gases. That is the kind of thing good, strong housing policy does. It houses people and fights climate change. It is a cornerstone of our national housing strategy.

• (1150)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 11:48 a.m., pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, June 4, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill now before the House.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 28, the recorded division stands deferred until later this day, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

CUSTOMS TARIFF

Hon. Pablo Rodriguez (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-101, An Act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the legislative changes made by Bill C-101.

To understand this bill, it is important to understand our government's values. Indeed, it is a good reflection of what we have been doing since our first day in office. Since day one, our government has been firmly on the side of Canadian workers. We have made investments in Canadians and in the economy, investments that have helped create over one million jobs across the country over the past three years. We are helping more workers access skills training so they can get and keep those jobs.

Furthermore, faced with global uncertainty, we have negotiated new trade agreements that will give Canadian workers and businesses access to two-thirds of the global economy. This represents billions of customers around the world. When the United States imposed unfair tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, we stood up for our workers. We refused to turn a blind eye or take a hands-off approach, as the Conservative members suggested. At the end of the day, the fact is that our plan worked. We managed to get the tariffs lifted, and we did so because we were thinking about our workers and Canada's interests.

That was a victory for workers and for the country, but we know we are not out of the woods yet. Despite everything we have done to help Canadian workers succeed, global forces beyond our control may continue to threaten that growth, so we must remain very vigilant. We have a duty to ensure that trade practices do not negatively impact the Canadian market by undermining our steel industry and jeopardizing thousands of good middle-class jobs. That is at the core of this bill, which builds on our previous work and strengthens our government's commitment to protecting Canadian workers and their jobs from potential threats like those.

[*English*]

We did not get to this point by accident. We have been listening closely to Canada's industries and workers, and they say that they want more reassurance. They want a government that is willing and able to act quickly when markets are distorted, so we are taking action.

The legislation we are debating today, Bill C-101, would amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act. Specifically, it would remove the two-year moratorium on the imposition of safeguard measures should provisional safeguards be found to be unwarranted.

Safeguards are actions taken by a government to restrict imports of a product temporarily to protect a specific domestic industry. Through this legislation, Canada would be able to respond quickly and appropriately to situations where a surge of imports harmed or could harm Canadian producers and workers.

I want to add that these amendments are intended to be temporary. Our government is proposing that the amendments be in effect only until June 2021. To take this action, further amendments to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act are necessary. They are included in this bill.

I want to assure hon. members that the conditions for the application of safeguards would remain unchanged. There are still bars to meet before any safeguard measures are put in place. This legislation would just help us evaluate and act on those standards faster.

● (1155)

[*Translation*]

I think that all honourable members can agree that these are very interesting and volatile times for international trade. The rules governing international trade and free trade are evolving, sometimes very quickly and often unpredictably. We cannot take anything for granted.

That is why our government has gone to great lengths to try to protect Canadian workers and ensure that Canada's businesses can compete on a level playing field. In fact, when things are unfair and the market distorted, Canadian jobs are at risk.

As the Prime Minister stated, Canada has always been a trading nation. However, we cannot allow this longstanding tradition of openness to threaten or harm Canadian businesses. In the case of the steel industry, we will not let Canada serve as a back door to other markets.

Canada already has the strictest enforcement regime to combat this practice, with 77 trade remedy measures in force for imports of steel and aluminum alone. Last year, we further strengthened the enforcement regime to prevent foreign exporters from avoiding tariffs.

Our enforcement framework includes Canada's trade remedy system, which helps preserve a fair and open trade climate for our producers. It protects Canadian businesses against the effects of foreign goods that are unfairly subsidized or that are sold in Canada at artificially low prices. We currently have trade remedies involving 13 steel products from 25 countries.

*Government Orders**[English]*

In budget 2017, our government went even further to strengthen and modernize our trade remedy system. In April 2018, we increased funding for the Canada Border Services Agency and Global Affairs Canada to keep trade enforcement working for Canadians. This bolstered our efforts to prevent the transshipment and diversion of unfairly priced foreign steel and aluminum into the North American market. The new funding started immediately and amounted to more than \$30 million over five years and \$6.8 million per year after that. It means more than 40 new officers to investigate trade-related complaints, including those related to steel and aluminum. It means more accurate data on imports so we can better monitor trade trends and better protect our industries and workers against unfair trade.

At the same time, our government made targeted and timely investments to support the Canadian steel and aluminum industry. This includes an investment of \$2 billion to defend and protect the interests of the Canadian steel, aluminum and manufacturing industries and their workers. These investments will help companies expand into new markets, increase operational and environmental efficiencies or purchase new technology and equipment.

We know that strong, decisive trade action works, because we have seen it work. As I said earlier, when the United States imposed tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, we stood up for our country's steel and aluminum workers, industries and the communities that rely on their businesses. We imposed reciprocal dollar-for-dollar countermeasures to encourage the full removal of the U.S. tariffs. Canada stood firm and did not back down. As members know, on Friday, May 17, we were proud to announce that these tariffs and countermeasures would be eliminated by the following week.

Therefore, there should be no doubt in the minds of any members here today that our government has protected and will continue to protect Canada's steel and aluminum workers, and all Canadians.

• (1200)

[Translation]

Their success is well earned.

Despite global uncertainty, Canadians created more than one million jobs since fall 2015. Last year, all job gains were in full-time positions. The rate of unemployment and poverty is at its lowest in more than 40 years and salaries are rising faster than the cost of living.

Moreover, employment gains are broadly spread out among groups that are often under-represented in the labour market, such as new immigrants, single mothers, indigenous peoples living off reserve and young Canadians who do not have a high school diploma. This is the type of progress that makes a real difference in the lives of Canadians from one end of the country to the other.

Nevertheless, the reversals in global trends are not the only threat to Canadian jobs. New technologies present both obstacles and opportunities to Canadians seeking to build a career. We are making investments and introducing policies to help workers succeed in the economy of the future. By helping more people gain new skills today, we are creating the necessary conditions for long-term

prosperity in every sector of the economy, especially for Canadian workers. In fact, that is the spirit of the bill currently before the House.

The nature of work is changing around the world, and Canada is no exception. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, estimates that one in six jobs in Canada is at high risk of automation. This means that a number of workers could be forced to change jobs many times throughout their years in the workforce. Many others will have to learn new skills simply to keep their jobs in an ever-changing work environment.

The good news is that, through the new Canada training benefit in budget 2019, we are providing real support to the workers of today and tomorrow.

[English]

The Canada training benefit will provide a flexible option for Canadians to find the time and money needed to pursue training, improve their skills and build strong and lasting careers. It does that in a few ways.

First, budget 2019 proposes a new, non-taxable credit to help Canadians pay for a training course or program. Under this new Canada training credit, eligible workers between the ages of 25 and 64 will accumulate a credit balance of \$250 each year, up to a lifetime limit of \$5,000.

Second, a new employment insurance training support benefit would provide up to four weeks of income support to workers when they take time off to take a training course. It would replace regular earnings so that workers do not have to worry about taking some time off to upgrade their skills.

[Translation]

Third, in addition to these two aspects, the government is proposing that it consult the provinces and territories about amending the labour laws to ensure that workers can take time off work for training without worrying about losing their jobs. This would protect a worker's right to take leave for training and skills development.

Before I wrap up, I want to remind members that this bill is very much in keeping with what I consider to be the three main pillars of government policy.

Government Orders

When we took office in 2015, the Canadian economy was sluggish, and Canada was in a technical recession. In my opinion, Canadians elected us based on three main economic pillars, on which we have founded our achievements these last three years in office.

These pillars kick-started economic growth in Canada. I would define them in the following manner. First, we made major investments in infrastructure to ensure that people and goods can travel efficiently across the country; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; look after our waste water systems; protect the environment; and build modern and effective infrastructure from coast to coast. It goes without saying that these investments also stimulated growth. We are talking about a very ambitious, \$180-billion plan over 12 years.

The second pillar was reducing inequality by giving more to those who need it most and giving the middle class some breathing room. The first thing we did was lower taxes for the middle class and raise taxes on the wealthiest one per cent. Simultaneously, we introduced the Canada child benefit, a social policy unlike any other in recent Canadian history. The CCB reduced poverty in this country by 20% in just three years and reduced child poverty dramatically.

Those are just two of a suite of measures targeting the middle class and the most vulnerable Canadians. Seniors, for example, are getting more because we increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10% when we took office. The goal is to reduce inequality. We on this side of the House believe that the more inclusive our prosperity, the stronger our growth and the better off Canada's economy will be. We know we are right about that because in 2017, Canada's growth was the strongest in the G7 and we are still at the head of the pack.

The second pillar was about reducing inequality through measures like taxation and the Canada child benefit. There is also social housing, which the federal government has been withdrawing from for years. Now this government is getting back into it. I could also mention how we helped seniors by rolling back the retirement age from 67 to 65. The Conservatives had raised it, plunging hundreds of thousands of seniors into poverty. Then there is the Canada child benefit, which is putting a lot more money back in families' pockets.

According to available data, which, incidentally, are from the OECD, not from partisan think tanks, the average Canadian family has \$2,000 more in its pockets in 2019 than it did in 2015.

Furthermore, according to Statistics Canada, a renowned and completely impartial institution that everyone can be proud of, we have succeeded in reducing poverty in Canada by 20%. We achieved that in just three short years. We are not planning to stop there. As I said, one of the key pillars of our government's efforts and our economic strategy is to reduce inequality.

The last pillar is about maintaining Canada's competitive edge by investing in science, research and innovation. Budget 2018 contained some of the largest investments in science in Canada's history. We are also opening up access to international markets, as we did with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement, or CETA, and with the renegotiated NAFTA.

Thanks to these kinds of measures, we are making sure we are here to protect our industries from the threats of today's interconnected economy.

• (1205)

I believe that Bill C-101 is entirely consistent with the government's ambition and action. It will promote growth and prosperity, while protecting our industries and workers to ensure that Canada succeeds.

[*English*]

To conclude, I want to reiterate our government's commitment to Canadian workers and to our industry. We will continue to carefully monitor the situation, with great vigilance, for distortions in global markets. Make no mistake, if it is determined that a surge of imports is harming or could harm our workers and producers, we want to be able to respond.

It is the right thing to do for our workers, and the right thing to do for our economy. That is why I urge all members to support this legislation so that it can pass without delay.

[*Translation*]

On that note, I would like to thank the NDP, the Bloc Québécois and the independent members who voted in favour of this way and means motion. The Conservatives, on the other hand, will have to explain their position on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the government is moving on this.

We in the Conservative Party wanted the government to take action over two years ago. As a matter of fact, when we had the minister in committee, we found out that a year before the Americans put tariffs on our steel and aluminum sector, the Americans asked Canada to come on board and help out. Basically, because of dithering and incompetence, Canadian companies have been suffering with these steel and aluminum tariffs since that time.

The bill is extremely important, especially in my community, where we build automobiles and have Gerdau Ameristeel.

The government has collected over \$2 billion in tariffs, and because of the way it is enacting the bill, some companies may be affected negatively. What is the government going to do to dispense, perhaps regionally, this \$2 billion, this massive amount of money? The government has collected it and has promised to get it out to the affected companies, but it has really done absolutely nothing. What is the government going to do to address any inadvertent harm from the bill and get money out to the producers and manufacturers that require that support?

Government Orders

•(1210)

[*Translation*]

M. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I also thank him for his support for this bill, which is so important for the steel industry in particular. It gives the Government of Canada the ability to respond, should the need arise, by taking a very flexible and agile approach.

However, I am a bit puzzled by my colleague's view of the past two years, given this government's unwavering support for the steel and aluminum industry and its workers as we passed through some very stormy waters last year and over the past few months.

Industry representatives and workers have reiterated, in news release after news release, how satisfied they are with the government's strong response to the American tariffs. We have always considered those tariffs to be completely unacceptable and illegal. We responded very decisively, even though the Conservatives were suggesting, from the very beginning of the NAFTA renegotiation, that we cave in to the Americans and give them everything they wanted.

We stood firm and everyone knows how it all turned out. We managed to have those tariffs lifted, while supporting steel and aluminum workers through this difficult time.

I can attest that, on this side of the House, the government will continue to strongly support steel and aluminum workers across the country.

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to give a shout-out to my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain, Essex and Windsor West for standing up for the workers, manufacturers and producers suffering through this debacle.

I also want to reiterate what my colleague said about the government dithering. On this side of the House, we wonder why the government did not put permanent safeguards on all seven steel products that were investigated by the Canadian International Trade Tribunal this spring. However, I will move on.

In the 2018 budget, the government allocated \$40 million to the Canada Border Services Agency to supposedly provide more boots on the ground to assist in investigations and stop foreign steel dumping. However, by October, the agency had managed to hire only 10 people to get this work started.

How many additional officers are in place now so that we can stop this from happening?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, to answer the hon. member's specific question, I can come back to him with an exact number. As this is not under the purview of the Department of Finance, I do not have all the information about the exact number.

I appreciate the member's acknowledgement of the fact that this government decided to make substantial investments to give the Canada Border Services Agency and Global Affairs Canada the resources they need to conduct assessments and obtain the data as

quickly as possible. As a result they will be able to make informed decisions to protect our industries and workers in Canada.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of members on all sides of the House and their efforts during this difficult period in our trade relations with the United States, which imposed tariffs, for example.

I can assure my colleague that our government will always stand behind steel and aluminum workers. That was made clear when we gave them the \$2 billion that I mentioned in my speech. This was very well received by the workers in the steel and aluminum sector. Our government also took safeguards that are a testament to our unwavering support for the steel and aluminum industry.

We know that the past few months were not easy. However, these industries have no doubt whatsoever about this government's firm commitment to always support them and to support the workers who are the pride of this country.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the regional disparities in this country when it comes to steel and aluminum producers. In the central part of Canada, safeguards are welcomed as a way to protect the big, central Canadian steel mills and those jobs. As a member of Parliament from British Columbia, I have heard from steel and aluminum producers there who have never sourced their steel from central Canada, because that is not the way the supply chain is set up to work. They have always sourced their steel from the offshore markets. They do not transship. This is what they use to produce the goods that employ people all across western Canada.

Are the jobs in manufacturing facilities in British Columbia being sacrificed? Are there any regional considerations at play? What is being done to protect the jobs of companies that have always used offshore steel and are now going to be put at a competitive disadvantage in not being able to get the supply? I am really worried about the jobs in British Columbia, and I want to hear what the government is doing specifically for western Canadian jobs.

•(1215)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Bill C-101 provides the government with another tool and greater flexibility to respond to a market distortion or an increase in the amount of steel entering the North American market. However, the bill does not impose any safeguards, per se. It is important to remind our opposition colleagues of this.

Everyone knows how trade relationships work today. Things can change very quickly and we need to respond quickly. It is important that the government have greater flexibility to be able to act, as needed. This is a measure that is generally supported by the House.

Government Orders

As for my colleague's specific question, I would like to remind him of the investments made in budget 2018 and budget 2017 to give Global Affairs Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency sufficient resources to obtain more information and better understand the market and how it is changing in real time, with a view to making decisions that take into account Canada's different regional realities. My goodness, there are so many, and they all operate differently and have a different reality. It is important we have this information and to obtain it, we need to make these investments. That is what the government has done in the past to be able to support each region of the country in the most appropriate way.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask him a simple question because the steel sector has been a priority for the NDP for a long time. We are supportive of this step forward, but we are under the impression that it is a temporary measure.

Why did the Liberal government not follow the European Union's lead and implement permanent safeguard measures for seven steel products subject to dumping on the international market?

Mr. Joël Lightbound: Mr. Speaker, I thank the NDP for supporting this important bill, which gives the government the ability to act quickly when necessary. I believe that is why it is an indispensable legislative tool that will protect the steel and aluminum industry.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I need to start my remarks by recognizing that today is the 75th anniversary of D-Day. I have the ability to stand in this House, in our parliamentary democracy, because of the sacrifice of the 359 Canadians who died on D-Day, the 14,000 who landed on Juno Beach, and the 25,000 involved in the operation with our allies. I would be remiss if I did not start my remarks with this, because we are fortunate to have democracy based on that.

The parliamentary secretary said that this bill is a reflection of the Liberal government's values when it comes to trade. He is either reading a speech that was provided for him, or he does not realize it is actually a very high-profile abandonment of the values that Liberals projected on trade for several years. The parliamentary secretary has heard the foreign minister talk countless times about the international rules-based order. With the trading order and security order, the international rules-based order has probably been one of the foreign minister's most common refrains. In fact, in her famous speech in Washington, in June 2018, she said:

One answer is to give up on the rules-based international order, to give up on the Western alliance and to seek to survive in a Metternichian world defined not by common values, mutually agreed-upon rules and shared prosperity, but rather by a ruthless struggle between great powers governed solely by the narrow, short-term and mercantilist pursuit of self-interest.

“The ruthless, short-term, mercantilist pursuit of self-interest” should be the preamble to Bill C-101. It is an abandonment of WTO rules with respect to international trade, the rules on which the minister would like to lecture not only us but also the Americans in Washington.

It is not just my opinion that it is a WTO violation. As noted trade lawyer Mark Warner tweeted about Bill C-101, the Canadian government has been proclaiming its adherence to the rule of law at every turn, and now is suspending parts of the WTO safeguards agreement for two years.

This is an example of an abandonment of a rules-based approach to trade, and our trading partners and friends around the world notice that.

Now, there is a real politic to trade that the government avoided and ignored for its first several years. That is why Canadians should be shocked that in the final weeks of this Parliament and with no collaboration from the opposition, Liberals have tabled a ways and means motion on the new NAFTA, on safeguard provisions. In fact, they are changing the law, not to allow safeguards not to have their two-year suspension after being applied, but to have the ability to have permanent safeguards. The Liberals are doing this in the final days of the House and will likely use time allocation to rush it through.

The Conservatives are going to use this time to try to suggest some ways to mitigate the impacts of Bill C-101 with regard to issues that the government should have thought of and should have brought for debate. We are going to stand up for the interests of the wider group of employers and employees in the fabrication of steel products, particularly the western steel and construction industries, and recommend ways to help them through the disruption this bill will cause.

Hopefully, the government will address some of our concerns and make this better. Hopefully, it will deal with the companies and employees in western Canada, in Quebec and in Newfoundland and Labrador who will be impacted. In my remarks, I am going to use some time to recommend that. We want to, and may, support this bill, but it is up to the government, rushing it through in the last few days, to address the real issues that will affect small and medium-sized businesses, and to allocate some of the \$2 billion it has already collected in retaliatory tariffs. The government promised this would help small and medium-sized enterprises, but it has not.

We want to hear a plan. The government has lurched from crisis to crisis on trade, tariffs, NAFTA, canola with China and pork with China. Enough with the crises. We want a plan. As an effective opposition, that is what we will do.

Government Orders

•(1220)

I have already said that this violates WTO safeguard regulation, but it also violates the ruling of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal from April, our own rules-based order. I would refer to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The trade tribunal did say that there was “serious injury” with respect to the dumping or import of heavy plate and stainless steel wire. However, it clearly said that on rebar, energy tubular products, hot-rolled sheet, pre-painted steel and wire rod, there was no serious injury and therefore no need for safeguards.

These may seem like obscure terms to Canadians, but our recommendations today will actually show how we can go with the spirit of the safeguards and also safeguard the jobs and economic activity that depend on these steel products.

I will bring it home for Canadians. Energy tubular products are used in our oil sands, the energy industry in western Canada. There is steel plate that, if we do not have specific imports, will raise the cost of the Champlain Bridge in Quebec by \$1 billion, putting at risk critical public infrastructure. There is also the Muskrat Falls project in Newfoundland and Labrador. I would like to shake out of their slumber the Maritimes and Atlantic members of the Liberal caucus. Do they realize that this project, which is already in huge cost overruns, will potentially be made worse unless there are geographic or steel-specific exemptions? The LNG Canada project, which I believe the Prime Minister took some photos at the launch of, is at risk unless some exemptions or specific regional quota is provided. There is also the Site C dam in British Columbia.

Therefore, critical jobs, economic development and public infrastructure, like the Champlain Bridge, are all potentially at risk economically because of steel that needs to be imported.

We do not make enough of these types of products, such as rebar. We already know of the affordability crisis in Vancouver, the Lower Mainland and Toronto. The construction industry needs rebar for commercial and residential building, and 40% of it in western Canada has been imported from Asia, Taiwan mainly. It will be cut off, and the producers, construction companies and fabricators that use a lot of these types of steel will see their prices go up by more than one quarter. There are real impacts here.

The government cannot rush in all of these bills at the end of Parliament because it messed up its trade strategy for four years. Therefore, we are going to have some recommendations that we want the government to take seriously, because there are thousands of jobs. Let us have a win for the steel producers, fabricators and construction companies by being smart with safeguards and having regional provisions, regional protections and quota allocations.

Let us review the history. The Liberal government came in knowing that the U.S. had issues with the Chinese oversupply and transshipment of steel. In fact, the Obama administration, in 2016, applied tariffs when it introduced the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act and brought up steel duties by 500% on some steel products. We know that the Prime Minister got together with President Obama for another photo-op the other day. We know that bromance. Why did they not start coordinating concerns about

transshipment then? In fact, they did not. Some of the members are waking up now, and I am happy to see that.

In 2017, the U.S. president expressed a direct concern about oversupply and transshipment, and said he would use section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum. What was our response? Absolutely nothing. We know that because of the admission of failure from the finance minister that came on May 30, 2018, when he quietly introduced country-of-origin labelling rules for Chinese steel tracing, which is part of transshipment investigation, hours before section 232 tariffs were applied on Canada. I would remind the member for Malpeque of that.

The U.S. had been asking for this. In fact, the Commerce Secretary has acknowledged that Canada did not work with the U.S. on transshipment concerns; therefore, section 232 tariffs were applied.

•(1225)

Despite the fact that, in 2018, the Prime Minister went to Sault Ste. Marie and a number of other communities and said he had their back because he had a one-month exemption, the Conservatives who were going down to Washington knew that Canada had not made the moves. It had not put in tracing measures, country-of-origin labelling, to take American concerns on transshipments seriously. Therefore, the tariffs were applied. We could have avoided that.

I laugh at the friends who used to call the current Prime Minister the “Trump whisperer”. We have been in a one-sided, bad-outcome relationship with the United States under the Prime Minister, going back to Obama, because transshipment concerns could have taken place back in the Obama administration. I will remind the members that, in June of last year, over a year ago, I asked the minister about this at the trade committee. I referred to the section 232 tariffs and the need for country-of-origin marking and transshipment concerns. The minister dodged my questions for six minutes.

•(1230)

Mr. Adam Vaughan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member opposite is clearly using a prop. He is waving a white flag. The Conservatives are prepared to surrender and he seems to be trying to surrender again. Captain Capitulation can have the floor back.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I did not see a white flag. I am not sure what the hon. member is referring to.

We will go back to the hon. member for Durham.

Government Orders

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, there is a transcript from a year ago, when I questioned the minister on Liberal delays on safeguards. I will send this package to the member from Toronto and to the rest of the Liberal caucus, because they have been asleep. How do I know that? None of them showed up to their own government's briefing on this bill last night. In fact, I found out about it when the Minister of Finance asked me and said there was a briefing. The Liberals did not invite the opposition to the briefing. That is how they have played this from day one.

The minister avoided all my questions on why Canada waited over a year to take U.S. concerns over transshipments seriously. We could have avoided section 232 tariffs. We could have been having this debate on safeguards a year and a half ago, when the Conservatives asked for it, at a time when we could have mitigated some of the impacts of safeguards.

I am going to go through those impacts now, because they are real. They affect jobs in Winnipeg, Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Toronto, Prince Edward Island and wherever that guy is from. They are real because there are fabricators in all communities.

I toured a great fabrication plant, one of the largest employers on Prince Edward Island. It works with Quebec steel companies to bid on and build stairways and parts of construction in Manhattan high-rises. I know the member for Malpeque is proud of those jobs, as am I. These are all affected by poor Liberal decisions on trade policy and will be impacted by Bill C-101.

What the Conservatives want to see is mitigating the impact. We want to see western Canadian fabricators and critical public infrastructure projects like Muskrat Falls, Site C, LNG Canada and the Champlain Bridge protected by regional allocation of quota. We want to make sure that the Champlain Bridge does not cost \$1 billion or \$2 billion more as a result of this bill. That can be done, and it can be WTO-compliant through TRQs, regional allocation of quota for critical industry, because western Canada cannot get steel from Hamilton to Sault Ste-Marie. It is uneconomical to ship it there. We do not make enough rebar and other critical elements of plate that we need. They need to import, so let us give tariff allocation where it is needed, for example in Newfoundland and Quebec. We are going to recommend that.

We also have recommendations about the \$2 billion the Liberals have collected through tariff-like taxes, through retaliatory tariffs. They said it would go as relief to small and medium-sized businesses impacted by trade disruptions, by section 232. They have not given the money. They have given some loan guarantees to the large steel players. We want to see a commitment to allocate some of those funds to the small and medium players and to address geographic concerns. If so, they will see the Conservatives work with them on Bill C-101, work with them on NAFTA, even though we are not happy with the fact that we are seeing these in the final weeks of Parliament, when the Conservatives have been asking for this for over a year.

Let us review. President Trump was not even inaugurated when the Prime Minister volunteered to renegotiate NAFTA. That was a risk we did not need to take, but when it was taken, the Conservatives put forward suggestions to the government. Let us remember that 98% of Canada's trade access was negotiated by

Conservative governments, including NAFTA, including U.S. free trade. We said, let us put auto forward. Let us put softwood and key agricultural sectors forward as our priorities, because the U.S. trade representative Ambassador Lighthizer and his team had already prepared a list of priorities where the U.S. wanted to go.

The minister's speech at the University of Ottawa addressed none of the issues the U.S. wanted to talk about. The Liberals launched their much-vaunted progressive agenda and they talked about issues related to the Prime Minister's brand, but that had no relation to trade whatsoever. In fact, they did not mention auto and auto part calculation for six months. When they did, we praised them for that and there was progress finally made in the NAFTA discussions.

Mexico took the talks seriously and had 80-plus meetings with White House officials. It had a deal done before Canada did. That should trouble Canadians. The government virtue-signalled, as I call it, and put its own electoral ambitions ahead of the national interest. That should trouble Canadians.

• (1235)

That is why, in the final days of Parliament, we have the two most substantive economic pieces of this Parliament being rushed through in ways and means motions. It is because of incompetence. The section 232 tariffs were completely avoidable if, going back to President Obama, we had taken concerns about Chinese transshipments seriously. They were avoidable if we had taken NAFTA seriously and had put forward the auto sector, which was always going to be critical, and if we had put in softwood lumber and tried to deal with that constant generational issue that is now hurting our western producers, and if we had put in agriculture and started punching back at the administration's claims about subsidies through our supply management system. The U.S. spends more on agricultural subsidies than we do on our military. I did not hear the government pushing back on that.

The Liberals were talking about the progressive agenda with a president who they know was not quite progressive. They totally misaligned our interests. That is why Mexico, which had a weaker position going in, got a deal before Canada did. We had to scramble to try to be an add-on to that deal.

The same thing happened with tariffs. Mexico was ahead. That is why I am happy that the Conservatives collaborated. We told the ambassador that we were going down. The member for Prince Albert and I, in one day, were invited to a caucus meeting and met more members of Congress than the government did in the previous year to talk about section 232 relief.

Government Orders

I have talked about some of the ways we can work with the government on Bill C-101. To fix the issues that are missed, to mitigate, we are proposing an amendment to make this bill better.

I move, seconded by the member for Oshawa:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

the House decline to give second reading to Bill C-101, An Act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act, because it fails to:

- a. take into consideration regional disparities in industry needs, specifically, that domestic producers only minimally supply certain steel products to British Columbia, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador;
- b. add a geographic exclusion, either exempting British Columbia, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador from the proposed safeguards or allocating a dedicated share of the regional quota to British Columbia, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador;
- c. stipulate specific tariff and trade disruption relief to steel fabricators;
- d. mandate that the funds collected through retaliatory tariffs on the United States go to support small and medium-sized Canadian steel and aluminum fabricators and retailers impacted by the application of the retaliatory tariffs; and
- e. grant specific product exclusions for certain steel products that are not produced in commercial quantities in Canada to avoid the negative economic impact of safeguards on critical public infrastructure projects like the Champlain Bridge, the Muskrat Falls Hydroelectric Dam, the Site C Dam, and projects of national economic importance like LNG Canada.

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I wonder if you could direct the Sergeant-at-Arms to have whoever is having conversations outside the chamber to quiet down, because they are extremely loud at this point. We cannot hear anything on the floor.

• (1240)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I thank the member for bringing that up. That is exactly where I was going before the point of order came up. We will have to have some discussions about banning all traffic in the back unless the people are with an MP who can control the people or the volume of the people he or she is with.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I too would like to acknowledge the significance of the 75th anniversary of D-Day and pay tribute to those 14,000-plus soldiers who contributed so we would have the types of freedoms we have in Canada. I appreciate the member making reference to that at the beginning of his remarks and want to echo those comments. We will make sure we never forget and continue to pay tribute to the women and men who serve us day in, day out in our forces.

Having said that, I am a bit taken aback by the Conservative Party's approach in regard to this tariff. At the end of the day, with the support of Canadians and industry, the Government of Canada was successful at bringing this thing to a conclusion. It will be protecting literally thousands of jobs in different regions of our country. This is a good-news piece of legislation.

I ask the member across the way to recognize good legislation when he sees it and to support it. Recognizing the importance of the jobs that would be protected within this legislation, does he agree that it is time to attempt to pass this legislation before the session winds up? Does he support that?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I am glad we can recognize this special day today.

We have said from the outset of the NAFTA negotiations and the risks to tariffs that we want to work with the government. In fact, our amendments would mitigate against some of the negative impacts of this legislation. The reason we are putting it in an amendment is that when we asked for this safeguard debate over a year ago, the government did not comply. In fact, as I said, a day before tariffs were applied, the finance minister finally put tracing mechanisms in place in response to U.S. concerns about transshipment.

The government has been lurching from crisis to crisis. We are now at the final weeks of Parliament, and now it has a proposed solution to the latest crisis. What we are suggesting is some improvements to recognize critical regional infrastructure projects and jobs in western Canada. We can mitigate against the impacts with some modest amendments.

That member knows that the Liberals have collected in the range of \$2 billion in tariffs from Canadian companies, such as retailers and steel producers that needed to fabricate U.S. steel to re-export it. They have had to absorb the costs of the trade disruption the government has handed them. We want a commitment that this \$2 billion will go to small and medium-sized enterprises. That is what the Liberals said at the beginning.

The Prime Minister is very good at going to Algoma and putting on a jacket or a hat and making promises. Most of the time he has not come through.

We want to support the Liberals, but we want to see some mitigation aspects. We want to see them recognize the impact this would cause to western Canada, in particular on construction costs for key projects such as Site C, Muskrat Falls, the new Champlain Bridge and LNG Canada. In fact, the fabricators in those projects provide five times or more the number of jobs of the steel producers, so let us try for a win-win.

They are not used to a single win in this Parliament. Let us try for a win-win.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Durham made some very good points. I think he would agree with me that the government has made a real mess of this file. It is putting jobs at risk right across our country.

Does the member agree that it is imperative for the government to impose safeguards immediately following the passage of this legislation? This is something the steel workers and the steel producers are united in asking the government to do.

• (1245)

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain and I are in full agreement on his definition of the Liberals' handling of this. He used the term "mess". I agree wholeheartedly. We in the Conservative caucus want to stand up for the members of that union, and not just workers in and around Hamilton, but also others.

Government Orders

I am not sure if the member is on the trade committee, but he might know that a year ago Conservatives asked the minister about safeguards. We knew that it was critical to have this debate to find out how we could apply safeguards but mitigate against some of the real impacts on fabricators, on critical infrastructure projects and on western Canada in particular. The member would know, because the union members in his riding are akin to some of the pipeline workers and union members in western Canada, that those industries are suffering. We do not need to pile yet another economic challenge on top of that.

Our modest proposals to the government should be a way of constructively addressing some of the impacts of this big, quick trade action. As I have said, the government knows that it violates the WTO rules. It formed a little Ottawa group to modernize the WTO, and it has lost a lot of credibility on this issue.

Let us try to blunt some of the negative impacts of this legislation. Conservatives have been wanting to have the debate on safeguards for over a year. Let us get it right. I hope the NDP and the Conservatives can both push the Liberals to finally do the right thing.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague to go back to the mitigation that he was speaking about. I have a situation in which small businesses in the recreation area have had to purchase inventory for the coming season because winter is over, but the steel tariffs have increased the cost of carrying an inventory of recreation vehicles, boats, campers and that sort of thing. In this one case that I am looking at, it may not be as much as the greater steel industry, but \$35,000 to one small business is a lot of money. I would like the member to expand on what he thinks we could do.

In his speech and in answers to questions, he mentioned the \$2 billion that the government has obtained from the tariffs that it imposed, but I want to follow up on it again with regard to mitigation and how we could best convince the government to make it part of an amendment and move it forward before we pass this legislation.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I have had the fortune of being in the riding of the member for Brandon—Souris and know he has a great relationship with the chamber and a lot of businesses, and those are real concerns. The aluminum recreational boat industry has been hammered, and Conservatives have raised this issue in the House.

I have talked about the Junkin family in my riding at LakeView Marine in Port Perry. It now has stranded inventory. It has some inventory for which it had to absorb the cost of the tariffs, but consumers now know the tariffs are off, so how is it going to deal with this stranded inventory that it paid tariffs on? Some of that \$2-billion fund that the government has collected could be put toward that. That is all Conservatives are asking on that front.

That would help in Brandon, that would help in Port Perry and that would also help fabricators like Mielke Industries in the Fraser Valley and in areas like Abbotsford and Chilliwack. There are a lot of fabricators in western Canada that have imported steel to fabricate into world-leading products. They are some of our best exporters, but they are now becoming uncompetitive because of the trade disruption that happened because we could not avoid the section 232 tariffs the way Australia and South Korea did.

The government has put them in a place where they are uncompetitive. Let us use the \$2 billion the government has collected to provide some relief, to make sure they do not lose international contracts and to make sure small businesses—family-owned, in many cases—in Brandon and Durham do not have a loss this year and next.

The government promised that small and medium-sized enterprises would be helped by this relief, but we have seen none of it. Time is running out.

The government will see Conservatives co-operate if it addresses these geographic and small and medium-sized business issues. We have given it some ways to do that. It could also help provinces like Newfoundland and Labrador or Quebec with the Champlain Bridge. Our recommendations are not only effective but modest. We can make this bill better. Let us all get on the same page by addressing the shortcomings of this bill quickly so we can pass it and remain competitive.

● (1250)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill C-101, an act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act.

The bill looks to repeal subsections 55(5) and 55(6), thereby eliminating the two-year waiting period on the imposition of provisional safeguards. I am somewhat pleased to see the government finally taking this good first step to protecting Canadian steel producers and the hard-working people employed in the industry.

The NDP will support the bill as it will temporarily help the steel industry, but the government should never have let the deadline go by without imposing permanent safeguard measures, which the NDP has been calling on for years. When the finance minister allowed the safeguard deadline to pass in April, he placed workers and business at great risk. Now he is temporarily changing the timeline through legislation.

However, let me be very clear. The NDP is adamant that we see this measure as only a small step and it absolutely must be followed by the imposition of, at the very least, provisional safeguards over the five remaining unprotected product categories of the seven listed by the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, also known as the CITT.

These measures must also protect and stabilize the Canadian steel industry over the long term. Having worked in the steel industry for 35 years and representing a community in which the steel industry plays a large part in the economy, I have a very personal interest in this issue along with other workers.

For the past three and a half years, we have tried to deal with this and many other issues facing the steel industry through the ineffective and Liberal-dominated all-parliamentary steel caucus. The commitment of the government to the work of that committee has been disappointing and half-hearted at best.

Government Orders

The measures in the bill also seem half hearted. While these provisional safeguards are satisfactory, we in the NDP have been calling on the government and the Minister of Finance to put permanent safeguard measures in place for well over a year. This would, of course, provide more stability to this already shaken and targeted industry.

Like so many things the government does, this bill, its reaction to the tariffs imposed by the Americans on the Canadian steel and aluminum industry and the issue of the dumping of foreign steel into the Canadian market, has half measures at best.

Speaking of half measures, by taking away the two-year waiting period, the bill would only allow the government to put into place temporary and somewhat superficial protections for unprotected steel product categories listed by the CITT. We will be watching and fighting to ensure the government follows the legislation up with real action. Our steel industry and workers deserve real solutions to the predatory pricing efforts of steel importers worldwide.

For years, the NDP has urged the government to address the very real problem of cheap steel imports directly and/or indirectly entering the North American market, including the provision of increased resources to the CBSA to allow them to investigate and respond to the increased dumping of steel products. In our view, Canada cannot be a dumping ground for foreign steel or be a back door to the American market.

It must also be recognized that, while the U.S. has dropped section 232 tariffs on Canadian steel, tariffs remain on other steel producing countries. That leaves Canada vulnerable to surges of foreign steel heading through Canada to the U.S. market. This is a dangerous position that must not be tolerated.

However, please allow me to take a step back and provide some context for why this is such an important issue.

Canadian steel producers generate over \$14 billion in annual sales, while supporting over 22,000 direct jobs and over 100,000 indirect jobs. All of this is done through 19 facilities across five different provinces. The production of steel acts as an anchor for a much larger supply chain of secondary manufacturing companies in fabrication, construction, automotive and many other sectors throughout the Canadian economy.

I know that in the greater Hamilton area, the steel industry provides over 10,000 direct jobs and supports an estimated 30,000 secondary jobs.

• (1255)

In Sault Ste. Marie, the steel industry is anchored by Algoma Steel and Tenaris Algoma Tubes. These two companies alone directly account for over 41% of the community's gross domestic product. About 30% of their workforce are directly and secondarily employed in the steel sector. That is over 9,000 jobs.

In the Windsor-Essex region, Atlas Tube, which is located in Harrow, Ontario, employs 220 workers and exports over \$250 million of product each year. It is interesting to point out that Atlas Tube is the most efficient producer of structural steel in the world.

EVRAZ is another steel company and it employs over 1,800 people in western Canada, including in the pipe mill in Regina.

It is also interesting to note that the Canadian steel industry is a world leader in labour and environment standards, something of which we should all be proud.

Dumping is a form of predatory pricing when a country exports its product below the market price, driving out competition and creating a global monopoly. Many of these foreign companies are able to offer lower prices precisely because of their lack of environmental or labour regulations.

We have been after the government for years to provide protection against the dumping of foreign steel. The Canadian Steel Producers Association has repeatedly asked the government to be proactive in finding solutions to the dumping steel issue, which has hurt the steel industry across the board. The government only took action, and temporary action at that, in reaction to the tariffs imposed by Donald Trump on the Canadian steel and aluminum industries.

We were given a heads-up almost the first year of this session. The government kept saying it knew what it was doing. However, it all comes down this. What the government did unilaterally became a real mess. It kept having to fix its mistakes, as more and more were made. Now we are debating the bill today.

That is clearly not good enough. The Liberals should have put permanent safeguards in place as soon as they came into power. They knew then that the illegal dumping of dirty steel into Canada was a major concern for our steel industry.

In April, the government decided to allow the safeguards in place to expire on imports of five types of steel products. Because of current legislation, those safeguards cannot be restored for two years, regardless of potential threats to Canada's steel sector. The legislation we are considering today would allow the government to waive the two-year waiting period and impose the safeguards again. That is a good thing, but it is not nearly enough.

It is always interesting to gauge the response to government legislation through those who will be affected.

Ken Neumann, national director of the United Steelworkers, had this to say:

We hope the legislation announced today will be passed swiftly in Parliament, before the summer recess. In the meantime, Canadian workers and producers need an unequivocal commitment from the federal government that it will implement safeguards or other strong measures to defend our industry.... The government must signal that it is prepared to retroactively apply safeguards or other measures to protect Canada's steel sector from potential surges in imports.... These safeguards or other measures must be reintroduced to stabilize Canada's steel sector and defend Canadian workers and producers from surges in foreign imports.

Government Orders

With respect to surges, one thing was very concerning for many producers across Canada. Although they wanted the tariffs lifted, they did not want them traded off for a quota system that would stop the growth of the steel industry in Canada. The government said that it listened to this and said it did not have quotas. However, it has what are called “surges”, to offset concerns. The government believed that since it did not use the word quota, it could fool producers by saying it had surges. However, I think surges is just another name for quotas. We are not sure what surges actually means.

Recently, the United Steelworkers asked the government to use sections 53 and 55 of the Customs Tariff, which gives the federal cabinet the authority to respond to tariffs as well as act against countries participating in dumping. For example, the government can apply a surtax to any goods that are being imported under such conditions as to cause or threaten serious injury to domestic producers. The Liberal government declined.

● (1300)

Interestingly, the United Steelworkers also recently sent a letter to the government, detailing its concerns about the new North American free trade deal. In that letter, it addresses concerns about the steel industry. It says, “The USMCA should never have been signed absent the removal of steel and aluminum tariffs. While we are happy that the tariffs have finally been removed, we are concerned with some of the details in the agreement to remove the tariffs: The ability of the U.S. to legally apply new tariffs if there is a surge of imports about the historical average.” Is that quotas or is that all of a sudden a bigger supply? “The lack of measures to protect and stabilize the Canadian steel market leaves us vulnerable to import surges. This threatens not only the domestic Canadian industry, but also leaves us vulnerable to the reimposition of tariffs; Our ability to respond to tariffs if they are imposed. Canada will be limited in its response and only able to impose counter tariffs on the same products; this limits our ability to impose counter tariffs that are proportional but based on products that are actually produced in the U.S.” It says, “We believe that the USMCA should not be ratified until the details of the tariff agreement are finalized. We must ensure that we do not agree to provisions that allow for the re-impositions of tariffs or that are, in effect, a quota.”

Catherine Cobden, president of the Canadian Steel Producers Association, also commented on the legislation, saying:

Today’s announcement by [the finance minister] represents an important step to ensuring Canada can respond swiftly to changes in global steel markets caused by overcapacity and trade actions taken by other jurisdictions. Safeguard measures are an important trade tool for preventing diversion of foreign imports into Canada’s domestic steel market. The Canadian steel producers believe these trade measures continue to be necessary in today’s global context.

Roger Paiva, general manager of Gerdau steel in Whitby, had this to say, “We seek your support to extend the Government of Canada’s provisional steel safeguards. The safeguards have stabilized the Canadian rebar market. They are securing middle-class jobs in your riding and beyond. They are growing the economy while protecting the environment. Please show your support for good steel jobs, and please encourage [the finance minister] to extend the safeguards.”

Finally, Francis Miner from Ivaco near Hawksbury, says:

The European Union and a number of other jurisdictions have recently implemented safeguards on steel products following restrictions to the US market

caused by the section 232 tariffs. Without safeguards Canada will stand alone, and the domestic steel industry will be heavily exposed to large volumes of low-priced imports being diverted into the country. This places Canadian producers at a significant competitive disadvantage and thousands of jobs at risk.... Without the extension of a safeguard measure on wire rod, market conditions for producers in Canada will deteriorate further.

I totally agree with him on the wire rod. That was my business for 35 years. We took wire rods and made wire anywhere from as thin as a hair to an inch and a half. It would be used for ball joints or car parts, such as steering wheel rods. They made it into fencing. They made it into all kinds of different things. We were a big market, but with the tariffs and the safeguards, there was nothing. It really hurt our competitive edge in Hamilton.

It is clear that Canada’s steel sector still faces daunting challenges. Canada cannot continue as one of the few countries in the world that allows foreign steel to flood into its markets. The federal government must protect our producers and our workers.

I have spoken with many workers from the steel industry, from across the country and many in my own community. They are all feeling some sense of insecurity. While they are all happy the tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum were finally dropped, many of them do not trust the government on this issue.

When the Prime Minister visited Stelco to make the announcement the tariffs were being dropped, one of the workers asked him what he had to give up to get the tariffs lifted. He did not answer the question. As we have heard in recent reports, this could have been more than what the government first let on.

I am told that the mood among the workers at Stelco is that while they are happy the tariffs have been lifted, they still have a healthy dose of skepticism. Like many workers across the country, they are concerned the government is not tough enough to stand up for them and the steel industry against the U.S. and other countries.

● (1305)

As the president of USW Local 8782 in Nanticoke pointed out recently, one would think the government in Ottawa would have the interest and common sense to protect Canadian interests and the industry, but that is apparently not the case.

Government Orders

In closing, I would like to say that I listened to the comments from the member for Durham and I agree with the suggestion that we should all work together on this. All parties should work together. We have found that the government cannot do this unilaterally. It has made too many mistakes. We have to make sure we get this right, to protect not only the Canadian industry but our Canadian workers. We can only do that by working together. Therefore, I encourage all members to join the same team and work as hard as we can.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member's very last comment with respect to a team. There has been a team effort by this government from day one in trying to address the very important issue of steel and aluminum tariffs. It is something that has had a profound impact on workers in different regions of our country. That is one of the reasons we have members of Parliament from within our caucus, led by our Prime Minister and ministers, working with the many different stakeholders, going out and visiting some of these plants first-hand and talking to the workers to look at the industry and continue to have the dialogue, which was absolutely critical.

Canada is not alone with respect to what has been taking place with these tariffs. I am pleased we have been able to take it to the point we have, where we now have this legislation. I hope that over the next period of time we will see the legislation pass, because it will provide some additional certainty. We owe it to the workers to do what we can.

Does the member across the way not agree that one of the ways we can jointly support our thousands of workers in Canada, who are so dependent on providing those quality steel and aluminum products, is by recognizing it and ensuring that this legislation passes before we rise in the next week or so?

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question, because I believe we should all work together. I can only tell the member that I am not on the trade committee; I am on the all-party committee for the steel caucus. However, I know of some of the problems that came up on the trade committee with listening to people's amendments and trying to get stuff going. It seems the government took the unilateral approach of listening but not doing anything. It took it its own way, and that is why we are where we are today.

I truly believe that if we all work together, listen to each other, accept those proposals and adopt them, because they are good amendments, we can all come up with a great agreement that would be far better than anyone could do alone.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, the place where I was born. I have to say that I still have that steel guy inside me. In my community of Oshawa, steel is so important for the auto sector. He mentioned a friend of mine, Roger Paiva, from Gerdau Ameristeel Corporation, and how important the steel and aluminum sector is to my community.

Earlier on, the member mentioned the uncertainty and the mess the current government has created, and I am extremely concerned. I know both our communities are very happy this bill is being debated in the final days of the current government. It is a very important issue.

My colleague from Durham spoke about how this is something the bigger companies want to see moved forward as quickly as possible, but for regional suppliers, fabricators and different communities there needs to be something else done. We talked about this \$2 billion the Liberals are sitting on and holding. That could be spread to the companies that are going to be so negatively affected, especially if we go forward and implement this bill as is.

In order to decrease the uncertainty out there, I was wondering if the NDP would be supporting our amendment, which my colleague from Durham read into the record. He said he agreed with my colleague from Durham. Because there is such a short period of time, we do not have the time to debate this as well as we could. Therefore, could he give us some certainty and let Canadians know if the NDP will be supporting our amendment, which would make this better by working together?

• (1310)

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, the amendment was just put on, and it is going so fast that I have not seen it on paper. I think there would be some great points in there, and I would like to have our party investigate that to make sure we are all on the same page, dotting the i's and crossing the t's, before we take a position on whether or not we are going to support it.

We need more time to look at it and study it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for his speech and his tireless efforts to defend the steel sector and steel workers. I also want to mention the work done by our colleague from Essex on this file. This sector and the quality jobs involved are very important to the NDP.

After waiting for far too long, the government is taking a step in the right direction, but is taking only half measures and temporary measures. The federal government should follow the European Union's lead and establish permanent safeguards for, among others, seven steel products threatened by dumping, which could harm the stability of Canada's steel sector.

If Europe can do it, why can't we?

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, we too are trying to find out why we did not take that position.

I can only say that the all-party steel caucus was meeting at the beginning of this four-year term, and we have not met in over a year. No information was going back and forth. Many requests were made to meet and discuss certain issues, to see if we could come up with something and to see where we could make recommendations. However, those requests failed. The Liberals wanted to keep waiting and see what was going to happen.

The answer is that I do not know.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his intervention today and for bringing up the importance of steel to Sault Ste. Marie. We have Algoma, Tenaris and all the other ones. It is 41% of our GDP. It is absolutely massive and critical.

Government Orders

Would the member join us in calling on the Conservatives to move forward with what we are proposing today? After all, the leader of the opposition said on May 29 that he would put safeguards in place.

Would you agree that the question is, “What is the holdup?” Will you call on the opposition to join us in moving forward expeditiously?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to remind the hon. members to place their questions through the Chair, not directly to the other side.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is one of the co-chairs of the all-party steel caucus.

As I said previously, they made some good points. What they are offering is to work together and get into a room, even if we have to do it tonight, to understand what they are talking about and to see how we could work together to move forward, working as fast as we can to have this implemented.

There is a concern for all the parties in this House that the Canadian steel sector and its jobs are very important. It is too bad it has taken this long to figure this part out. I think progress is being made on what the government is proposing. I also think that maybe there is some additional stuff that could be put in there to make this even better.

My answer is working together, but I would still want to investigate what the actual amendments are before I take a position on that.

• (1315)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of serving on the all-party steel caucus with the member for Hamilton Mountain. I would just invite him to speak to the role of the all-party steel caucus in advocating for appropriate safeguards for our steel industry.

Mr. Scott Duvall: Mr. Speaker, we have a very interesting committee. We listen to all the different views from all regions and share with other members what we know about the steel industry. I want to thank the member, because he has provided some valuable information to help us out.

It is very important that we sit and listen to each other. I thought we were doing very good work until the last year and a half, when we did not have any type of meeting at all, even though there were many requests. It was as if we were not an all-party caucus but just a government caucus.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to join my colleagues in saying how honoured and privileged I am to stand here, particularly on D-Day, when those who went before us paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect our democracy so that we could have this important discussion today. There are a few vets left. One is tail gunner Dick Brown, from Sault Ste. Marie, whom I had the privilege and honour of speaking with on Friday, before he left on Sunday, to hear about his remarkable service. I want to thank him and all veterans, those who are living and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for what they did.

Today I stand to talk about the important proposed legislative changes that would amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act. The goal of this legislation is

simple. It would temporarily remove the two-year moratorium on the imposition of safeguard measures for products that were recently subject to safeguards.

Before I go on, I would like to indicate that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

The legislation would give the government the flexibility it needs to respond quickly and appropriately to situations where a substantial surge of imports could do harm to Canadian producers and workers. Together, these measures would give the government the tools it needs to stabilize Canada's steel market and, if needed, to further protect Canadian steelworkers and producers from global instability and surges in imports that could be harmful to Canada's economy.

Canada's steel and aluminum sector is an important part of our economy. It provides thousands of good middle-class jobs to people and communities across the country, including those in Sault Ste. Marie. Members have heard about its importance. It accounts for over 41% of Sault Ste. Marie's GDP. That is why, for those workers and those communities, our government has always taken strong action to stand up for these industries.

I remind people that in budget 2016, in black and white, we made changes to strengthen Canada's trade responses to dumped steel. Further, we consulted, and in 2017, we made more changes on market distortion, scoping, duty circumvention and union participation.

In 2018, we put more dollars into fighting dumped steel, and it is working. We put more money into our borders. We have specialized agents who work for the Canada Border Services Agency. They are forensic people who can fight and stop the dumping. We made changes that created one of the greatest strengthened trade regimes in the world.

During one of our meetings, either at the trade committee, the industry committee or the all-party steel caucus, I asked one of the people from the Canadian Steel Producers Association what would have happened if we had not put those in place, with what was happening with the section 232 tariffs. His remark was that, quite simply, the steel industry would have been devastated.

I am glad that from day one, just a couple of months after we were elected, we had the steelworkers' backs. Further strengthening happened when we stood firm and did not back down. I am proud to say that on May 17, when Canada and the U.S. announced that they would eliminate their tariffs and countermeasures within two days, it was the culmination of a lot of work we had undertaken over those years, in particular in the year before, when we announced dollar for dollar trade retaliation, not only on steel and aluminum but on a number of items.

Government Orders

I was in Washington recently with the trade committee. We took a team Canada approach. We had Conservatives, New Democrats and Liberals with us. We met with many people, and we could see in their body language how it was affecting them. Although we had a NAFTA in principle, we were not going to sign it until those tariffs were lifted. It worked quite well. Part of what we did to protect the steel market at the time, when the Americans announced their tariffs, was announce that we were imposing provisional steel safeguards for a period of 200 days to help stabilize the market and protect against surges of foreign steel into Canada.

On April 26, 2019, after the Canadian International Trade Tribunal found that final safeguards were warranted for heavy plate and stainless steel wire, the government announced its intent to enact safeguards on these products.

● (1320)

While we have been working hard, and continue to, to make our steel and aluminum industries even more successful, because they create good, well-paying middle-class jobs, we have also been focused on making sure that Canada has a solid system in place for addressing unfair trade. Therefore, we have effected a very important trade remedy system that provides recourse for Canadian producers harmed by unfair trade imports. Under this system, Canadian producers can request that duties be applied on dumped or subsidized goods sold in the Canadian marketplace.

I reiterate that since 2016, our government has taken several steps to modernize and strengthen Canada's trade remedy system to ensure that Canadian companies can compete on a level playing field with foreign exporters. This was informed by public consultation. Our government implemented a package of measures, which I have referred to, to strengthen the trade remedy system. It has been extremely effective.

Our government made legislative and regulatory changes to improve the trade remedy measures addressing the circumvention of duties, to better account for market and price distortions and to provide unions with the ability to participate in trade remedy proceedings. In fact, the president of Tenaris was here with Evraz steelworkers to provide testimony in a case. It was so effective that we won, and I thank the United Steelworkers for participating in that particular case.

We have been speaking today about the importance of the steel and aluminum industries. We have a very integrated market between the United States and Canada. It is perfect. We create steel and aluminum on both sides of the border that are put into the supply chain downstream for the auto, manufacturing and energy sectors. That is why we continue to look at how to diversify to new markets.

Last year, our government launched the export diversification strategy, which has the ambitious goal of growing Canada's overseas exports by 50% by 2025. We are investing more than \$1 billion over the next six years to make this happen.

The strategy will focus on three components: investing in infrastructure to support trade; providing Canadian businesses with resources to execute their export plans; and enhancing trade services for Canadian exporters.

Let me very quickly touch on one component of the export diversification strategy: how we are helping Canadian businesses export and grow. While Canada has had success in gaining preferential access to key markets via trade deals, more needs to be done to ensure that Canadian firms take full advantage of international growth opportunities.

Last year, to put more resources directly in the hands of Canadian businesses seeking to develop export plans, build global partnerships or gain skills and training for global trade, the government announced investments of \$198 million over six years. This includes \$50 million over five years to support businesses, including in the steel, aluminum and manufacturing industries, in diversifying their exports, including with new export readiness grants. This funding is going to support CanExport and related funding programs. These are tools that are absolutely critical as we penetrate the new European and Asian markets. Our new agreements have created this opportunity.

In conclusion, the measures I have been speaking about clearly show that our government has been listening closely to the industries and unions most affected by trade disputes and global market distortions. It is clear that we need the flexibility to take necessary actions to protect Canadian industries and workers. Today's amendments would help do just that. Canadian workers and industries deserve a level playing field, and we have an opportunity before us today to make sure it gets done.

We will continue to stand up for our workers and our industries and do what is needed to preserve the fair and open trading environment they depend on. I urge all members to support this important legislation expeditiously. The steelworkers are counting on us.

● (1325)

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, I have had the honour of serving with the member for Sault Ste. Marie on the all-party steel caucus.

As I think we all understand in this House, the legislation we are debating today would remove the moratorium, which would allow the government to bring in safeguard measures. I am wondering if he could provide some reassurance that the government's intention is to actually bring in those safeguards to protect Canada's steel industry and steelworkers from unfair competition from offshore steel, often produced in violation of internationally recognized labour and environmental standards.

Government Orders

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's contributions to the all-party steel caucus. We have had a number of face-to-face meetings and teleconferences over the last year as we have been updating various actions this government has been taking in relation to protecting steelworkers.

Part of what the member was talking about was the environment. We know that Canadian steel is better for the environment. This is something the member made a point of in the all-party steel caucus. When Canadian steel is used in our infrastructure, there is less of a carbon footprint. It is better in fighting against climate change when we use Canadian steel in our own infrastructure programs.

Quite frankly, we were quick to act in putting safeguards on seven products last year. The CITT came out with a ruling supporting two of them. There are five left. If there were surges that the CITT did not indicate were there, this legislation would allow the government to move expeditiously to stop any surge that may occur. That is why it is critical. It is a tool in the toolbox we have to have just in case.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if what the government is proposing were implemented, would there be a time when those safeguards would expire? Would there be an automatic expiry date, or could we leave them on for as long as we wanted?

Mr. Terry Sheehan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his earlier intervention pointing out the importance of the steel industry to not only Hamilton but to Sault Ste. Marie and Canada, with 123,000 direct and indirect jobs that support not only the workers but the pensioners who rely on the viability of the steel industry.

The proposed legislative amendments would create a timeframe in which if the surge happened, we would be able to utilize it over the next couple of years. One of the things I have found in my role representing the good people of Sault Ste. Marie is that we have to be nimble, we have to be quick and we have to be constantly looking at the industry.

One of the people presenting at the all-party steel caucus said that these are not our grandparents' steel mills. They are new and modern. There are a lot of changes. What is happening in the world, with so many market changes and shifts, is that we have to keep our ability to be nimble and to constantly review.

I am proud of this government, because it continues to consult and consult broadly. It is not done here in Ottawa. The government reaches out from coast to coast to coast to the steelworkers, the aluminum workers and the industries in B.C., Ontario, out east and in Quebec.

● (1330)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House.

As has been mentioned, we are commemorating D-Day events today. Many of us regret that we are not able to be in our communities. There were events held last night in Hamilton, and today as well, but the second-best place to be is here in Parliament, where it has been said that the men and women who made those sacrifices so many years ago have allowed us to be here to debate and discuss the issues of the day.

I would point out that in 1944, the honorary flagship of the Canadian Navy, HMCS *Haida*, which is now in Hamilton, was part of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla, which had the job of clearing the English Channel of German ships ahead of D-Day. The *Haida* also participated in testing radar-jamming technology to confuse the Germans when D-Day was unfolding.

On the topic of steel, there was no armour plate made in Canada until 1941, when Dofasco, which is now ArcelorMittal Dofasco, created the armour plate division. That armour plate division made 100% of all the armour plate used by the Canadian military in preparing its vehicles and vessels for wartime, so the steel industry has a proud history of supporting the military. Also, many of those steelworkers actually enlisted, and there are many monuments in our Hamilton steel mills, such as Stelco, National Steel Car, Dofasco and so on, for those former employees who gave their lives in the service of their country.

I am pleased to now move on to the topic of the day, which is the legislation before us.

Our government has a proven record, I would say, of broadening and deepening Canada's global trading relationships. The new connections that we are forging with the world are helping Canadian business to succeed and grow and create more well-paying jobs, delivering the strong economic growth that benefits all Canadians. It is an important part of our plan to strengthen and grow the middle class, and I can say with confidence that this plan is working.

With the successful conclusion of the Canada-United States-Mexico agreement as well as the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, Canada is now the only G7 country to have free trade agreements with all other G7 nations. Canada now has comprehensive free trade agreements with countries representing two-thirds of the world's total GDP, and that is over one billion potential new customers.

Our government's commitment to free trade with economies around the world, including those in emerging markets, will help to further strengthen and grow the middle class and deliver long-term economic growth that benefits all Canadians. Canadian businesses are ideally positioned to benefit from the advantages that we have secured through trade, being located next to the world's largest economy to the south, as well as having close historic and economic ties to Europe to the east and deepening connections to the fast-growing Asia-Pacific nations in the west.

To make the most of these opportunities, our government is working tirelessly to support open, fair and rules-based trade arrangements with the world, but that does not mean that we can turn a blind eye to the reality that there are very real challenges to fair and open trade that are playing out around the world, including here at home. Canadian workers, communities and industries have seen the negative effects that come about when there are significant disruptions in global trade, including those that affect our steel and aluminum industries.

Government Orders

As the son of a steelworker and the grandson of steelworker, and as a former full-time steelworker myself, I can attest to the impact of steel on the lives of Canadians. In my city, steel helped build our universities, hospitals, art galleries and concert halls. It paid tuition fees for thousands of students, and it continues to pay retirees' pensions. Steel pays our city millions of dollars in taxes and more millions in charitable donations.

• (1335)

For Canada, steel provides thousands of good, well-paying jobs and serves as an important source of products used by other major industries, including energy, advanced manufacturing, construction and auto manufacturing, so when steel markets are disrupted and steel is diverted into the Canadian market, the damage ripples right through our economy. It hurts businesses and it hurts people.

In the face of this threat, it is critical for the government to have the tools and resources it needs to protect Canadians while continuing to encourage foreign investment, trade and economic growth. The legislation we are discussing today would provide this protection. By removing the two-year moratorium on the imposition of safeguard measures on steel, these proposed amendments would provide additional flexibility for the government to respond quickly and appropriately to a substantiated surge of imports harming, or potentially harming, Canadian producers and workers.

With today's legislation, the government is proposing that the amendments only be in effect for two years. They are intended to be temporary, as we hope the current global environment of trade distortions will be. Moreover, the conditions for the application of safeguards under the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act and the Customs Tariff would remain unchanged and would still need to be met in order for any new safeguard measures to be put in place.

Today's legislation would build on the actions our government has already taken to defend the competitiveness of Canadian business and the strength of our economy, pushing back against market-distorting practices that originate beyond our borders.

We recently announced an intensive 30-day consultation period with industry and workers to determine further protections that may be required. These include actions in a number of key areas, such as conducting timely and targeted reviews of dumping cases to boost protections through higher duties to ensure Canadian companies are not at an unfair disadvantage with foreign competitors.

We are looking to introduce a more robust steel import regime with a view to strengthening import data, including product quantity, type and origin information. This will improve our ability to monitor import surges, assess evidence of transshipment and be more responsive to sudden changes in trading patterns.

We are looking to introduce greater flexibility for the Canada Border Services Agency to address price and cost distortions in foreign markets when determining whether dumping has occurred. Our government is also ensuring flexible and responsive support for domestic producers through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and its agencies. These actions are all part of a broad and sustained effort to help our steel and aluminum producers in light of global challenges. This includes \$2 billion to defend and protect the interests of Canadian steel, aluminum and manufacturing

industries and their workers, with up to \$250 million in new funding through the strategic innovation fund.

The challenges that these industries face are real and significant. They must be met with strong and decisive action on the part of our government, and that is exactly what we have done and continue to do with the legislation before us today.

Our government's plan to strengthen and grow the middle class is working. The result of our investments in people speak for themselves. Hard-working Canadians have created over one million new jobs, most of them full time. That is the equivalent of almost nine million jobs for an economy the size of the United States or 14 million for an economy the size of the European Union.

We know that there is more to be done so that people can feel secure and confident about their future. We need to make sure the economy works for everyone by finding new markets for Canadian products, making sure our businesses are competitive in the global economy and helping more people to find and keep good jobs. We also need to ensure that these gains are not undermined by surges in imports. The measures contained in today's legislation would give us an effective tool to safeguard Canadians against these challenges.

I will conclude by encouraging and urging all hon. members to support the bill's timely passage through the House accordingly.

• (1340)

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the cause of this legislation has to be placed right at the feet of the Liberal government. It appears that the American government, for over a year, has been pleading with the Canadian government to implement protections to ensure that foreign steel and aluminum is not dumped into Canada, that surges are addressed and that if foreign steel and aluminum enter Canada, they are not transshipped to the United States, undermining the competitiveness of their industry and ours in Canada. It has taken over a year for this legislation to come forward to address the concerns of our American cousins.

Is the member not concerned about that delay? As well, why did that delay happen? This legislation should have happened well over a year ago. Why did it not?

Government Orders

Mr. Bob Bratina: Mr. Speaker, what we were faced with was the sudden, illegal imposition of section 232 tariffs against the greatest ally the United States has. Here we are, celebrating D-Day and all those soldiers working together, and to this day companies in Canada are building parts for American Abrams tanks, so we were confronted with a situation that was unprecedented. We immediately began working to try to change the attitude among the American Congress decision-makers with regard to section 232.

Dumping has been going on for many years, and the question might be thrown back as to why there were no considerations given to the plight of Canadian steel by the previous government.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have known the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for years, and we have worked together in a previous government at city hall.

One of the things that concerns me with this piece of legislation, even though we believe it is a good step forward, is that it is a temporary solution. Is the government ready for a more permanent solution for our future? Is it willing to listen to steelworkers, to sit down and talk to them about finding a way of doing it permanently without throwing them out of the office?

Mr. Bob Bratina: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that when anybody comes to my office, the meetings are held in good faith, but if it comes to a point where I am being described in derogatory terms by those people, the meeting is ended. What I said at that meeting, after being called names, was “This meeting is over”.

To the more important point that my friend is making from across the way, I believe that what we have gone through with the Trump administration with the steel tariff issues and all that really demands that we pay stronger attention to the larger needs of Canadian heavy industry. I would agree that we should have a more robust framework to work together to ensure that the needs of our Canadian workers are met. I would commit to doing that.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to engage in this debate.

This debate is really a story of failed Liberal foreign policy. It is a story of failed Liberal trade policy. It is also a story about the abandonment of Canada's western manufacturers who depend on competitively priced steel and aluminum products.

As with most Liberal ventures, there is always a backstory, a very ugly backstory. In an earlier question, I signalled what that story might be. It is a story of a government that thought it could bluff the Americans. It thought it could get away with not addressing the issue of steel and aluminum dumping, and the U.S. called its bluff. A year ago, the U.S. imposed steel and aluminum tariffs on Canada, its most trusted trading ally.

When has that ever happened? Never. This is a Liberal government that cannot even get its relationship with the United States right. I can speak from experience. I am the former trade minister of Canada. Under our Conservative government, we were able to negotiate free trade agreements with 46 different countries around the world, the most successful trade policy ever implemented in this country. We left the Liberal government with a trade environment that was as good as it gets. There was not a relationship

around the world that we had where we could not go to our counterpart, whether it was the U.S. trade representative or the trade minister for China or Chile or Peru, and resolve important issues, trade irritants between our countries.

Now we have found ourselves in this situation for a whole year. Canada has faced punitive tariffs from the United States, because of the incompetence of the Liberal government. Let me explain.

The present Liberal government thought it could bluff Donald Trump by saying, “I know you are concerned about the dumping of aluminum and steel products into Canada, for example from China, one of the worst offenders when it comes to dumping. I know you are worried about it, Mr. President, but we are going to do nothing about it.” Donald Trump said, “I am not someone who does nothing. I am going to do something about it. I am going to impose tariffs on you, Canada, one of our most trusted allies. I am going to do it under section 232, the national security provisions.”

What an embarrassment that should be for the Liberal government, that this would happen under the Liberal watch. However, that is what happened. For a year, we had American tariffs on any exports that involved aluminum or steel. We can imagine how difficult that has been for our industries.

I am going to speak a little about Abbotsford, my home community, where we have a number of very significant manufacturers that use steel and aluminum to create products for Canadians and for export to the United States and elsewhere around the world. These companies, small to medium-sized businesses, had been expanding.

In fact, one company, Mayne Coatings, a favourite of mine, had chosen Abbotsford as the best place to invest, assuming that under a Liberal government the trade policy of this country would continue on, that it would be a healthy one, and that our relationship with the United States would continue to be healthy. They made those assumptions, quite falsely, of course. They assumed that would carry on, and they invested heavily in Abbotsford. In fact, they built a manufacturing facility worth \$100 million in a small community of 150,000 people. They trusted the Liberal government, and what a mistake that was. No sooner had construction started on this building that Canada was slapped with aluminum and steel tariffs that have seriously undermined the business model for this company.

•(1345)

I feel very sorry for Mayne Coatings and other industries and companies in Abbotsford that trusted the Liberal government. What a misplaced trust that was.

Today we are seeing the tail end of that process. For a year, we suffered under those punitive tariffs, and now finally the Liberal government has woken up to the fact that the Americans expect Canada to address the illegal dumping of steel and aluminum in Canada and to address surges.

Government Orders

The government is finally introducing Bill C-101, which addresses this issue, except it has a number of failings. We have introduced an amendment that highlights the fact that this legislation fails to take into consideration regional disparity. In other words, what happens in British Columbia, where I am from, is quite different from what happens in Ontario and Quebec, where steel and aluminum are produced.

Shipping that aluminum and steel to the west coast does not make any financial sense, so those who manufacture products in my region of the country need to have different rules, which take into account the fact that they have to bring in their steel and aluminum from elsewhere because it is not competitive to do so from central and eastern Canada.

Second, this legislation fails to add a geographic exemption for industries like Mayne Coatings from Abbotsford that are far beyond the reach of our own homegrown Canadian steel and aluminum producers.

Third, this legislation fails to stipulate specific tariff and trade disruption relief for steel fabricators.

The fourth one is the most important one, in my mind, because it is a breach of trust, a breaking of failed promises by the Prime Minister. A promise was made by the Liberal government that it was going to impose retaliatory tariffs on the Americans, which is great. They do it to us; we do it to them. We collect tariffs coming in. What did the Prime Minister promise? He promised that those tariffs would be used to offset the impact of American tariffs on our Canadian manufacturers.

How much did the Liberal government collect? It collected \$2 billion in tariffs. How much of that money has actually gone to the manufacturers across Canada that were impacted by the tariffs the Americans imposed upon us because we would not act on their concerns? How much of that money went to our manufacturers across Canada? Virtually zero. This is another broken promise on the part of the current Prime Minister.

Members may remember that he made a ton of promises. He knew very well from the start, even before the last election, that many of those promises he could not keep. He made them anyway, because he just wanted to get elected. That is disgraceful. We see it playing out now here in Canada with our manufacturers who are suffering the consequences of it.

Two billion dollars were supposed to be dispersed to support our small and medium-sized businesses across Canada, and larger ones, that were all being impacted by this failure of the Liberal government to take care of our bilateral relationship with the United States. The Liberals could not even deliver on that.

I do not hold any ill will toward my Liberal colleagues across the way. They are not disputing the fact that \$2 billion was collected by the Prime Minister, with the understanding that the money would be dispersed among Canadian companies to make sure they did not suffer as a result of the Donald Trump steel and aluminum tariffs. Guess what. It was a broken promise. Every single one of those MPs on the Liberal side is going to be held accountable for that in October. A reckoning is coming on October 21, and that reckoning is going to hold the Liberals to account for their false promises, such as

their promises on balanced budgets, their promises on small deficits—

• (1350)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I am going to interrupt the hon. member for Abbotsford. I am having a hard time hearing him because the members from both sides are shouting at each other so I cannot hear. I am sure everyone wants to hear what the hon. member for Abbotsford has to say.

I will let the hon. member for Abbotsford continue.

• (1355)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, this whole catastrophe, starting with the section 232 tariffs that Donald Trump imposed on Canada under the auspices of national security concerns and all that entailed, the casualties along the way and the companies that went under because of these tariffs, all of that has to be laid at the feet of the current Liberal government and our virtue-signalling Prime Minister, who cannot keep simple promises.

As members know, we are heading into election season, the silly season, and each one of these Liberals will be held to account. However, we can bet our boots the current Prime Minister is already

—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. I want to remind the hon. members that there is a speech being given and shouting across the floor is not going to allow us to hear it. I want to point out that it is coming from both sides. One side is not being blamed over the other.

The hon. member for Abbotsford can continue, so we can hear what he has to say.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member has about four minutes left. Then he will have just over four minutes and 20 seconds left when we return to the debate, as well as 10 minutes of questions.

The hon. member for Abbotsford.

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that you reminded my Liberal colleagues across the way that they should not be heckling something that is a serious matter. I think you, Mr. Speaker, will acknowledge that most of the noise is coming from over there, because they do not want to hear the truth.

The Liberals moved forward with disastrous economic policies that are laying waste to many of our industries. Companies are going under, across Canada, because of tariffs that have been imposed by our largest trading partner.

Statements by Members

I started off by talking about Canada's foreign policy, and I said that the story of these tariffs is about a failed Liberal foreign policy and a failed Liberal trade policy. I mentioned the fact that The Conservatives left our trade relationships around the world in excellent shape. I could call any of my counterparts around the world and say that we have a trade irritant, a trade problem we need to resolve, and, invariably, we could get those issues resolved. Today, no matter where we look, it is a disaster. It is a wasteland of broken trade relationships and burned bridges.

We talked about China earlier. Can the Prime Minister even pick up the phone and call the President of China to try to address the issue of the two Canadians who are held there? He cannot even get him on the phone. Our foreign affairs minister cannot get the Chinese on the phone.

If we look at the Philippines, can the Prime Minister travel to the Philippines today, after sending it garbage and not taking it back on time? If we look at India, do members remember the disaster with the India relationship because our Prime Minister travelled there? We have no diplomatic relationship with Saudi Arabia at all. It is a wasteland of trade relationships.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It was Stephen Harper's garbage that went to the Philippines. We are the government that cleaned it up.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order. The debate will continue with the hon. member for Abbotsford, who will have five minutes and 34 seconds when we come back, and we can come back to a fresh Parliament.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

ROYAL REGINA RIFLES

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, CCF): Mr. Speaker, 75 years ago today, in the largest seaborne invasion in the history of the world, allied soldiers opened another front against Nazi Germany to help liberate occupied Europe.

The first Canadians on the beach were the Royal Regina Rifles. They landed at the most heavily fortified German point on the Anglo-Canadian beaches, facing artillery and 12 machine gun pillboxes.

Two of the regiment's landing craft were destroyed by mines. Fortunately, most of the Regina Rifles made it ashore with support from amphibious tanks. They cleared the beach and captured the port of Courseulles, where the Juno Beach Centre Museum is now located.

Today, Canadians are proud of the role our country played in the allied landings. The people of Regina will always remember what our regiment contributed to this Canadian victory.

● (1400)

NANAKSAR GURDWARA GURSIKH TEMPLE

Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Steveston—Richmond East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple in Richmond is proud to champion health care in our region through its generous donation to help build a new acute care tower at the Richmond Hospital.

The Temple was established in 1979 as a place of worship and gathering for people of the Sikh faith. Followers believe that the purpose of life is to grow closer with God through service to others. Its \$1.3-million donation certainly meets these principles.

To quote Gary Berar from the temple, “We all rely on our local hospital during our days on this earth. It’s a common need that unites us all.”

On behalf of the Richmond community, I want to thank Maharaj Ji, Gary Berar, Jinder Berar and all members of the Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple for their service to our great community.

* * *

MEMBER FOR BATTLE RIVER—CROWFOOT

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after six elections and close to 19 years in the House, it is time for me to leave. While this has been an extremely difficult decision, it is the right decision, as it will allow me to spend more time with my family, especially my new grandson, Kaden.

My wife Darlene, my son Ryan and my daughter Kristen and her husband Matt have patiently and stoically stood by my side since November 2000, when I was first elected. For that and their unwavering support and love, saying “thank you” just would not be enough. I will, over the coming years, try my best to repay such a huge debt of gratitude and make up for lost time.

I thank the people of Battle River—Crowfoot for the faith they placed in me to represent them. I tried my utmost to always respect and truthfully represent their views and concerns in Ottawa. I will miss all their letters, emails and phone calls and our in-person discussions and debates.

I have made many friends during this time, especially in the campaigns. I thank Neil and Leona Thorogood and Bruce and Sylvia Dahl, who are just a few of the many lifelong friends we have made.

* * *

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to celebrate Portuguese Heritage Month.

Cambridge has a strong Portuguese community, with over 10,000 members. Portuguese traditions are deeply woven into the cultural fabric of our community. We celebrate the history, food, music, language and art of the Portuguese community.

I will be in downtown Galt at the Portugal day parade on Saturday at 11 a.m. The festivities will continue at the Portuguese Club into the afternoon. There will be food, activities for kids and entertainment by local artists. I encourage everyone to come out to enjoy the best that Portugal and Cambridge have to offer.

Statements by Members

I want to thank the organizers and the entire Portuguese community for hosting these amazing events and being part of the diverse cultures and people that make up our city. *Obrigado.*

* * *

[Translation]

SUROÏT BEER FESTIVAL

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the association for people with intellectual disabilities in Suroît, known as APDIS, is hosting the fifth annual Festi-Bières festival, which will be held at Delpha-Sauvé park in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield from June 7 to 9. Festival-goers will be able to taste beers, ciders and other drinks, as well as enjoy live music, all for a good cause.

The money raised at this event will fund the Défis-Logis project to build an eight-unit building for people with intellectual disabilities. The Défis-Logis is a new solution designed to create a stable, permanent living environment for residents that more than meets their need for privacy and socialization, all under respectful supervision. APDIS hopes to raise \$45,000 at the event, which is not to be missed.

I thank the organizers, Greg McKenna and Johanne Noël, as well as their volunteers, who have put so much energy and love into this project. I will see you starting tomorrow, June 7, at Delpha-Sauvé park.

I wish happy Festi-Bières to everyone.

* * *

[English]

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to join the constituents of Brampton Centre and all Canadians in celebrating June as Portuguese Heritage Month.

Half a million Portuguese Canadians display admirable work ethics. I am fortunate to know many of them as entrepreneurs, trades persons and professionals in Brampton.

Canada has a long-standing friendship with Portugal. Last year, Prime Minister Antonio Costa visited Canada on an official visit. As an executive member of the Canada-Portugal Parliamentary Friendship Group, I believe this occasion strengthened the bond between our two countries, as we committed to fighting ocean pollution together.

I look forward to all the Portuguese cultural events this month and enjoying my favourite, *Bife a casa.*

* * *

• (1405)

DON BARNARD

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 75 years ago, 14,000 Canadians were fighting on Juno Beach, supported by our navy and air force. By the end of D-Day, 359 had paid the ultimate sacrifice. By the end of the Normandy campaign, 5,000 Canadians had died fighting tyranny.

Behind every name on the cenotaph there is a family, like the Barnard family of Toronto.

Brothers Fred and Don joined the Queen's Own Rifles and they were part of the first wave to land at Juno Beach at Bernières-sur-Mer. As the landing craft approached, Fred hit Don on the shoulder and said "give 'em hell Don". However, by the time Fred hit the beach, Don's war was over. Fred had to start D-Day witnessing the death of his brother.

Two brothers and 75 years later, Fred, at 98, is the oldest living Queen's Own Rifle, veteran, and we still remember Don's sacrifice today.

In Uxbridge, his regiment and community will be parading in front of Fred's house remembering. Canadians will never forget the service and sacrifice of our veterans like Fred and Don Barnard.

Lest we forget.

* * *

PORTUGUESE HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the second year, June is celebrated nationally as Portuguese Heritage Month.

As the member of Parliament for Davenport, home of the largest Portuguese community in Canada, I am inspired every day by the hard-working Portuguese whose passion for their families, church, community and soccer is second to none.

Through the Canada-Europe Trade Agreement and the Youth Mobility Agreement, both signed over the last two years by our government, Canada and Portugal will forge even stronger relations.

I would like to thank all the Portuguese leaders, clubs, associations and media that have tirelessly promoted the Portuguese culture, language and community. They serve as an inspiration for this national recognition. It is to honour them and their aspiration for the Portuguese to be recognized at the highest level of our nation and be celebrated for its many contributions to Canada.

Whether we are cheering on Ronaldo during the World Cup, singing along to a Shawn Mendes tune, or eating a *pastel de nata*, take the time to celebrate Portugal this month. *Viva Portugal. Viva Canada. Obrigada.*

* * *

[Translation]

CENTENARY OF THE CN RAILWAY

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoyne, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House today to mark an important milestone in Canadian history.

Statements by Members

[English]

On, June 6, 1919, 100 years ago today, Canadian National Railway was incorporated through an act of Parliament and set out on its journey to become the only transcontinental railway in North America.

I started my career at CN, so I know first-hand how it encourages employees and retirees to contribute to society through CN's community partnerships and volunteer programs.

As part of CN100, it is recognizing June 6 as "CN in Your Community Day". Every year, employees will be given time off to volunteer in their municipalities.

[Translation]

CN is an important part of the communities located along its over 30,000 kilometres of track. The anniversary will also include "A Moving Celebration", where CN100 themed containers will stop in major North-American cities.

[English]

I wish CN a happy 100th anniversary. We wish it continued success.

* * *

●(1410)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, "It increases my feminism" said the Prime Minister when he was recently asked about the decision he made to fire the former attorney general and the former president of the Treasury Board.

Let me get this straight. When two strong, intelligent and principled women stand up and speak truth to power, firing them equals an increased commitment to feminism, correct?

The Prime Minister has communicated loud and clear to the Canadian public that arrogance and self-righteousness are at the centre of his definition of feminism. In his so-called "feminist" world, women are to be exploited, women are to be silenced and women are to be treated as less than.

A year ago, when a strong female reporter went public with accusations that the Prime Minister had groped her, did that also increase his feminism or was it simply that she just experienced things differently than he did?

What is clear is this. The Prime Minister has no absolutely no real intent to increase his feminism. His sole interest is in serving himself. Women across Canada deserve better, and better will be delivered in October.

The Speaker: I encourage members to be judicious in their comments and avoid things that might be considered insulting.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

* * *

HMCS KITCHENER

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize the HMCS *Kitchener*, which was one of 123

corvettes, or escorts, built in Canada during the Second World War. Named after communities across the country, like my own, they were critical to maintaining supply lines during the Battle of the Atlantic.

On June 6, 1944, D-Day, the *Kitchener* was the sole Canadian corvette escorting landing craft to the beaches of Normandy. Some of those brave soldiers came from my community's Highland Light Infantry Regiment, which landed at Juno Beach as part of the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade. As the Canadians pushed inland, the *Kitchener* returned to fight on the seas.

Let us remember the 14,000 Canadians who fought on the beaches that day to secure our freedom. On this, the 75th anniversary of D-Day, I encourage my colleagues and all Canadians to learn more about the corvettes named after their own communities.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the women and men who stand up to fight for human rights around the world, often at great personal risk, are today's heroes, and they often go unrecognized and unsung.

Today, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights had the opportunity to recognize and give voice to three of these courageous human rights defenders, some of whom are with us in Ottawa today.

[Translation]

Marguerite Barankitse helped more than 20,000 orphans access health care, education and cultural services.

[English]

Sara Hossain has worked tirelessly with Bangladesh legal aid services to make the Bangladeshi legal system accessible to marginalized groups.

Teresita Quintas Deles, or "Ging", as chair of INCITEGov, is a champion for human rights, democracy and peace in the Philippines.

Today we honour them for being true change-makers. They are an inspiration to all of us to look beyond ourselves and make a better and more just world for our children.

* * *

[Translation]

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 75 years ago on June 6, 1944, D-Day, the Régiment de la Chaudière, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul Mathieu, landed on Juno Beach to fight the Nazi forces that had invaded France and Europe.

Statements by Members

The Régiment de la Chaudière helped liberate the beaches of Normandy, the city of Caen, the Carpiquet airport and many other areas where heavy fighting claimed many victims from our regiment.

Dozens of men from the Régiment de la Chaudière died in the Normandy campaign and many others were wounded. However, one fact remains: these men are heroes. They are the heroes of the Régiment de la Chaudière.

Today marks the 75th anniversary of a major military operation, the largest in history. In memory of all those Quebeckers who gave their lives in battle to protect our freedom, let us all be eternally grateful to those men and say, “Never again”.

Aere Perennius.

* * *

[English]

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time this month, Canadians from coast to coast to coast are celebrating Filipino Heritage Month. Thanks to the unanimous passage of my private member's motion last fall, this month the contributions of Filipino Canadians to the diversity and strength of Canada are being celebrated.

On Saturday, in my riding of Scarborough Centre, I had the pleasure of taking part in a fantastic kickoff celebration organized by our local Filipino community. From morning Zumba to get the blood flowing to a musical variety show and an evening rock concert with local Filipino bands, it was an all-day celebration of Filipino culture. Thanks go to Rolly Mangante, Teresa Torralba and all the volunteers for organizing this event.

Filipino Canadians are proud of their culture and they are proud to make Canada their home. I look forward to continuing to celebrate this first national Filipino Heritage Month.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I say, *mabuhay*, Canada and *mabuhay*, Philippines.

* * *

•(1415)

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the NDP, I am privileged to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

Gratitude certainly shapes Windsor and Essex county. On the waterfront are monuments to lives and moments that shaped our country.

D-Day is a culmination of stories, acts of bravery and sacrifice, like the battle of Dieppe, which took many sons from the Essex Scottish Regiment of Windsor either to their grave or to a POW camp. The allies learned lessons from Dieppe, so the victory of D-Day is owed to all who suffered.

Our factories retooled quickly so that they could make artillery, and it was the women at home who did the job. The Canadian Historical Aircraft Association next to Windsor airport once housed

No. 7 Elementary Flying Training School. Windsor pilot, Captain Tommy Brannagan, flew his famed Spitfire against the Nazis and today the terminal at Windsor airport is named after him. It is the Windsor Spitfires who take to the ice and pay tribute every day.

Our Legions preserve, keep and share these stories, and that is the most cherished tribute of all.

* * *

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, D-Day veteran Martin Maxwell, now 95 years old, made this profound and relevant statement in the days leading up to today:

If these young men [killed at Normandy] could look at the world and what is happening, not only against the Jews—mosques are being attacked, churches are attacked—they would say: “What the hell have you done with the tomorrows we gave you?”

Fourteen thousand Canadian soldiers landed on Juno Beach 75 years ago today. D-Day was the turning point in the fight from oppression, the fight for freedom, the fight for valuing human life, the fight for human dignity and the fight for democracy.

Three hundred and fifty-nine of our fellow citizens gave their lives that day, believing their selfless sacrifice would lead to a better tomorrow and a better world. Today is the tomorrow that those who died have given us. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to honour their sacrifices by treating each other with kindness, to respect our differences and be united as a nation, just as they were on this day in June of 1944.

* * *

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 75th anniversary of D-Day, when thousands of Canadians reclaimed Juno Beach in what marked the beginning of the end for the Nazis in World War II. We took the beach in two hours, and Canadians advanced the furthest of any allied unit. Hundreds of Canadian men died on Juno Beach and thousands of Canadians sacrificed their lives in the war in the name of freedom, equality and justice.

This past weekend, I marched in an annual D-Day commemoration and participated in a service at the cemetery of St. John's Norway hosted by our local Beaches—East York Legions.

Afterwards, I stopped by the home of Guy Eisnor. He is one of a smaller number of surviving World War II and D-Day veterans. We had a beer and played cribbage together, a game he told me he learned to play in the foxhole. We talked about his service, his life and his belief that Canada is the best country in the world. It is, and it is because of men and women like him.

We owe Mr. Eisnor and all those who served in World War II a debt of gratitude.

[Translation]

Lest we forget.

The Speaker: Following discussions among representatives of all the parties in the House, I understand that there is an agreement to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[*English*]

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on June 6, 1944, the operation to liberate France began, and today, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day. We acknowledge and will never forget the sacrifice that was made by these brave men and women who answered the call to duty without hesitancy to make sure that we had freedom and democracy today.

In that spirit, Her Majesty's loyal opposition would like to offer the government an opportunity to inform this House and Canadians how we are commemorating this incredibly important day in Canada's history.

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to have the privilege of standing before this House on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, parliamentarians, premiers and members of our armed forces who are today in France celebrating and commemorating the sacrifice and the service of so many Canadians who gave their lives and who served in their youth to bring peace to our world. It is incumbent upon us all to always remember their service and their sacrifice, and to honour that sacrifice by committing to continue to work to maintain a better world.

I join members of the opposition and all members of this House and all Canadians in taking this opportunity to say to all of those veterans that we thank them.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. minister for his gracious words.

As we are approaching the election in the fall, many of us are in our communities talking to our constituents. One of the topics that continually comes up for me in Milton is the fact that Canadian families are worried about affordability. They worry about more taxes that they are seeing on their bottom line each and every day, and as a result, they are asking us questions. It makes sense to me that the accounting firm MNP indicates that Canadians are only \$200 away from insolvency.

Will the minister please acknowledge the pain that these families go through and stop the taxes?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, affordability has been an issue that the government has been seized with from the very

Oral Questions

beginning. That is why one of our very first moves as a government was to reduce the tax burden on middle-class families. The tax rate in the middle-class bracket was reduced by 17%. We have also reduced the tax rate for small business by 18%. The whole purpose here is to leave more money in the pockets of ordinary Canadians so that they have greater spending power. That drives more jobs and growth.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe Canadians actually agree with the government that it reduced tax liability. What Canadians are seeing is the loss of their ability to deal with their education and tuition costs through a tax credit. They have lost their transit tax credit. They have also lost their children's arts and fitness tax credit. These things are meaningful to Canadian families. As a result, Canadians are asking how many more taxes are coming.

Would the government please give comfort to Canadian families, and assure them that it will not continually look to them for more taxes?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we add together the Canada child benefit with the middle-class tax reduction, which I have already referred to, the typical Canadian family is \$2,000 better off compared to all of the boutique tax credits that were provided by the previous government. When we add together the total benefits package, the fact is that the taxes on middle-class families are down substantially as a result of the Canada child benefit and the middle-class tax reduction by about \$2,000 per family.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberal government was elected, Canadian families have been paying \$800 more a year. What with the carbon tax, which is driving up food and gas prices, and the elimination of the public transit tax credit and the children's sports and cultural activities tax credits, Canadians are sick and tired of paying for the Liberal government's mistakes.

When will the government and the Prime Minister stop taking away Canadians' hard-earned money?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were elected with a very clear mandate to help the middle class in order to grow the economy, and it is working.

From the Canada child benefit to the middle-class tax cut, our measures are growing the economy. A million new jobs have been created since 2015, unemployment is at its lowest since 1976, and we have the best growth rate in the developed world. Our debt relative to the economy is falling and will soon reach its lowest level in 40 years, and in 2019, the average middle-class family has \$2,000 more in its pockets than in 2015.

Oral Questions

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear. Canadian families are paying \$800 more every year; one in two Canadians is \$200 or less away from insolvency; and 80% of Canadian families are paying more tax today because of the Liberals. Only a Liberal would think that wealth can be created by taxing people.

Will this Prime Minister and his Liberal members stop taking Canadians' hard-earned money?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Sadly, Mr. Speaker, I am little disturbed by what I am hearing from the official opposition.

The member should have stood up to talk about the Canada child benefit. In his riding alone, tens of thousands of children are receiving an average of \$550 a month tax free. This is helping the families in his riding invest in our children, which means investing in the future. It really bothers me that here we are in 2019 and the Conservatives still know nothing about the Canada child benefit and the significant impact it is having in their communities.

* * *

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the wealthy are once again getting off scot-free. The government just granted amnesty to wealthy KPMG clients accused of sidestepping our tax laws. Way to go!

We know the Liberals have two sets of rules: one for their friends and the wealthy and another for everyone else.

Why is the Liberal government still doing favours for wealthy, privileged people who try to get around our laws and rules?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to fighting tax evaders. Out-of-court settlements are reached through a fully independent process within the Canada Revenue Agency to ensure the integrity of the tax system.

While we understand that settlements may not be used appropriately in some cases, I am concerned about the resulting lack of transparency. That is why I directed the CRA to review its process to allow for greater transparency regarding the reasons why some settlements are reached.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer is simply not good enough.

The CRA has been letting tax cheats off for far too long. Canadians have been looking to the government for leadership, and all the Liberals do is say that they are not in charge. If they are not in charge, who is? Canadians mean to elect a government that will take care of big tax cheats, and the Liberal government is not doing it.

Please, stop with the incredible answer that somehow the Minister of National Revenue does not have anything to say about whether tax cheats get off the hook in Canada, and give Canadians the answer they are looking for, which is that the rich are going to pay their fair share.

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona to, of course, direct his comments to the Chair. I do not think he is intending that the Chair would give those things he is talking about.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike Stephen Harper's Conservatives, we are serious about cracking down on tax evaders.

This is why we have invested more than \$1 billion to give the Canada Revenue Agency the tools it needs to crack down on tax evasion in Canada and abroad. As I said, I am concerned about the lack of transparency surrounding out-of-court settlements, and I have directed the CRA to review the process to make it more transparent. Canadians deserve a fair tax system.

* * *

● (1430)

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they do deserve that, but clearly they are going to need a different government to get it. I will say this, when the wealthy and well-connected want help getting out of paying their taxes, the Liberals are there to get them an expedited secret deal.

However, there are 3,000 to 5,000 veterans living homeless in Canada right now. Yesterday, MPs from all parties supported a motion that would give a stipend to veterans to help them put a roof over their heads, but we all know it is not going to happen until the government adopts this as its own policy.

Is the government prepared to develop a program to give direct help to veterans so they are able to put a roof over their heads? If so, when and with how much?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that even one homeless veteran is one homeless veteran too many, and our government is committed to ensuring that no one who has served our country will end up on the street.

Our whole-of-government approach is making a difference for homeless veterans across the country. Last June, we brought together over 70 organizations working on this issue to find the appropriate path forward. Our increased focus on outreach is identifying more homeless veterans and getting them the services and financial supports they need. It will remain a priority for our government, and we will continue to do the important work that our veterans deserve.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many veterans are left alone and without support. They do not even have a roof over their heads, and it is shameful. In Canada, some 3,000 to 5,000 veterans are homeless. That is unacceptable in this day and age.

Yesterday all members of the House, from all political stripes, called on the Liberal government to act and adopt a new benefit to help lift these veterans out of poverty and homelessness.

When will the government follow through and take concrete action to help our veterans?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, June 6, 2019, is obviously the perfect opportunity to remind Canadians that we have a moral obligation to respect our veterans, who gave their lives to protect our safety, peace and justice.

Today is also the perfect opportunity to remind Canadians of the government's commitment to ensuring that all Canadians, and certainly all veterans, have a safe and affordable place to call home. This is why we are developing a historic national housing strategy that will help reduce homelessness for Canadians and, certainly, veterans.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has no understanding and no respect for hard-working, middle-class Canadians. He thinks that small business owners are tax cheats. He thinks construction workers are a threat to our rural communities and he calls commuters who are driving to work polluters. He has made it more expensive to access public transit, to buy textbooks or to put kids in sports. To add insult to injury, these are the very same people who are going to be paying more for gas at the pump.

Why is the Prime Minister making life so expensive for everyday, middle-class Canadians?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is quite ironic to hear from the opposition, the knows-best opposition in Ottawa. We know who they are. The Conservatives know best, as their leader said, I think a few days ago.

We have made historic investments in public transit. Just a week ago, the Canadian Infrastructure Bank invested more than \$2 billion in the GO rail transit system to make the lives of transit commuters easier, because on this side of the House, we think that Canadians know best. We think that people know best. We think that transit users know best. That is the difference between us and them.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will tell members what the Prime Minister has no idea of and does not know anything about. That is the struggles that everyday middle-class Canadians are going through. He is more focused on self-promotion and increasing his so-called feminism than on the needs

Oral Questions

of hard-working families. He does absolutely nothing, while small business owners are dealing with the price of his carbon tax.

Canadian families are falling further and further behind under the weight of the Prime Minister's failed economic policies, and they are asking for tax breaks. Does he know what? Conservatives are going to give Canadians those tax breaks.

Why are the Liberals ignoring Canadians?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are a government that cares about small businesses and that cares about creating jobs in this country. That is why we have lowered the small business tax rate to 9%, making it one of the lowest. We are helping hard-working Canadians create those jobs in small businesses. We are helping small businesses be more competitive.

We have cut more regulations in the three and a half years we have been in government than you did, or that the Conservatives did, in the last 10 years. We are working hard for Canadians.

● (1435)

The Speaker: I remind the hon. minister to direct her comments to the Chair. I do not think she meant the Chair did something or other.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small business owners in Canada clearly remember two years ago when the Minister of Finance mounted an all-out assault against them. The Prime Minister sees small business owners as people who try to get out of paying their share of taxes. That may be the Prime Minister's approach, but that is not the approach of Canadian workers and it is certainly not the approach of small business owners.

Will the government finally realize that small businesses are the backbone of our economy? We have to help them, not hinder them like the government has been for four years.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague that we completely agree with him. Small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They are fundamental to Canada's economy. We have supported our entrepreneurs and SMEs from the start. We lowered the small business tax to 9%. It is one of the lowest tax rates among OECD countries.

I also want to remind my colleague that nothing helps SMEs more than a booming economy, a thriving economy. That is what Conservatives have always failed to offer Canada, with the lowest growth rate since the Second World War. The Conservatives' results speak for themselves: one million—

Oral Questions

The Speaker: The hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague from Louis-Hébert that his leader, the Prime Minister, has said that he thinks small businesses are a way to avoid taxes. Perhaps that is what the Prime Minister and other people, like the Minister of Finance, believe, but it is not what real Canadian workers and entrepreneurs believe. Entrepreneurs mortgage their homes in order to create jobs and wealth. We, the Conservatives, stand up for Canadian workers and entrepreneurs.

Does the government understand that by directly attacking wealth creators, it is attacking the Canadian economy?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we lowered the small business tax rate to 9%, the lowest rate in the G7. We also lowered taxes on the middle class. That was the first thing we did. The member for Louis-Saint-Laurent voted against that. We gave more money to families with the Canada child benefit. This money goes into the economy and builds confidence in the future. The money can be used to buy back-to-school supplies, for example. On average, a typical family of four is \$2,000 better off. My colleague voted against that. In his riding, \$79 million goes out to 22,000 children every year. He voted against that.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class families that are paying \$800 more in income tax since the current government took office are asking what is next. The government is running out of other people's money and tries to take more. It tried to take away the disability tax credit from diabetics. It considered taxing health and dental benefits for middle-class families. It tried to raise tax on investment income for small businesses to 71%. Will the government tell us today that although it tried to bring in those tax increases, it will never reintroduce them again?

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat troubling that the member for Carleton still refers to a Fraser Institute study that has been debunked by just about anyone who can read and count and has taken five minutes to look at it. He can do better than that.

Last week, in committee, the member for Carleton said that we should judge policies based on results, not on intentions. The result over the last four years is that the average Canadian family pays \$2,000 less in taxes than it did under the previous government. That is a fact.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government that missed its deficit promises by \$20 billion wants to extol its virtues and prowess in arithmetic. The member wins the award for irony today. I wish he would win the award for clarity. I asked him a very specific question, that he would rule out future tax increases on Canadian families, the ones the government tried to implement already. Will he not admit that the reason the Liberals will not rule those out is because the only way they can pay for their out-of-control spending is through massive tax increases—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also find it troubling when the member talks about the deficit. He was sitting around the cabinet table when the Conservatives added \$150 billion to the national debt, but with what to account for it?

Again, in committee last week, he said that we should judge policies based on results, not on intentions. He was quoting an unnamed economist. Surely that was not Stephen Harper, because when we look at the results of the Conservatives' decade in power, it had the worst job creation since 1946, the worst growth in 69 years and the worst growth in exports since the Second World War.

In three years, we have delivered—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

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[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2017, regarding the KPMG affair, the Minister of National Revenue promised to, and I quote, “exhaust all judicial avenues”. She failed.

There is no longer a single tax evader who is afraid of this incompetent minister. On the contrary, she is sending a clear message that she will cut a nice little secret deal with any wealthy individuals caught cheating. The minister wants more transparency, so let us start today with a few questions.

When did the minister become aware of this new amnesty? Did she think it was appropriate?

If not, what did she do to stop it?

The Speaker: I encourage the hon. member to be judicious in his word choice.

The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I see my colleague has an interest in tax evasion, so he will be happy to learn that the CRA has published the results of the fight against tax evasion in the real estate sector.

Since 2015, CRA audits have identified over \$1 billion in additional gross taxes related to the real estate sector. Nearly 42,000 files were reviewed in Ontario and British Columbia, resulting in over \$100 million in assessed penalties.

Our investments are paying off.

Oral Questions

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that the Minister of Indigenous Services lives in an alternate universe when it comes to Grassy Narrows. He said a deal was in place, but the chief says otherwise. He said shovels were ready, but contractors have not even been lined up.

The Liberals say there is political will, but today Liberal MPs refused to move an NDP motion calling on the government to put the money into a trust fund before it is too late. Is it not ironic that we have finally found the one trust fund our trust fund Prime Minister will not support?

Why is the government choosing to delay, deny and obstruct? Will it finally deliver justice to the people of Grassy Narrows?

The Speaker: I encourage members to be judicious and prudent in their comments and try to avoid comments that could be considered insulting.

Mr. Dan Vandal (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes the health issues that the people of Grassy Narrows have endured for over 50 years and that continue today.

We share the community's goal of finding a solution that meets its needs. We remain steadfast in our commitment to building a health facility in Grassy Narrows. We will continue discussions with the chief and council until we arrive at a solution. This facility will get built.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear today that, as with canola, the government has no plan to ensure that Canada will be able to continue to export pork to China. If nothing is done, there will be a national crisis.

Canadian exports about \$600 million worth of pork to China every year, including \$300 million from Quebec, \$170 million from Alberta, and \$116 million from Manitoba.

The Prime Minister is now saying that he plans to talk to the Chinese president at the G20. Does he realize that Canadian farmers and livestock producers are being held hostage in this political dispute?

What is he waiting for? When will he intervene to help Canadian farmers and livestock producers?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike my Conservative colleagues, it did not take me weeks to realize that the canola crisis was part of a bigger issue.

From day one, my colleagues and I have been working hard on this file. A few weeks ago, I was in Japan, where I met with China's agriculture minister. We agreed that he would discuss the situation with his colleague who is responsible for customs.

I am pleased to inform the House that, just last evening, scientists at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency had a discussion with their Chinese counterparts about canola.

● (1445)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past five months, we have been asking the Prime Minister to talk to the Chinese president, but he has chosen not to. That is how the Liberal government operates.

The Premier of Quebec said that China's plan to inspect every single shipment of pork is unacceptable. He thinks the Canadian government should be firm in its negotiations with China. The Liberal Prime Minister has not said a word yet.

The problem is that the minister wants nothing to do with this. She is offloading the responsibility onto pork producers and telling them to be careful or suffer the consequences. It does not take a committee to make a call.

Why are the Liberals leaving pork producers to fend for themselves?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our farmers know how hard our government is working with them and for them. They know how much we are doing to support the system. We have the best agricultural products in the world and one of the best food inspection systems in the world.

I know that our farmers are aware we are standing by them, consulting them and doing what needs to be done to help them and reopen markets, including the Chinese market, as quickly as possible.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, six months ago, China detained our citizens on trumped-up charges. Mr. Kovrig and Mr. Spavor receive daily interrogations and are in prison with the lights on 24-7. In those six months, our exporters have faced trumped-up claims over the quality of our products, blocking our exports.

It has been half a year of crisis, but only today did the Prime Minister say he is considering engaging directly with the Chinese leadership. He is only considering getting involved after six months.

It has been five months since his hand-picked Liberal ambassador resigned in disgrace. Will the Prime Minister consider appointing a new one?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it: China has heard our positions very clearly and at many levels. Our government takes every opportunity to advocate for the interests of Canadians with China.

Oral Questions

Just two weeks ago, a parliamentary delegation went to China and raised the cases of the detained Canadians, as well as canola and pork. I was on that delegation, and unfortunately the Conservatives chose to send no one. The Conservatives sent no one, and the NDP sent no one.

We will stand up for Canadians. We will stand up for Canadians' interests, whether it is with regard to canola, pork or detained Canadians.

The Speaker: Order. I remind colleagues, as the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil said earlier, to be kind to each other and listen to each other.

The hon. member for Durham.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us summarize six months of Liberal failures on China. Our citizens are suffering; our exporters are suffering and the situation is deteriorating each week.

After six months of no plan, today the Prime Minister said he is considering getting involved. He should consider getting serious about China. This diplomatic dispute will not be solved by tweets or by photo ops.

Rather than posting tweets like “Canada is back”, how about Liberals get our Canadians back?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are Canadian lives at risk in these cases. The cases of Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor are a priority for this government. This is not about grandstanding. It is not about scoring points. It is about keeping Canadians safe.

We have rallied an unprecedented number of partners from around the world in support of Canada's position. Liberal members were in China two weeks ago to raise these cases. I was there, but the Conservatives and the NDP were not.

We have a plan. We are always ready to talk, and we are open. We are working for Canada and for Canadians' interests.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Prime Minister asked us to show some compassion and generosity and welcome Syrian families. We would like him to show the same compassion for Nour Mohammad, a 22-year-old Syrian woman who is stranded alone in Libya, far away from her eight brothers and sisters, who live here in Saint-Hyacinthe with their parents. They are here today. I asked the Minister of Immigration to help Nour, but he refused.

How can the Liberals ask us to show compassion when they have none?

• (1450)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising this request in the House of Commons. She knows that she can speak to me or the minister about

such cases, but that we cannot discuss this or any other case on the floor of the House of Commons.

Family reunification is a priority for this government. We have implemented extraordinary measures to reunite refugees with their families. That is essential to provide families in this country with psychological, social and economic support, and it will continue to be a priority in the years to come.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 27 migrant workers spent up to \$5,000 to come to Canada for a job that never materialized. They signed an employment contract with Golden Eagle Farms, which is part of the Aquilini empire. They have valid employer-specific permits. It has been over six months, and they have yet to get work.

If there was no work at Golden Eagle Farms for these migrant workers, how on earth did the Aquilini group get a positive labour market impact assessment for 280 workers?

Will the minister stop this abuse and immediately issue open work permits for these women?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her passion for the equal treatment of all workers in Canada, no matter where they come from. Temporary foreign workers are entitled to the exact same protections and rights as every Canadian, and I am aware of the recent reports regarding the treatment of temporary foreign workers at the Aquilini group. We take these allegations very seriously.

The department is aware of these allegations and will be conducting an investigation into these claims. Whether someone is a Canadian, a permanent resident or a temporary foreign worker, that person's health and safety matters to this country, to all of us, and we will continue to work with provinces and territories, employers and workers to make sure every worker in Canada is protected.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fight for women's rights is not over. The residents of Outremont have shared with me their concerns about women's access to abortion being threatened.

[English]

Women's rights are human rights, and Canada has always led on this issue. That is why Canadians are so concerned about the increasing rhetoric we are hearing both at home and abroad.

Could the House please get an update on the work our government is doing to support the rights of women and girls around the world?

Oral Questions

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that when women and girls are healthy and empowered, everyone benefits. That is why we made our historic investment of \$1.4 billion a year for women's and girls' health at the Women Deliver Conference; \$700 million will go specifically toward sexual and reproductive health rights to fill the gap that was left by the previous Conservative government, and it will empower 18 million women and girls by 2030. With this, we will be at the forefront of international efforts to improve the health of women and girls. We also stand firmly in support of women's right to choose, here at home and abroad.

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DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned today that Elections Canada will spend \$650,000 to hire social media influencers. Canadians are growing weary of hearing the linked words of “influence” and “elections”.

No one can claim to be free of opinions on the issues contained within each party's electoral platform, so how can Elections Canada ensure that these social media influencers have never had political opinions and do not have political opinions today?

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservative Party, we will not muzzle scientists; we will not muzzle public servants, and we will certainly not muzzle Elections Canada. In fact, in Bill C-76, we empowered Elections Canada to talk to Canadians about the importance of voting. Unlike Conservatives, we are not afraid of more Canadians voting. I hope they will join us in supporting Elections Canada's good work in reaching out to vulnerable populations, reaching out to groups that do not vote and making sure that in this election more Canadians than ever vote.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Elections Canada is keeping secret the names of its social media influencers: musicians, celebrities, athletes and YouTube producers. These folk become influencers because they have strong opinions. How can Elections Canada ensure that these influencers have never expressed political opinions?

The Chief Electoral Officer concedes that this unprecedented campaign is politically sensitive. Should Elections Canada not simply focus on administering a fair election?

• (1455)

Hon. Karina Gould (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike the party opposite, we have full confidence in our officers of Parliament. We have full confidence in Elections Canada and the professional men and women who administer elections. In fact, unlike the party opposite and its so-called fair elections act, we will not make it harder for Canadians to vote. We will not make it harder for Canadians to get information on how to vote. In fact, in Bill C-76 we empowered Elections Canada to do such a thing.

We hope Conservatives also think it is a good thing that Canadians have the right information on where and how to vote, because that matters for Canadian democracy.

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Environment Day, and I thought the minister was going to tell us the truth by confirming that the Liberals' environment plan is not working.

It is urgent that we take action, and we, the Conservatives, know and acknowledge this. The Liberals must take action and propose a real plan to meet the Paris targets. Why are they so intent on hiding the truth from Canadians?

I would like the minister to listen to the question, which is very simple: when will her government tell the truth and clearly state that Canada will not meet the Paris targets?

[English]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are committed to hitting our targets, because we know failure is not an option.

I would invite the hon. member to take a look at our climate plan, the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. It has over 50 measures. We are putting a price on pollution. By 2030, 90% of Canada's electricity will be generated from non-emitting resources. We have made the largest investments in the history of our country in public transit and in protecting nature.

These are just a few examples of how we are taking it seriously. We can reduce our emissions, grow our economy and make life more affordable at the same time.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal environment plan is in shambles. We see raw sewage in the St. Lawrence, million-dollar handouts to Loblaws and punishing carbon taxes.

Now it is clear that the Liberals will not even meet their own Paris targets, because they do not have a climate plan. They have a tax plan.

However, the minister refuses to admit that her plan has failed. She even told us her strategy: “If you repeat it, if you say it louder... people will totally believe it.”

When will the minister admit her plan is totally not believable and will not meet the Paris targets?

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would take the criticism seriously if it came from a member of a party that actually had a plan of their own to talk about.

Oral Questions

Do members want to see what Conservative climate action looks like? We can look at Doug Ford in Ontario, dismantling flood protection, showing up at a flood zone and saying, “Oh, gee, I wonder what this is all about.” Jason Kenney in Alberta had to shut the vents of the provincial legislature while they were debating the repeal of the carbon pricing legislation. What is next? Is Saskatchewan going to sue the floods and fires themselves?

It is time the Conservatives pulled their heads out of the sand and joined us in the 21st century.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I would encourage the hon. parliamentary secretary to be judicious in his comments.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new Australian study warns of the dramatic impact of climate change. We are on track to see the earth's temperature increase by 3°C, which will devastate ecosystems and force the migration of a billion people, but here at home the Liberals are missing the Conservatives' targets and buying a pipeline to triple the production of the oil sands. ENvironnement JEUnesse is in court today to sue the government.

What is it that the Liberals fail to understand? Why are they not listening to the science and our young people? Are their heads buried in the oil sands?

• (1500)

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the young people who are advocating for climate action.

I agree with the NDP's intention. The New Democrats have their heart in the right place, but they have not thought their plan through. In commentary on it, the Ecofiscal Commission indicated that the NDP's plan for big emitters is going to hurt the Canadian economy and will not do anything to reduce emissions. It will just inspire polluters to cross the border and pollute elsewhere.

We have actually been working on a plan for several years now. The NDP seems committed to implementing some of the things we have been doing. It is time for them to actually look at what has been going on and realize we are taking action.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands seems to be having trouble sitting quietly when others are speaking and not speaking out when he does not have the floor. Perhaps he would like to not do that and wait until he has the floor. We have been over that before. He could talk to his colleague from Barrie—Innisfil about us all being kind to each other and listening.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Longueuil—Saint-Hubert.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a circus we have around here. Exactly six months ago, the NDP invited all parties of the House of Commons to work

together on the climate crisis because the failure to meet our targets is the failure of this entire Parliament. The Liberals and the Conservatives continue refuse this offer.

I have a message for the young people marching in the streets: get involved in the upcoming election and kick out all those who do not want to save the planet or find solutions. It is appalling.

I want to ask the Minister of Environment and Climate Change a question, but, honestly, I feel like there is no point. I do not even want to hear what you have to say. Keep thinking that you are the best and figure it out yourselves. Goodbye.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: That is not acceptable. It is not acceptable for comments to be directed to other members and not to the Chair.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we see the NDP's strategy: When they have to deal with a difficult issue, they just give up.

The young people who have been protesting to demand climate action have been active in my community, and I want to thank them. It is going to take all of us pulling in the same direction, because we know that failure is not an option. We know that young people are going to disproportionately bear the consequences of climate change, because the consequences will only get worse with time.

We started this progress not six months ago but over three years ago, when we started campaigning to put a price on pollution and to ensure that we had the largest investment in public transit in the history of our country.

If the hon. members want to know about our investments in the energy sector, I would be curious what their leader's opinion is on the LNG facility, because he cannot make up his mind.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General asked for additional funding to fulfill his mandate, but the Prime Minister refused his request.

The Auditor General was therefore forced to abandon his audit of the government's performance on cybercrime and Arctic sovereignty. Once again, this Prime Minister does not care about anything that relates to security.

Can the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness call his boss to order and bring him to his senses?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the important question on cybersecurity, the hon. gentleman will know that very early in our mandate we reviewed that whole field, a very important priority in national security. We announced a national cybersecurity strategy last year, and in the last two budgets we have invested very close to \$1 billion in the cybersecurity of Canadians.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not have an Auditor General's report to look into it and see if the government has done its job or not.

For weeks, the President of the Treasury Board has said that they always consider funding requests from officers of Parliament—this while denying the Office of the Auditor General the money that it has repeatedly requested. The Auditor General needs another \$10.8 million to do his job, including audits on cybersecurity and Arctic sovereignty. This is less than the money the government gave to Loblaw's for refrigerators.

Why is giving money to their friends more important than transparency and accountability?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the very important question of support for the Auditor General, the President of the Treasury Board has pointed out repeatedly in this House that in fact it was the previous Conservative government that reduced the budget of the Auditor General. Our government has actually increased the budget and is always interested in looking for better ways to support that important work in the interests of transparency.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board has over \$48 million of Canadian pension dollars invested in Hangzhou Hikvision and Zhejiang Dahua tech companies, which are two firms working closely with China's military. These companies are playing a significant role in China's internment of over one million minority Uighurs. These growing labour camps are euphemistically referred to as “vocational schools”, but the Uighurs in these camps can expect a starvation diet, torture, forced labour, beatings and worse.

Will the government direct the board of the CPP to divest from these companies, yes or no?

•(1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Lightbound (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I simply want to remind my colleague that the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board operates independently, at arms' length from the government, and we expect it to make wise investments in the interest of Canadians and Canadian pensioners.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey—Newton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the removal of the unjustified steel and aluminum tariffs and the introduction of the NAFTA bill by the Prime Minister is great news for Canadians and great news for small business.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion tell us what the ratification of the new NAFTA means for small business in Canada?

Hon. Mary Ng (Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that great question.

Canadian small businesses indeed are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They employ over eight million hard-working Canadians. While the Conservatives wanted us to just make any deal at any cost, we stood up for Canadians.

We have secured a new trade deal with the U.S. and Mexico. We have removed the unjustified tariffs on steel and aluminum. We have positioned our small businesses for success now and in the future.

* * *

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, time after time the Liberals have failed to address the lack of Internet connectivity for rural Canadians. Yesterday the Liberal government announced a spectrum clawback that may significantly affect Internet service for a huge number of rural customers. How many rural Canadians will be negatively impacted by the Liberal government's decision to claw back and repurpose the 3,500-megahertz spectrum band?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been very clear in supporting our rural and remote communities when it comes to high-speed Internet access. We are the ones who introduced the Connect to Innovate program, which invested a billion dollars into our rural communities and allowed 900 communities to have strong backbone fibre infrastructure so families could have access to high-speed Internet connectivity.

In the last budget, we made a commitment of up to \$6 billion worth of investments into high-speed Internet connectivity. With the 3,500-megahertz clawback and repurpose, we will continue to make sure communities have access to high-speed Internet connectivity.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals missed the mark yesterday with their announcement about the 5G spectrum auction.

Oral Questions

Their policy will cut service to tens of thousands of households in rural communities. Reducing capacity in the regions to make it available to cities is like robbing Peter to pay Paul. It makes no sense. The NDP raised concerns during the consultations. Even the Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development admitted the changes would hurt rural regions.

Why are the Liberals knowingly disconnecting our regions?

[English]

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, broadband and cellphone connectivity are key to our economic prosperity. We know we are taking real action to make sure we connect all Canadians. For Canadians living in rural areas, service providers will be able to continue offering rural wireless services until much faster 5G networks are deployed in those areas.

Where they live in Canada should not limit people's access to the digital economy. We will make sure that we stand up for rural Canadians.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that northern communities face unique economic and environmental challenges as well as a lack of modern public infrastructure and that this government has plans to address these challenges. Investing in local green infrastructure projects helps grow the economy and improve the quality of life for those living and working in Canada's north.

Can the Minister of Rural Economic Development please update this House on recent investments this government has made to improve water quality for future generations in Canada's north?

Hon. Bernadette Jordan (Minister of Rural Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was happy to visit Nunavut last month to announce our investment of up to \$18.6 million in three green energy projects. Two of these projects will replace diesel-powered generators in six communities to improve energy efficiency and reliability as well as overall energy production capacity.

We are also investing in building a renewable solar energy and storage system that will provide more reliable wastewater treatment services. We will continue to make the investments that will create jobs and improve the quality of life for Canadians living in remote areas.

* * *

• (1510)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Irwin Cotler is a vocal defender of minorities around the world against tyrannical dictatorships. He has represented the likes of Nelson Mandela, Jacobo Timerman and Natan Sharansky. He serves several human rights organizations.

On Monday, Mr. Cotler was interrupted and berated during a speech at Concordia University in an attempt by a protestor to shut

him down. Will the government condemn this attack on the free speech of one of Canada's top human rights defenders?

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege. Everyone in this House by their presence and by their applause represents the idea that we stand with Irwin Cotler, who has been a defender of human rights, civil rights and justice around the world. We send our support from this side of the House to Mr. Cotler and convey it from the other side of the House as well.

* * *

[Translation]

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the same thing happens every year. Our businesses and farmers cannot get their temporary foreign workers in time because it takes Ottawa forever to process their applications. This is pretty easy to predict, though. Summer comes around at the same time each year, and so do the harvest, fishing season and landscaping season. These things do not wait for the federal government.

What is the government going to do today to make sure our businesses get their temporary foreign workers before it is too late?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to get up and answer the member's question because it is an indication of just how hot our economy is. With a million jobs added over the last three and a half years, we have a new problem now. Employers are saying they simply cannot find people in any way in any sector. We have seen, as a result of that, an increase in applications. Businesses are growing. They are able to sell more through trade agreements such as CETA and the CPTPP.

We have seen an increase in trade and a decrease in available population. That is why we have invested more money to get through the 40% increase in applications.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are great at talking the talk but not so great at walking the walk. Every year, the demand for temporary foreign workers grows. There is a labour shortage. Everyone knows that, and it is even worse in the regions. Every year, the government apologizes for not being ready.

What is the government going to do today to fix the problem? What is it going to do to make sure we do not have the same problem next year?

[English]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we were taken a bit by surprise by the 40% increase in applications we received this year, an indication of just how fast our economy is growing. I am really happy that so many producers, agriculturalists, have the kind of prosperity that requires them to search for new talent and new labour. That is why we have invested an additional \$1.7 million to specifically address the increase in Quebec: 34 new staff, 27 officers, seven clerks. This is really about making sure we can get through those applications as quickly as possible to deal with the growing industry's needs.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, Peter LeBel, the commissioner of marketing and community services for the Town of Whitby, passed away on May 27 after a 27-year career.

When the member for Louis-Hébert, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, visited Whitby last year, Peter's one ask was for the government to dedicate specific funds toward municipalities for community development and growth needs.

I am sure that Mr. LeBel's request had some impact as we saw the municipal infrastructure top-up fund announced in budget 2019. Would the minister give the House an update on the implementation of this fund?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to extend my condolences to members of the LeBel family, their friends and the Whitby community as they mourn their loss.

Mr. LeBel was a true champion for his city and an advocate for greater funding for municipalities. We heard his call. Our government understands the importance of working with municipalities, which is why in budget 2019 we proposed a \$2.2-billion top-up to address municipal priorities.

We will honour his legacy.

* * *

● (1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Pam Damoff (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order to do with decorum during question period.

Yesterday, the member for Lethbridge stood and asked that the rules be upheld equally in this place and claimed that members on this side were heckling her. As we know, it is an issue during question period when members are heckled. The Minister of Democratic Institutions sits very close to me and every time she stands, she is heckled loudly. Today, I could not even hear her answer, and yet she sits two seats away from me.

Government Orders

I would ask that members show a little more respect for each other in this House and if we could have more decorum in the House.

The Speaker: I am always grateful for the assistance of members in trying to improve decorum in the House and encouraging us to be kind to each other.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2019, NO. 1

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-97, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 19, 2019 and other measures, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Tuesday, May 28, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment of the member for Beloeil—Chambly to the motion at third reading of Bill C-97.

● (1525)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 1343)

YEAS

Members

Aubin	Benson
Blaikie	Boulerice
Brosseau	Cannings
Choquette	Christopherson
Donnelly	Dubé
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Fortin
Garrison	Hardeastle
Hughes	Johns
Kwan	MacGregor
Manly	May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
Moore	Nantel
Pauzé	Philpott
Rankin	Sansoucy
Ste-Marie	Stetski— 30

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Albrecht
Aldag	Alghabra
Amos	Anandasangaree
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Barrett
Baylis	Beech
Bendayan	Bennett
Benzen	Bergen
Berthold	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Brassard	Bratina
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carrie	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chong	Clarke
Cooper	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davidson

Government Orders

DeCoursey
 Dhaliwal
 Diotte
 Dreeshen
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 Eglinski
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Falk (Provencher)
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Garneau
 Gerretsen
 Godin
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hébert
 Hoback
 Holland
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jordan
 Kelly
 Khalid
 Kitchen
 Kusie
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Lighthouse
 Lobb
 Long
 Lukiwski
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Medicino
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Soeurs)
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 Ng
 Oliphant
 O'Toole
 Paul-Hus
 Peterson
 Picard
 Poissant
 Raitt
 Rayes
 Richards
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saini
 Sangha
 Saroya
 Schiefke
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trost
 Vandenbeld

Deltell
 Dhillon
 Doherty
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
 Fast
 Finley
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Gladu
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Graham
 Harder
 Harvey
 Hehr
 Hogg
 Housefather
 Iacono
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kent
 Khera
 Kmiec
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Lebouthillier
 Leslie
 Liepert
 Lloyd
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacKenzie
 Maguire
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Motz
 Nater
 Nicholson
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petipas Taylor
 Poilievre
 Qualtrough
 Ratansi
 Reid
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Romano
 Rudd
 Sahota
 Samson
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Schmale
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Spengemann
 Sweet
 Tan
 Tilson
 Vandal
 Vaughan

Vecchio
 Virani
 Waugh
 Weir
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young
 Zahid
 Viersen
 Wagantall
 Webber
 Whalen
 Yip
 Yurdiga
 Zimmer— 226

PAIRED

Members

LeBlanc— 2

Gill

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.*[English]*

The next question is on the main motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1530)

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

*(Division No. 1344)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag
 Amos
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis
 Bendayan
 Bibeau
 Blair
 Bossio
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Rudd
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Fisher
 Fortier
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Garneau
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Hajdu
 Alghabra
 Anandasangaree
 Arya
 Badawey
 Bains
 Beech
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Boissonnault
 Bratina
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chen
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhaliwal
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hardie

Harvey
 Hehr
 Holland
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jordan
 Khalid
 Lambropoulos
 Lamoureux
 Leboutillier
 Leslie
 Lighbound
 Long
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Rogers
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saini
 Sangha
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Yip
 Zahid— 157

Hébert
 Hogg
 Housefather
 Iacono
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 Maloney
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Ng
 Oliver
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Romano
 Rudd
 Sahota
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Tan
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wrzesniewskyj
 Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
 Anderson
 Aubin
 Barrett
 Benzen
 Berthold
 Boulterice
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cooper
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster)
 Fast
 Fortin
 Garrison
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Hoback
 Johns
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Kwan
 Lloyd

Albrecht
 Arnold
 Barlow
 Benson
 Bergen
 Blaikie
 Brassard
 Calkins
 Carrie
 Choquette
 Clarke
 Davidson
 Diotte
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Eglinski
 Falk (Provencher)
 Finley
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Godin
 Hardcastle
 Hughes
 Kelly
 Kitchen
 Kusie
 Liepert
 Lobb

Business of the House

Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Manly
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Moore
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 Paul-Hus
 Poilievre
 Rayes
 Richards
 Saroya
 Shields
 Stanton
 Stetski
 Tilson
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Webber
 Zimmer— 97

MacGregor
 Maguire
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Motz
 Nater
 O'Toole
 Pauzé
 Rankin
 Reid
 Sansoucy
 Schmale
 Sorenson
 Ste-Marie
 Sweet
 Trost
 Viersen
 Waugh
 Yurdiga

PAIRED

Members

Gill
 LeBlanc— 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am kind of new to this place. It seems odd to me that so many ministers cannot be here for question period but can show up for the vote.

The Speaker: My hon. friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, my in-laws' MP, is not new around here. He knows very well that members cannot draw attention to the presence or absence of members in the House.

Order. The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands has a point of order arising out of question period.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it arises out of the point made by my friend from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. We would never reference the presence or absence of a minister in the House. However, it certainly was unusual that the Minister of Environment did not rise to answer questions, which went to her parliamentary secretary instead.

• (1535)

The Speaker: That comment sounds pretty close to the line.

* * *

[*Translation*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the uncertainty surrounding the agenda and future work of the House, can the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons tell us about the business of the House for the rest of this week and next week?

[*English*]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will resume debate at third reading of Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

Tomorrow we will begin debate on the Senate amendments to Bill C-59, an act respecting national security matters.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Next week, priority will be given to Bill C-101, an act to amend the Customs Tariff and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal Act, and to bills coming back to us from the Senate.

There may be a few changes, but that is what we have for now.

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, which might be my final act here as a member of Parliament. There have been discussions among the parties, and I want to thank them for those discussions, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion: Whereas black communities in Canada have been established for over 400 years; whereas Canada is a signatory to the UN initiatives for the International Decade for People of African Descent; whereas the UN working group of experts on people of African descent has noted the disproportionately high unemployment rates among black Canadians, many of whom are forced to take low-paying jobs with little security and poor prospects, and has, accordingly, recommended that Canada should systematically address employment disparity for African Canadians through enactment of employment equity legislation; whereas in 20 years, the black population has doubled in size, going from 573,860 persons in 1996 to 1,198,540 persons in 2016; whereas the very first employment equity program in the federal government for black employees was in Halifax in 1973, and in 150 years of the establishment of Canada, a black person has never been appointed to or promoted to deputy minister in the federal government; whereas employment equity cannot explain the thinning out of visible minorities, particularly black employees, that happens at the assistant deputy minister and deputy minister levels; whereas employment equity cannot explain the virtual absence of black women within the executive cadre, considering over the past 30 years, women in general have come to represent approximately 50% of the population of executives in the federal public service; whereas we need to disaggregate employment equity data to understand the lived experience of black employees; and whereas there have been more than enough qualified, meritorious candidates from the black community in Canada to fill these roles; therefore this House: (1) will examine the systemic barriers which prevent members from black communities from being promoted within the federal system; (2) will review the definition of visible minority with a view to updating this language and concept in ways that are consistent with best and promising practices for effectively addressing racial inequality in Canada's federal labour market; (3) will engage in a process to understand the work lived experience of federal black public servants; (4) will consider using disaggregated data for the next iteration of the employment equity report; (5) will consider the establishment of a commissioner of employment equity; and, lastly, (6) will consider the use of equity and anti-racism training within an anti-oppression framework for all federal employees.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

CRIMINAL RECORDS ACT

The House resumed from June 4 consideration of the motion that Bill C-93, An Act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak once more to Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

I will be splitting my time with the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

As I said last week, this is a terrible bill. It reminds me of the NAFTA bill. However, sometimes a bill is better than no bill.

As I have said many times in the House, I was never in favour of the legalization of marijuana, Bill C-45, which was another typically ill-conceived bill brought in by the Liberal government.

I will support the Bill C-93 because there is a common-sense element to it.

Although I did not support legalization, I am not naive enough to say that it was not right to look at the whole cannabis strategy in Canada. Let us face it, we are not the only ones. Many other countries have legalized or decriminalized marijuana. We only have to look at our closest and best trading partners, the good old U.S.A.

The use of marijuana has been legalized and decriminalized in Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, the District of Columbia, Mariana Islands and Guam. Many of these jurisdictions are looking at or have commenced programs to get rid of the old cannabis-related charges for simple possession. There are several different programs being looked at. Some are similar to this bill, Bill C-93. Some are similar to what the NDP has been pushing, which is expungement.

We have heard from many of my colleagues in the House about the injustices that have taken place with respect to Canadians who have records for simple possession of marijuana. Stories have been told about people being turned back at the U.S. border. However, in my research, I have found the same things are happening in the United States. I will provide two cases. We have heard this before with respect to our people, just not south of the border. I will not to give their names to protect their identity.

A 70-year-old retired carpenter in the United States, who once ran for the Senate, was convicted back in 1968 for simple possession. His conviction caused him to be refused entry into Canada and he is unable to purchase a firearm in the United States.

Another gentleman, a professional lighting technician, worked for Willy Nelson for a time. Because of a misdemeanour drug charge as a youth, he was unable to accompany the band on tour to Canada.

Government Orders

Therefore, I strongly believe we need to remove the records for Canadians who were charged with simple possession of marijuana. Clearing people's records can remove barriers to employment and housing.

Many groups in Canada have become victims because of the area they live in and the environment around them. Many are good people who made the wrong choice at the wrong time. That is why I support Bill C-93, although I feel the bill did not go far enough. It should have, and could have, looked at many minor Criminal Code offences, such as public mischief and wilful damage, offences we call misdemeanours in the Criminal Code. There is always room to fix things. Maybe sometime in the future Bill C-93 can be fixed.

I spoke about this last week. In California, Code for America has brought out a program called "Clear My Record". It is a computerized program that allows for the expedient removal of simple criminal code records, such as the simple possession of marijuana.

• (1540)

From the list of states I mentioned previously, nearly every one has passed laws that allow people to clear or change their criminal records. Those states recognize the impact on the economy and on the lives of families when millions are shut out of the workforce or unable to fully reintegrate into their communities because of criminal records from their past. I was shocked to learn, in my research on Bill C-93, that one in three people had a criminal record in the United States.

I also discovered that those states that had a cumbersome, overly complicated system of removing one's record failed in their goals. Only a small fraction of the tens of millions of eligible Americans benefited from these laws, which was directly related to being over-complicated, costly and took too much time to do.

"Code for America", a computerized system that was adopted by California, is a modern 21st century technology that is quick, efficient and benefits the recipients. "Clear my Record" is a free online tool that assists people in California to navigate the complicate process of clearing their records. People can fill out a short, easy to understand application online that typically takes 10 minutes to get connected to a legal authority.

Jazmyn Latimer and Ben Golder, who co-developed the program, realized there was a problem when they looked into how many people were taking advantage of getting their records expunged. They found that less than 8% of the people who qualified accomplished it, simply because the system was opaque, hard to understand and navigate and costly, both for the people with the records and for the government. Does this sound like Bill C-93? It very much does.

I made recommendations to Bill C-93 during committee that the Canadian Parole Board look at electronic means of modernizing the way we do business. We are still following 20th century technology, trying to do too much by hand. Why? I could not get an answer for that.

The state of California, which has implemented the electronic process, has plans to try to clear over 250,000 cannabis-related

convictions by 2020. That is probably as many as we have in Canada, and if not, a lot more. I hope it succeeds.

As well, I hope our Parole Board looks at an electronic process for Canadians with all possession charges and to expand in the future to look at other minor Criminal Code offences. We owe it to Canadians to make this system simple and free so they can get rid of their records, live better lives and be less of a burden on society.

• (1545)

Mr. Sean Casey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it quite fascinating to hear the member for Yellowhead say that Bill C-93 does not go far enough, that it should include some minor offences and that processes should be free and easier to get at.

I invite him to comment on the measures taken by the previous Conservative government, a government of which he was a member. It jacked up application fees, increased the waiting time to the point where the backlog is substantial, as is the hardship for many of the people in the very situations he described. That is the record of the Conservative government.

How does he square that with the position he has taken on this bill?

• (1550)

Mr. Jim Egliniski: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives' stand was that we were trying to run an efficient government, with a balanced budget. Sometimes, governments must take hard measures, realizing that certain expenses may have to be passed down to the public. It is obvious that not many people are receiving the benefits of our parole program and pardon system.

We would be naive if we did not look at ways of modernizing it. Bill C-93 tries to do that. It should have gone further. It should have been more forceful in looking at electronic means to make it simpler, less costly and more efficient for the government.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my friend and friend colleague is retiring, I would like to thank him for his service. We have done some work together at the all-party climate caucus, and I appreciate his involvement there.

With respect to the legislation, we have heard the arguments about record suspension and we have talked about expungement. The MP for Victoria put forward a bill on expungement, which was defeated by the government. It just does not make sense to us that everyday Canadians can go ahead now and legally use marijuana recreationally, while their neighbour, who may have been convicted for using marijuana, still holds a criminal record. Now people are being asked to go through a long process in asking for a record suspension, which is very costly. Records could be expunged. We have done this in the past with historical wrongs, such as with Bill C-66.

Government Orders

Does the member agree that we should go to full expungement, save a ton of money and move on so people, especially those who are vulnerable, do not have to go through this process?

I have 10 first nations communities in my riding. Many of these people are facing huge challenges when it comes to transportation. For them, applying for a record suspension is very unlikely, because of the costs associated with getting to where there is broadband or an office to do that important work.

Mr. Jim Eglinski: Madam Speaker, I have mixed emotions. Expungement would be a quick and simple way of doing it. However, I was a police officer for 35 years. Many times when I charged an individual with possession for the purpose of trafficking, that charge got reduced. There may have been other charges. When that person went to court, the Crown and the defence lawyer would decide to plea bargain and, a lot of times, it went down to the simple possession charge. Therefore, I have a hard time with that.

We need to have a way to clarify if this is the only thing relating to the charge of simple possession. I personally have dealt with hundreds of cases over the years, where I may have made the charge simple possession but it may have been a lot more serious. If the guy was polite and co-operative, I would give him the benefit of the doubt. The chiefs of police have brought that concern forward.

I know that technically we could do it with the press of a button, but I do not know if that would be right. We need to really look in-depth at that aspect. We need some way of clarifying it. It is not as easy as a simple possession. In many cases, there are a lot of other things relating to that charge.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I could just stand here and listen to the member for a few more minutes. There is so much to learn, because this debate does have so many different sides to it. We have people who have spent 35 years in the policing community, who have a voice in here. People who have had a criminal charge against them have a voice in here. There are so many different things that we need to look at, so I do respect the words that the member said. That is what makes a healthy debate in the House of Commons.

I am proud to stand here and speak to Bill C-93, an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis. Although I am not 100% behind the bill, I do feel that it does what is best for Canadians.

To begin, I am concerned about the cost to taxpayers. There are different ways of looking at this. In the previous Conservative government, the process was a user-pay system. This system was put in, and for many years in my experience as a constituency assistant, I would sit with people who had a criminal record and needed to get a record suspension.

We would go through the list of what they needed to do, everything from going to the police station and to the courthouse and all of those different things that were necessary. In many cases, people were trying to get their criminal record suspended because they were looking for better opportunities, for better jobs, for things that would increase their livelihood. I fully respected that.

For many people, although there are different ways of looking at this, what I found was that sometimes the user-pay system was very

difficult. For those people who wanted to have a better life, I found it extremely difficult when I knew that they did not have the means, and all they wanted was to have a job. Sometimes this is a real difficulty.

What is at the end of the day for taxpayers? The border security minister indicated that there could be up to 400,000 Canadians who have a criminal record for simple possession, but the government expects between 70,000 and 80,000 are eligible to apply. According to public safety, the cost would be approximately \$2.5 million, equalling approximately 10,000 applicants.

There are ways of doing this. I believe that when someone breaks the law, there needs to be some sort of penalty, but sometimes the penalties can live on forever if people do not have the opportunity to have their record suspended, because it is not going away. If people do not have the means to pay for that record suspension, they are going to continue to have that record.

That is why I wish I could see that the government looked at a possible means test. The Liberals talk about means tests all the time, and about not helping the millionaires or the people who do not need it, so I do not know why they did not consider having means tests. Those people who cannot afford it could pay what they can—pay a small portion or pay for the court documents or the records or whatever it is they need. It could be very difficult, but instead we will have people who are making zero dollars and people who are making \$500,000 all paying the same to make it universal.

We know that this is an expensive program, so if we are looking at it as a poverty reduction measure, let us make sure we are actually helping those in poverty by reducing the cost to them so that those people can have a better life.

One of the discussions we had was whether it was necessary, the idea being that people would say getting a job was not a big deal and having a criminal record was okay. I lived during an economic downturn, and people who had lost their job at Ford in St. Thomas or lost their job at Sterling or a variety of other places were now looking to get a foot in another door. One of the things stopping them was their criminal record.

Many people would say it is against human rights. If there is no reason to worry about that criminal record and it has nothing to do with their job, it should not matter to the employer whether they have a criminal record or not, but let us be honest: When a company is receiving 200 applications and notices there is a criminal record, it is very easy to put it into the “later” pile, because those are issues it does not want to deal with. Companies do not know that it may be a simple possession of marijuana, but it is a simple way of separating the good from the bad, even though the best employee may be lost in that later pile. Those are some of the things we have to understand.

Government Orders

One of the key elements to this issue is poverty reduction. I believe giving every Canadian a chance to better themselves is extremely important, and now that we have legislation that allows for the possession of cannabis and the use of cannabis for people over the age of 18 in Canada, we need to be able to make sure that nothing is holding them back. Having this record suspension so that they can have better lives is key when it comes to a poverty reduction strategy, and it is one of the things that should be implemented for that strategy.

• (1555)

Law enforcement seems to be somewhat supportive. It is off and on. However, as we just heard from the previous speaker, sometimes people had reduced charges. For instance, people trafficking on the streets or who had something else in their possession may have had a reduced charge. There may have been other petty crimes like that, but the possession of cannabis was seen and may have been the only charge laid.

As the previous speaker said, it would be really nice if we could find out more, but what more do we need to do? At the end of the day, it would definitely slow down the process and would not make the process as expedient as people would wish. However, it is important, because sometimes people who have committed much greater crimes have only this possession conviction on their record. In some cases, it was the only offence for which a person could be found guilty, or it may have been a plea deal or a variety of things like that.

Some Canadians, like the NDP, are asking for full expungement. However, I question full expungement because of those cases in which a person has been able to get the charges reduced to simple possession.

There were several common sense amendments put forward by the Conservative Party that were defeated.

Those who had fines and had never paid them would still be eligible for this program, which defeats the whole purpose of having a fine. This is one thing that I am really concerned with. If, let us say, a person has a fine from 20 years ago sitting on their record, it would also be expunged. However, if my mom had a fine, for example, she would be at the station paying it the very next day, because that is who she is. She is a very honourable person. There are some people who may forget, which is one thing, but there are people who just choose not to pay the fine, and they would have this service as well, so at the end of the day, was there any penalty? The answer would be no.

I also think that the surcharge should be up to those individuals with unpaid fines and should not be laid upon the taxpayer.

One thing I like is the amendment that would allow the swearing of an affidavit. Many times I have helped people who have tried to get their records. They have gone to the courthouses and police stations, but sometimes getting those records has been extremely difficult, so the opportunity to swear an affidavit is a very positive amendment. I congratulate all parties who supported it.

Turning back to the legislation, a criminal record showing that charges were withdrawn or that there was an acquittal can have negative effects and can be an obstacle for people wanting to

volunteer at their child's school. For years I volunteered at my children's schools in reading programs or on school trips, although not so much now that I am a member of Parliament. However, if a person has been charged with simple possession in the past—which, let us be honest, has happened to a lot of Canadians—that person is not allowed to volunteer at their child's school or for a school trip. If this was something that happened when they were 18 years old and now they are taking their 10-year-old on a school trip, it is just really out there.

We have these screenings because children are vulnerable and we want to make sure that the children have the best opportunity to be with the best role models, but a simple possession charge does not make a person a horrific human being. It is so important that we allow those people to also be involved, whether it is volunteering at food banks, schools, or churches, or at many organizations where a person's criminal record must be clean. These are big concerns.

This goes to the idea of where the NDP would go. What would happen if there was expungement? There are a lot of issues with that. People with a criminal record would be unable to work at a bank, at most government jobs, as insurance or real estate brokers, taxi drivers, police officers, or private investigators. They would be unable to work at restaurants where alcohol is served and, as I said, as volunteers.

We have to give people opportunities, and sometimes it is as simple as giving them a second chance.

Therefore, I am pleased to support the bill before us. As with any other piece of legislation, we will have to look at it and make sure that it is doing exactly what it is supposed to be doing. We have to make sure that it does what it is supposed to do for the people who are supposed to gain the ability to have their sentences removed.

Let us do this while looking ahead and also looking behind to make sure that we have done it properly.

• (1600)

Mrs. Karen McCrimmon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the very balanced perspective that the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London put forward, showing what some of the advantages are and what some of the disadvantages are. That is the kind of conversation we should be having, and I appreciate that. However, this is not finished. Everything is not done here. There is more to do.

I would like to ask the hon. member this. If she could pick one thing that we were to look at in the next Parliament to make this even more effective, what would it be?

• (1605)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I think part of it is making sure that those records are all compiled, because people have to go here, here and here. We need to make it user-friendly. That is one of the biggest things we have to lean towards, making it user-friendly.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is actually nice to see the spirit of the House as we are trying to move forward collectively in a way that is going to help those people who have been convicted for small possession of marijuana, especially the most marginalized persons.

Government Orders

We hear in Regina that indigenous people are nine times more likely than non-indigenous people to be charged with small possession of marijuana or carry a charge of small possession. Clearly, that is a fundamental wrong.

If we look at historical wrongs, homosexuality was illegal until 1969. There were charges laid until 1969. It took us 49 years to pass Bill C-66 to expunge the convictions of those who were charged under what was clearly a historical wrong in our society. We do not want to wait another 49 years to fix this historical wrong. We can fix it right now, and record suspension is just not enough. It is going to be a long, onerous and expensive process.

I call on my colleague to support us in calling for expungement. I know she has talked about some of the rationale behind it, but this is just a much easier way. Let us not wait to fix this historical wrong, because we know that it clearly is one.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I was fully supportive of Bill C-66 and the expungement. Being an ally of the LGBTQ+ community, I look at people and who they are. This is something I look at differently. When comparing cannabis to a person's sexual diversity, I find the issues to be very different.

That being said, we need to make sure that we are actually focusing on people charged with simple possession. The thing is, I am concerned that we can come to an administrative barrier. Part of it is that I know the drug dealers on the street. I know there is a big issue happening here.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: I do not know them all by name.

Part of the issue is that there are some bad people out there, and I do not want to just say, "Forget about it. It was a simple charge." Some of those people have caused great angst for many families.

Mr. Paul Manly (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, GP): Madam Speaker, I support this bill. I think that there could be improvements, and I know that the Green Party requested some amendments, including expungement. We have a lot of people in this country who have criminal records based on simple possession. It has ruined a lot of good people's lives and opportunities, and it creates problems for people who want to cross the border.

I think expungement is the best solution. Finding a way to make it very affordable for people to have their records removed so that they can carry on with their lives and not carry this with them for the rest of their days is very important as well.

I would ask the hon. member whether she think that the bill is good enough as it is to support it. What changes would she make otherwise?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Madam Speaker, I look at this and I am just not there yet with expungement. I need more facts to show that we are getting only the people who have had simple possession. I think that is where my breaking point is, simple possession versus trafficking. That is where the line is.

Mr. Michael Barrett (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my neighbour to the north, the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-93. When I spoke to the bill previously, I expressed my concern that it has been rushed to meet the Prime Minister's self-imposed political timeline. We are going to miss real opportunities to get this right, and there was a lot of runway for the government to get this done.

Municipalities are going to struggle with this. There will be real costs for them. We have heard from law enforcement professionals about the challenges that the hurried legislation will present for them. Health care professionals have also expressed concerns about the timetable that came with legalization. It is fair to describe it as half-baked indeed.

The issues that come from a lack of due diligence are so much more than the downloading of responsibilities to municipalities. It furthers the inequalities people will face.

There is also a risk, as my colleague said, that we will not be able to have full visibility on the criminal records of the folks who will receive these expedited pardons. Perhaps the amendments that were proposed ought to have been given better and proper consideration by the government in an effort to further the interests of justice in Canada.

The last time I spoke to the bill, I described issues in a very clear way for the government to give it the opportunity to understand and consider the error of its ways. I did this using the story of "The Tortoise and the Hare". I will not retell it, as I am sure government members were captivated by my first telling of it. However, the fact remains that through the government's failure to deliver, we find ourselves here.

When the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety spoke on this issue, she conceded that due diligence had not been done. She said:

However, not all of the fines are owed to the federal government. All the federal government can do is wipe its fines, but it has to discuss this with provinces and municipalities and encourage them to do the same. That kind of discussion is ongoing, but it will take a while to come to an understanding of how provinces and municipalities can actually contribute to this process.

Further on she said:

Mr. Speaker, I believe how it would work, at a provincial or municipal level, is that payment of those fines, if they are not granted amnesty on those fines, would be through civil recourse.

It is pretty late in the game, as we are at quite an advanced stage, for those discussions to be ongoing or, more correctly, not happening.

Concerns that have been expressed by stakeholders persist. We have heard what the risks are for municipalities. However, our law enforcement and public safety professionals continue to have inadequate tools for roadside testing and screening for impairment. That presents a grave challenge. Despite all of the time and education that has been invested in preventing and stopping alcohol-impaired driving, we continue to have issues. Authorities could run a ride check any time of day and they would find people who are impaired.

Government Orders

It concerns me that while our law enforcement agents are out trying to do their jobs with this newly legalized substance, they do not have the tools and the tool kit to get the job done. The tool they have is error-plagued. Members may recall that the device police have been given is the same device on which folks test positive for opiate use after eating a poppyseed bagel.

An hon. member: What?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I share the shock and surprise of my colleague. It is unbelievable.

• (1610)

The rush to get things done comes out of the government now realizing that it has run out of runway and it wants to have a few things on the achievement list after a pretty rough spring for Canada.

The institution that we believe in, the independence of our judiciary, has been questioned. It has been weakened by the Liberal government's actions. We need to look no further than the SNC-Lavalin scandal. We need to look no further than the politically motivated prosecution and persecution of Vice-Admiral Mark Norman.

Now that the Liberals are looking to get a few accomplishments in their brochures for the election, this bill is one that they want to get done.

The Liberals have broken promises that they made in the last election. The democratic reform that they promised has not materialized. Certainly, it is quite the opposite. It is very concerning that the Liberals have Elections Canada now paying the better part of three-quarters of a million dollars to Instagram models and the like to influence the outcome of the election. It is preposterous. I cannot even believe that is part of the government's strategy. It clearly is not the work of a serious mind.

So much of what the Liberals have failed to do risks the future for Canadians. Failing to balance the budget, as the Liberals promised, is a huge problem. Having been given a balanced budget in 2015, they plunged us into deficit after deficit after deficit. Here we are in year four with another deficit. These deficits today will be the taxes of tomorrow. It is very concerning for Canadians.

We had a promise from the government that it was going to take real action on the environment. Hundreds of thousands of litres of raw sewage are being dumped into the St. Lawrence without consequence. It is not a concern for the Liberals.

In the absence of a plan to help the environment, the Liberals put a tax on everything. They put a tax on driving one's kids to hockey and a tax to run a small business, those same small businesses that the Liberal government alleged to be tax cheats.

Conservatives know that small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They are the real economic driver. We have often heard the government say that it created one million jobs. It is not the government's responsibility to create jobs. It needs to create an environment where jobs can be created. Canadians create jobs.

The Liberals will not accept responsibility for failures but they are quick to take credit for other people's successes. Certainly they are quick to take credit on the backs of ordinary Canadians and small

business owners, just as they are quick to bring in taxes to pay for their reckless spending.

It is a hurried process that we have arrived at with Bill C-93, but it matches very much the chaotic nature of the government.

We will monitor the implementation of this bill. We commit to reviewing its effectiveness and fairness. When we form government, we will see if any changes need to be made to ensure the reasonableness and fairness of it are applied.

• (1615)

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have said that the legalization of cannabis would lead to a catastrophe. That seemed to be the theme of the member's speech. So far, however, the facts speak for themselves.

We have seen a decline in the criminal share of cannabis from 51% to 38% in the first three months as opposed to last year. There is no sign of an increase in youth consumption, impaired driving problems or at the border.

Will the member concede that the Conservatives' doomsday predictions are a bit unfounded?

• (1620)

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I find it interesting that the parliamentary secretary would say there has not been an increase in impaired driving cases. The Liberals have not even given the police the tools necessary to detect if impaired driving has occurred. The equipment that they approved is not even ready to use. It is pretty rich for the Liberals to say that the implementation has been without error. In fact, I think the chaos that the Conservatives predicted has arrived.

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, my riding of Kootenay—Columbia has long been a place known for generations of cannabis farmers. It has been quite interesting to work through the process over the last couple of years trying to make sure that cannabis grown under sunshine and rain is as acceptable as cannabis grown under plastic and glass, and I do not think we are quite there yet.

I have consulted with constituents in my riding about this particular bill and I am personally supportive of Bill C-93. Why not go all the way to expungement now that we have started that process?

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I have had the pleasure of visiting the riding of Kootenay—Columbia and it is, indeed, quite wonderful, although I did not visit any cannabis-growing farms.

Government Orders

Bill C-93, in its current form, is flawed. The amendments proposed at committee by industry in response to recommendations by industry experts would have served this piece of legislation well. With a view to fairly implementing the new legislation in what should have been lockstep with the legalization of marijuana, the Conservatives are going to support this piece of legislation, but, as I said before, like so many other pieces of legislation that the Liberals implemented, we will fix it and clean up the mess.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, there was a discussion by a Liberal member about my party being afraid of the consequences of cannabis legalization. There was an implication that a Conservative government would want to recriminalize or put penalties in place for the use of cannabis in the future, and I thought that was an unfortunate implication.

I want to give my colleague the opportunity to make it clear what the Conservative Party position is with regard to the legal status of cannabis under a Conservative government after the next election.

Mr. Michael Barrett: Madam Speaker, I thank my neighbour to the north in Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston for the opportunity to say that of course, a Conservative government would make no effort to recriminalize cannabis.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague to the south, who has been representing very ably the riding that was, until very recently and for a long time, represented by my dear friend and colleague Gord Brown. Those were big shoes to fill. I know I am expressing a view that is shared by many in his constituency when I say that my colleague is doing a very admirable job, and my hat is off to him for that.

This is my second opportunity to address Bill C-93 and my third to address the issue of pardons for the formerly criminal act of simple possession of cannabis. I was also able to address the private member's bill, Bill C-415, which was moved in the name of our colleague from Victoria.

I want to focus my remarks primarily on the contrast between the expungement model in Bill C-415 and the record suspension or pardon model in Bill C-93. Looking at this bill and the comments raised in committee persuades me of the truth of a remark that was made in committee by a criminal defence lawyer, Solomon Friedman, who said:

I should first note that Bill C-93 is better than nothing. But better than nothing is a mighty low bar for our Parliament. You can do better. You must do better. Instead, I would urge a scheme of expungement along the lines already provided for in the Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act.

That act was, of course, passed by this Parliament at the instigation of the current government, which revealed that expungement is, at least in principle, possible for the former offence of simple possession of cannabis.

Better than nothing turns out to be the equivalent, in practice, of very little at all. Parole Board officials testifying before the committee studying this bill estimated that out of the 250,000 to 500,000 Canadians with convictions for cannabis possession, only 10,000 would apply for a record suspension or expedited pardon.

I will make two comments. First, I am not sure how much precision or accuracy we can expect in the prediction of 10,000 from

people who said that the number of records out there is somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000. That is a substantial margin of error. Additionally, if it is 10,000, why so few? The answer, in part, is the incredibly bureaucratic nature of the process under Bill C-93. When looking at Bill C-93, one gets the impression that the government looked at all available options for dealing with this issue and selected the most bureaucratic one it could find.

Let me quote from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, a supporter of this bill, and my point will be made. In promotion of the bill, she said:

[W]hy not just do it like some California municipalities and erase all the records with the press of a button? We do have an electronic police database of criminal records here in Canada, however, that database does not contain enough information to allow for a proactive amnesty....

[The] Parole Board should explore options for moving towards a more digitized system capable of receiving applications electronically, something particularly important for Canadians in rural areas.

That system would be in the future, not under this bill. That is a reference to the problems of getting access to broadband Internet in rural areas.

The parliamentary secretary then said:

In the meantime, the Parole Board is taking a number of steps to simplify the application process in other ways. It is simplifying its website and application form. It is creating a dedicated, toll-free phone number and an email address to help people with their applications.

In other words, none of this stuff is available, and it will take some time before that happens. She continued:

It is developing a community outreach strategy with a particular focus on the communities most [likely to be] affected by the criminalization of cannabis to make sure that people know about this new expedited process and how to access it...

We will need an advertising campaign.

This is going to be slow and complicated. By contrast, what would have happened under an expungement system? Expungement is nothing the government ever considered. Indeed, it seems not to have even thought of this possibility. Under expungement, we would simply say that the government would act as if any record that stated that a person had been convicted for possession of cannabis did not actually exist. If we found it, we simply would say there was nothing there.

• (1625)

This is done by the courts all the time. Any correspondence between lawyers done on a without prejudice basis, whether or not the words "without prejudice" are put at the front of the various pieces of correspondence, is automatically disregarded by a court. They have no ability to present it as evidence in a proceeding.

Government Orders

Similarly, we could do the same thing with records. This would overcome the problem of having different records kept in different ways, some on paper and some electronically, in different jurisdictions. They would simply have no existence in law. Because it is such a common conviction, when one was accessed, we would understand that it simply did not exist for the purpose of being used by any law enforcement official. That is how we could introduce expungement. This would eliminate all the bureaucracy, all the application fees that are necessary, which would still exist under this proposal, all the time, all the work and all the money that would have to be expended. There is a cost estimate, which I find hard to believe, attached to this bill. There would be zero cost with an expungement system.

In all fairness, the bill is better now than it was before it went to committee and came back with amendments. This is thanks, in part, to an amendment proposed by the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I will again read from the parliamentary secretary's words to give members an idea of what was done. She stated:

thanks to an amendment at committee from the member for Toronto—Danforth, people will be able to apply [for a pardon] even if they have outstanding fines associated with their cannabis possession conviction.

Due to an amendment we voted on at report stage...people whose only sentence was a fine will not be required to submit court documents as part of their application.

Finding these court documents was part of the supposedly costless, expedited process until this amendment was made.

On the other hand, a further suggested amendment, put forward by the Conservatives, was accepted at committee and then subsequently rejected by the government.

I will quote from our Conservative critic on this issue, who stated, "We proposed a measure to allow applicants whose records were destroyed to swear an affidavit explaining their situation and certifying that they are eligible", which of course creates some paperwork but is less complicated than what we are left with. He went on to say, "This would have made the process even more fair. The Liberals agreed to this amendment in committee but changed their minds at report stage and decided to reject it."

That would have helped relieve some of the bureaucracy. There are certain costs that continue to exist, and this prompted one person to quip, I think very appropriately, that the bill should not have been entitled an act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis, but rather, an act to provide for lower-cost, somewhat expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis.

In the remaining minute and a half of my time, I want to deal with another important issue. Getting a pardon essentially equals getting forgiveness. People have done something wrong, we forgive them, and we move on. Expungement is a way of saying that what they did was not wrong in the first place. There are some offences for which this might not be true, even if we eliminated them retrospectively. I think, in the case of cannabis possession, it is clear that our ancestors, those who came before us, did not make it legal because they felt it was morally wrong to ingest or use marijuana. They thought it was the best way to protect people from their own unwise instincts. It was a wrong move. It did not work. It ruined a lot of lives, but those people were not put in prison because they had done

something that was evil or wrong or would harm the rest of society. Therefore, removing this is entirely appropriate. We need not save expungement, as the government has proposed, only for the righting of historical wrongs based on laws that are now prohibited under the charter. I suggest that, in this case, it is also appropriate, and I urge all of us to consider, as we look forward to the future, the expungement model, perhaps in a second piece of legislation in the 43rd Parliament.

● (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I know that he spoke briefly about this, but I would like to go back to the issue of making the process automatic.

When the bill was in committee, we heard that giving it a title that implies the process would cost nothing is misleading. My colleague briefly mentioned this at the end of his speech.

In reality, not only is there a cost associated with obtaining the documents required to apply, but these costs also vary widely from one region to the next. Furthermore, people living far from major urban centres may have an even harder time obtaining these documents.

I also want to add that the Conservatives proposed an amendment, which I supported. In Canada, we have a serious problem with storing and maintaining criminal records, so this amendment would have allowed people whose documents have been lost or destroyed to swear an oath and receive a sworn statement that they could use to apply. This amendment was rejected by the Liberals at report stage.

I would like to know what my colleague has to say about this. Does he believe that we should be a bit more flexible and make the process automatic?

● (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, first of all, I thought the amendment was a good one. The decision to remove it I will not say was unwise, but I think it was inexplicable. I really do not know the reason for removing it.

My colleague is entirely right that it is harder for people in some parts of the country to get access to these kinds of records. It is harder for people who do not have ready access to a lawyer or the ability to pay for a lawyer or the services of a lawyer's office to hunt through court records. Citizens are not easily able to do this on their own.

The same people who were victimized too much initially, those who are poorer, those who are suffering from mental illness, those who are less able to manoeuvre their way through the byzantine legal system, will have the same problem at this level. I think we will discover that the same groups that faced too many arrests and convictions will face too small an ability to right these wrongs, relative to the population as a whole.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has an interesting background on this particular issue. He was not always on side with his Conservative Party when Stephen Harper was the prime minister. I respect that of the member opposite.

Listening to the Conservatives speak on this particular bill is a little confusing. The NDP members seem to have taken the position that they are not going to be voting for this bill, because they want expungement. If I listen to the Conservatives, some of them stand up and say that it should be expungement as opposed to a pardon. Others stand up and say that the pardon is good. Overall, it looks like the Conservatives are voting for the bill. It is hard thing to tell for sure.

Could the member give a clear indication of the Conservative Party's position on this bill? Do the Conservatives favour it, or are they inclined to vote against it?

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, I can only speak for my own position. I am in favour of the bill. It is better than nothing, but it is not much better than nothing, in my opinion.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hold my colleague in great esteem, and I appreciated his speech.

One of the questions I am hearing is, "What is the cost going to be for this?" More importantly, many of these convictions were plea bargained. In other words, a more serious offence was pleaded down, and now these people may have these options available to them, as well as the people who have convictions for simple possession.

Could the member comment on that issue? The government really has to look at this carefully, because no prosecutor would have accepted a plea bargain knowing that it was going to be washed away in the future.

Mr. Scott Reid: Madam Speaker, this is an issue on which I disagree with many colleagues in my own party. Some people, no doubt, were convicted because it was part of a plea bargain; others were not. I do not know the percentage. I suspect the majority who faced simple possession charges and were convicted did not plea bargain.

Blackstone, the great author and authority on the common law, said in the 18th century that it was better that 100 guilty men go free than that one innocent man be hanged. Everybody knows this saying. The same principle ought to apply here. It is better that some people be able to get a pardon even though their conviction was the result of a plea bargain, than the alternative, namely that others who had simple possession charges be unable to get a pardon.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia, Housing; the hon. member for Courtenay—Alberni, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, Sport.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to once again speak to Bill C-93. This bill has a

number of flaws and perfectly illustrates why Canadians' trust in the Liberals has been broken. On the eve of the election, the government is settling for half measures that are not even guaranteed to pass.

As the parliamentary secretary said, we oppose this bill. We are not here to give the Liberal government a free pass for measures that very few people will be able to access. For example, I will talk about Bill C-66, which established an expedited procedure for expunging criminal records of LGBTQ community members sentenced for behaviour that is no longer deemed criminal. This objective is commendable and we support it, but an automatic process would have been preferable.

We can look at the numbers for the sake of comparison. When Bill C-93 was in committee, we learned that of the approximately 9,000 people who were eligible for the procedure established under Bill C-66, only seven had applied. In committee, we asked government officials for an explanation, but naturally, they were unable to respond. I would certainly be able to provide some, just as the experts did in committee. I will come back to that.

Meanwhile, the government said that it would advertise through non-traditional means. Is it talking about tweets, Facebook posts or pretty hashtags? I have a hard time believing that these ads will be seen by the right people, who are often in precarious situations. We are talking about vulnerable Canadians, racialized people, indigenous peoples and low-income Canadians. Factually and statistically, these people are the most likely to have a criminal record for simple possession of marijuana.

This is easy to prove. Here in the House, the Prime Minister publicly stated that he had once smoked marijuana recreationally, as did other politicians. There is nothing wrong with that. Black people in Toronto, however, cannot get away with it that easily. They are the most likely to have a criminal record for simple possession of marijuana. This is a serious problem and is one of the reasons we oppose this bill. It is clear that the people who need this process the most are the same ones who will not benefit from it.

I would like to talk a little bit about the study in committee in order to explain why the NDP does not support this bill. First, a criminal lawyer told us that this was the least Parliament could do and that it was better than nothing but that parliamentarians have a duty to do much better than that. I could not agree more.

The NDP's commitment to Parliament involves doing our best to help those who need it most. We do not want to settle for taking a tiny step in the right direction. The lawyer I mentioned, Solomon Friedman, also raised several problems with the record suspension system. Those problems are not an issue in the NDP's approach of expunging criminal records. He mentioned two factors.

Government Orders

The first is good conduct. Those who apply for a criminal record suspension, whether under the process proposed by Bill C-93 or the usual process, must demonstrate that they are being good citizens. For the average Canadian, that means refraining from robbing a bank or murdering someone, for instance, as farfetched as that may sound.

• (1645)

Actually, Mr. Freidman explained that it could include getting a speeding ticket or causing a minor accident with another vehicle by turning onto a one-way street and the police is called in. These actions would be considered bad behaviour. Fortunately, the leader of the Green Party and member for Saanich—Gulf Islands introduced an amendment to fix the problem. We introduced a similar amendment that went even further. I will come back to that in a moment.

The government's amendment appears quite good, but if the government acknowledges this flaw and the distinction between record suspension and expungement, why did it not simply agree to expunge the records from the outset? That was what my colleague from Victoria's bill called for. Incidentally, some Liberal and Conservative members supported it.

There are other differences between the two approaches, but I want to come back to the amendment. The Liberals moved a sub-amendment to the proposed amendment, which then lost an important element that was found in one of my amendments, which was rejected. Simple possession of a reasonable quantity of cannabis, just like its consumption for recreational, medical or other purposes, is now permitted under the law following the passage of Bill C-45 earlier in this Parliament. An individual who obtains a record suspension for simple possession of cannabis could subsequently commit another crime for all sorts of reasons. I am not excusing the crime or stating whether it would be justified. This is a hypothetical situation.

Under Bill C-93, if an individual with a criminal record for simple possession of marijuana has his criminal record suspended and subsequently commits a crime, no matter how minor or insignificant it may be, the record is reinstated. That makes no sense. I do not understand that. If the member for Sherbrooke, the member for Saskatoon West, the member for Courtenay—Alberni, or even I, or anyone else, were in possession of cannabis, that would not be considered unlawful under the act.

An individual can get a record suspension through a government-approved process because the offence they committed is no longer an offence. That individual might go on to commit a crime, perhaps due to being marginalized, as the vast majority of people burdened with the injustice of a criminal record for simple possession of cannabis are. This bill is an attempt to repair that injustice. The individual might be struggling with very difficult circumstances. We do not know all those circumstances.

The government says it wants to help these people, but its new system is flawed. If these people trip up at any point in the future, their criminal record will be reinstated and they will no longer benefit from the Liberals' system.

If their records were expunged, as the NDP and all the committee witnesses except for the minister suggested, the records would no

longer exist. No matter what future difficulties people might encounter, that record would be gone for good.

[*English*]

I also want to speak about other vulnerable individuals whom this bill does not help. I want to speak about the issues raised by the Native Women's Association of Canada, which came to committee and said that one of the groups that would benefit the least from this legislation is indigenous women, because of all the barriers that would still exist despite this process.

• (1650)

Earlier, I asked the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston about the fact that, by not making the process automatic and calling it “no-cost”, the government is misleading Canadians who may want to benefit from this process. Why is that? As every witness said in committee, there are sometimes enormous costs associated with obtaining the necessary documents to apply in the first place, especially for the individuals who seek to benefit from this process.

The application no longer has a cost, but people have to pay to get their fingerprints, pay to go to the court to find their old records, if they even still exist, which is something I will come back to in a moment, and they have to pay for any other documents they might need. The costs could be hundreds of dollars, and it varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

If people live far away from an urban centre, in a region that is already underserved and where vulnerable Canadians, indigenous people and others are already victims of a system that is fixed against them in many ways, they are even more disadvantaged by those barriers that would remain in place despite this legislation. That is unacceptable.

What could have been done? We proposed an amendment that was unfortunately ruled beyond the scope of the bill, which is interesting. I challenged the chair and the Liberals voted with the chair, which is not surprising, but the explanation that was provided by the law clerk in committee was interesting, when he argued why the amendments were beyond the scope of the bill. He said that all the bill seeks to do is take the existing record suspension process, which everyone agrees is fundamentally unequal, and make it a bit easier in some aspects.

However, by making it automatic, we would get rid of those barriers. It was pointed out to us by the Canadian Association of Black Lawyers, the Native Women's Association and others that many of these individuals do not even think they have criminal records anymore because they paid their fines, which is considered time served, and have moved on to other things. They do not even know.

Anyone in this room who has dealt with government, and certainly we have, in our offices, by the very nature of our work, knows that if it is hard enough for those of us within government to deal with the government apparatus and to have the proper knowledge, then certainly it is true for the most vulnerable Canadians.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Even the idea of making the system automatic was a compromise. We initially wanted criminal records to be expunged, but we said we could live with record suspensions. We were not happy, but we wanted the government to at least make the process automatic. It refused. It will not even accept a compromise.

I said earlier that I would come back to the issue of documentation and poor records management in Canada. It is madness. Ask the police about the Canadian police database. Ask about a crime being committed in Ontario and having to search for records in Alberta, Quebec or elsewhere. It is crazy to see how poorly managed these records are. One of the things that needs to be done is a digital upgrade.

The Conservatives proposed an amendment that all committee members supported. If a person could no longer locate documents because they had been destroyed or lost, they could sign a sworn statement explaining the lack of documentation. The Parole Board of Canada would be able to accept this sworn statement, this letter or declaration, so that the person could move forward with the process.

Everyone was happy. It was a step in the right direction. When the bill came back to the House at report stage, the amendment was quashed. The government turned it into an option the board could choose to make available in very specific cases. The amendment might as well not have been adopted, because it will not help anyone.

That brings me to my next point, which is about the most shameful and frustrating part of the whole process. I have been an MP for eight years. I have great respect for the public service and for public servants who work very hard with very little in the way of resources, despite what the general public might think. What I saw during the committee's study of this bill was unbelievable.

• (1655)

When we asked the minister why this process could not be made automatic and why the records could not be expunged, he flat out said that it was too much work. I swear that is what he said, and I invite my colleagues to read his testimony. We heard the same thing from the representatives of the parole board and during clause-by-clause consideration. When I proposed amendments to make things easier for the people this bill is meant to help, the Liberals asked officials to provide a reason for rejecting my amendments. What did they say? They said that they did not have the capacity, that they did not know how they would do that and that it would be too much work.

The government says that better is always possible. It introduced a bill to help people in our society who are caught in a tough situation, but it refuses to accept a better approach, one supported by everyone who testified at committee. It seems it is too much work for the parole board. According to police, civil society and every expert in the legal community, the parole board has been mismanaging records for far too long. It is far from being the best system. In fact, it is quite the opposite. It is unacceptable.

It is even more shameful given that the committee conducted a study. When the minister was appointed, he came in with great fanfare, much like the rest of the government. He said that the

government was going to address all of the injustices created by the previous government and all of the injustices in society. To hear him talk, this was going to be the best government in the history of the universe. According to him, there was no need to worry.

Four years later, what is happening? It costs about \$650 for a person to have their criminal record suspended. I do not have the exact number in front of me. There are some disadvantages to giving a speech without any notes. People are being asked to pay about \$650 to apply for a record suspension. That measure was put in place by the previous government. Some of the wording has been changed. Now, we talk about record suspensions instead of pardons. As the former Conservative government would have said, a criminal can never be pardoned. The minister said that there was a major injustice in the system and that he was going to fix it.

What happened then? Following in the footsteps of several other members, a Liberal member who, I have to believe, had good intentions, hopped on the bandwagon and ordered a committee study. Most people will have only one opportunity in their entire life to introduce a motion or bill in the House. The member called for a study of criminal record suspensions.

I think he could have asked the committee to conduct the study. It would have gladly done it, but let us put that aside. The member's intentions were good. The member for Saint John—Rothesay appeared before the committee and said that an automatic process should be considered for minor crimes, such as simple possession of cannabis.

We did the work and produced a report. The committee presented its report to the House. The government said it would look at it. Incidentally, Public Safety Canada had already commissioned an Ekos survey that found that three-quarters of Canadians supported simplifying the process for applying for a criminal record suspension, because it would allow individuals to reintegrate into society and get a job. Indeed, 95% of people who are granted a pardon or record suspension do not reoffend.

What did the government do? If I were sitting down, I would fall out of my chair. The government presented the same recommendation that had already been made, which would have been a footnote to our study of the bill, based on what the minister said.

It really fuels cynicism when a government says it will do one thing when it comes to power, but then does not do it. One of the government's own members orders a study. The government says it will do it, and then it does not. Then, a month before the House of Commons' last sitting before the election, the same Liberal members say in committee that we did not really have enough time to do the study and that perhaps it should have been done or will be done with the next government.

This is why we oppose Bill C-93. In the justice system and the public safety system, people were far too often penalized for the colour of their skin or the place they lived. We truly want to help these people. We do not want half measures that fuel cynicism.

Government Orders

• (1700)

[English]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, as I understand, the direction we are going in is to allow people to apply for pardons at no cost. Cost is an issue I would like the hon. member to reflect on a bit.

For the longest time, police were enforcing cannabis possession, and the only tool they had at their disposal was to charge somebody, who would end up with a criminal record. At some point, the police stopped enforcing it. At the 4/20 events in Vancouver, the police would stand there and watch people use cannabis.

Does the member not think that the process going forward contributes to equity and fairness, to ensure that basically everyone will be treated the same way?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I do not think the bill would contribute to fairness, and this is why. I already mentioned some of this in my speech, but it bears repeating with regard to the member's question.

First, there is a cost. Yes, the Liberals have removed the \$600 cost, but they have not removed it for record suspensions at large, even though they promised to do that. As I said, there has been study after study, but it has not been done.

The government said it has removed the cost, but it really has not. Every single witness who came before committee, including lawyers and others in civil society, agreed that the costs are still there. People have to pay to get their records, and get to the courthouse to get them.

Representatives of the Native Women's Association of Canada asked whether we really thought that indigenous women with a record for simple possession of cannabis have the means to make their way to a courthouse in an urban centre, to pay to get the records, if they even still exist, and then take them back home and apply for the process the government is putting forward. They do not. Solomon Friedman, a criminal defence lawyer, said this is true of most of his clients.

In fact, it gets worse than that. If we google "Canada pardon" or "pot pardon", we get a bunch of Google results for some of the most disgusting and unsavoury people, who are taking advantage of these individuals, charging them thousands of dollars, much like we see in the immigration system. They take advantage of these people and give them bad and erroneous advice, making sure they get strung along at a high cost.

What is going to happen? Will we get a social media campaign from the Parole Board that will fight back against those unsavoury actors? That is not the case. All of the witnesses told us as much.

While I appreciate the hon. member's good intentions, the fact of the matter is that the title of the bill does not reflect the reality of what the bill would do.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and especially for his expertise. I also thank him for his outstanding command of his files. I know that he has worked very hard on this.

In his speech, he mentioned that government officials, and even the minister, claimed that providing for an automatic system would be too difficult and too much work. I find it somewhat hard to believe that that was the excuse that the department and the minister himself came up with, considering the billions of dollars they have at their disposal. The Parole Board of Canada may have a hard time managing its workload, but I still believe that the Government of Canada, with its \$360-billion annual budget, should have the means to set up an automatic system.

Can my colleague elaborate further on this surprising, absurd answer from the government, namely, that it does not have the means or the capacity to grant automatic pardons? I find that hard to believe.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are paraphrasing what was said. They obviously did not use the words "we can't", but they made it clear that it was too much work for them and that they did not feel as though they had the capacity to do it. In spite of that, in response to one of my amendments, they said that there were privacy concerns. However, the Parole Board of Canada benefits from Privacy Act exemptions that apply specifically to this type of case. It is important to recognize that, if the political will had been there, this could have been accomplished.

The best example is that of San Francisco. After cannabis was legalized in California, a process similar to the one being offered by our government was proposed. As members can imagine, as in the case of Bill C-66, which I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, very few people benefited from this process, particularly because it mainly impacts people in vulnerable situations.

What did they do in San Francisco? They decided to invest in artificial intelligence, a sector in which our governments like to invest, allowing them to sort through records, identify those who are eligible and develop an automatic process for expunging their records.

If a municipal government like that of San Francisco can be innovative, I do not see why the federal government of a G7 country cannot do the same.

• (1705)

[English]

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know Liberals have differences of opinion with the NDP on how to proceed to clear people of their criminal records for possession. However, when the head of the campaign for Cannabis Amnesty, who shares a lot of the NDP's views, was asked in committee whether Bill C-93 was a positive step, she said it absolutely was.

We can talk about the differences of opinion in the House, but would the NDP see fit to help the people impacted by existing convictions to get jobs, housing and education, and support us by voting for this bill?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, there were many witnesses who said the same thing, but I take the words of Solomon Friedman, who said that “better than nothing” is a mighty low bar for our Parliament, and that is what I believe.

The fact of the matter is that in my speech and throughout the study in committee, it was made clear that many barriers remain. In particular, the process that has been put in place will not be accessible to those who need it the most. We just need to look at Bill C-66, which had laudable objectives that we supported, with regard to the historical injustice committed to the LGBTQ community. Only seven people applied out of the 9,000-odd who could have.

New Democrats have asked these questions of officials and the minister in committee, with no one able to answer us in any kind of substantive or real way. What cause would any member of this House have to believe that it would be any different?

Quite frankly, and I say this with all due respect to those who were so wronged, I do not expect any more uptake on this particular measure than there was then. In some cases I expect even less, for a variety of the reasons I enumerated with respect to the barriers that still exist for many vulnerable Canadians.

I will say in closing—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to allow for one more question. Perhaps the hon. member could hold on to that thought and add it to his next answer.

Questions and comments, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this has been an interesting process, at the very least. We have seen a dramatic change in social policy, and it is a positive step forward. Providing pardons with this piece of legislation is going to assist a lot of individuals in being able to take further steps in employment and other aspects of life. Parties may disagree with regard to expungement versus pardons, but there is no doubt that it is a step forward, just like the legalization of cannabis itself. Would the member not agree?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, that is precisely the problem. Very few people will benefit from the system proposed under Bill C-93.

The Canadian Association of Black Lawyers said that it had a lot of clients who did not even know they had a criminal record. If a person does not know that they have a criminal record, how are they supposed to apply to have their record suspended?

There are so many inconsistencies and barriers. That is why I ran for the NDP in 2011 and that is why we are opposed to this bill. We did not come here to give a blank cheque to a self-proclaimed progressive government that proposes half-measures that do not go far enough. We want to truly improve people's lives.

If I thought that Bill C-93 was the best way to do that, the government would have my support. We could have done better. The hon. member for Victoria introduced a bill but the government voted it down.

The Liberals rejected a better solution so why should I give a blank cheque to a government that is not doing enough when I am here to represent people who need us?

• (1710)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Resuming debate.

Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect that if you were to canvass the House you would find unanimous consent to call it 5:30 p.m., so that we could begin Private Members' Business.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of Private Members' Business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP) moved that Bill C-438, An Act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Madam Speaker, there are many in this place who know that I have long awaited the opportunity to debate this bill again. It is Bill C-438, an act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other acts, because that includes an amendment to the bill of rights.

This is the fourth time that I have tabled this bill in 11 years in this place over three Parliaments. I believe the first time I tabled it was as soon as I was elected, somewhere between 2008 and 2009. That bill was debated and went through committee, and I will get into that in a minute. Today, in the brief time I am allotted, I hope to say what an environmental bill of rights is, what its origin is, why it is needed, and who has endorsed the need for an environmental bill of rights.

Private Members' Business

The environmental bill of rights legally extends the right to a healthy, ecologically balanced environment to Canadians. It confirms the duty of the Government of Canada to uphold its public trust duty to protect the environment. It amends the Canadian Bill of Rights to add environmental rights. It extends a bundle of rights and tools to Canadians, including having a voice in decisions impacting their health and environment, having standing before courts and tribunals, and having the power to hold the government accountable on effective environmental enforcement and on the review of law and policies. It extends protections for government whistle-blowers who release to Canadians information that is relevant to health and environmental impacts.

As I mentioned, I have tabled this bill four times over 11 years in three successive governments. My bill actually survived a challenge and gained a speaker's ruling in my favour when the Conservatives tried to crush it in 2009. It did proceed to second reading and on to committee. Sadly, it was essentially shredded at committee. It then died on the Order Paper when the early election was called.

I retabled it again, as I mentioned, in 2011 and 2015 and again in a revised, updated form in 2019.

Why is an environmental bill of rights needed? Community voices, the voices of non-governmental organizations and indigenous voices are absolutely critical triggers for action to protect health and the environment. Federal law and policy is made all the stronger with public engagement, and public rights are absolutely critical to government accountability. That has been my direct experience over the almost 50 years that I have been an environmental lawyer and advocate.

I want to now give a couple of examples of what happens when the public is engaged and their rights are upheld, and what happens when they are not.

One strong example is an engagement that I had, along with a small community organization in Alberta. We were dealing with how to improve air emissions from coal-fired power. Coal-fired power is still the major source of electricity in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and it is huge in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Mercury from coal-fired power is the largest source of industrial mercury in North America, and mercury is a neurotoxin. It was the first substance listed by the federal government under the former Environmental Contaminants Act and was incorporated into the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, yet to this day, the federal government has never regulated mercury from coal-fired power.

I intervened as a volunteer in the review of the standards. It is a consensus process. I dug in my heels. If industry wanted to get their emissions standards for NO_x, sulfur dioxide particulate, they had to agree to my recommendation that mercury had to be captured by that sector, and there had to be a law in place. To the credit of the Alberta government, they enacted that law.

That is a clear example showing that had my community not intervened, neither the federal nor the provincial government would have stepped forward, after 40 years of burning coal in Alberta, to actually stop the flow of mercury into our lakes.

Another example that we have been talking about over the last couple of months in this place is the issue of mercury at Grassy Narrows, and there is a different example. If the indigenous community at Grassy Narrows had been directly engaged in decisions on how those industrial operations were going to operate in their community and along the river and had been engaged on the issue of whether or not it was safe to put effluent that had high levels of mercury contamination into the river, and if they had been given the information on the potential health and environmental impacts and a seat at the table to have a say in how that plan should operate, I do not believe that we would be facing the health impacts and the expense of cleaning up that area now.

● (1715)

Those are the two differences in what happens when we have some environmental rights, the opportunity to be at the table and access to information. The other, Grassy Narrows, is an example of where we did not do that and there is a high cost, both health-wise and financially.

A number of times in this place I have raised concern with the impact of emissions on the indigenous community next to the Sarnia industrial complex and the failure of both levels of government to combat those and do proper health studies and control. That community has struggled just in trying to get basic information on what the emissions are, whether controls are in place and whether it is impacting their health.

Ongoing frustration was felt by indigenous communities in northern Alberta when they attempted to finally have a health impact study delivered in their communities on the impact of oil sands emissions on their health, despite the fact that there was a release quite some years ago about the high rate of rare cancers. A lot of work was also done by scientists, showing a buildup of contaminants in the Athabasca River, in the air and on the land.

Just this week, three chiefs in that area published an article in *The Hill Times*. They said the oil sands is the only activity in their area for employment and economic development. They invest in the oil sands. They demand to have a seat at the table on decisions as to whether or not they are going to allow the draining of the contaminated water in those tar ponds into the Athabasca River. It is going to contaminate the Athabasca River on to Lake Athabasca and on into the Northwest Territories. This has been going on for many years and the government, behind closed doors, has been making these decisions.

This is a perfect example of the need for an environmental bill of rights. If we had an environmental bill of rights, those communities would have the right to all that information, the right to the process that is going on, and the right to have a seat at the table in determining whether or not that is a wise decision.

The Mikisew Cree eventually had to go to UNESCO to demand that there be action on the impact of the Site C dam, the Bennett dam and the oil sands operations on the Peace-Athabasca Delta and the world heritage site. They issued directives, and we are still waiting for the government to act on those directives.

Private Members' Business

Two other final examples are pipelines. If the former Conservative government had actually listened to its advisers, if it had listened to first nations and if it had listened to the environmental community, it would have known it could not proceed with the northern gateway pipeline until it respected first nations' rights and interests. It was the same issue on the TMX pipeline, but as the court held, there was no consideration under the government obligations with regard to endangered species. Therefore, those projects have been stalled or cancelled.

If we had an environmental bill of rights, it would clarify the right to participate, the right to access to information and the right to access to experts and to legal counsel, so that one could come to the table in a constructive and informed way.

Who has endorsed this concept? Some provinces and territories have enacted an array of environmental rights, and some of those limited rights have been enacted in federal laws. Sadly, a good number of those laws were downgraded by the Harper government. That government downgraded the federal impact assessment process, thereby limiting the opportunities for people to participate and the kinds of projects that would be reviewed, including the expansion of oil sands projects and in situ operations.

The Liberals promised in the 2015 campaign that they would immediately strengthen federal environmental laws. Four years into it there is still no action on the report of my committee on reforming CEPA, which would have expanded environmental rights, and we do not know what the fate of Bill C-69 is. We are waiting with bated breath to know what will happen to all of those regressive amendments proposed in the Senate.

The North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation was a side agreement to NAFTA. It was enforced by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, where I had the privilege of working for four years as the head of law and enforcement. Under that agreement, Canada, along with Mexico and the United States, committed to public participation in conserving, protecting and enhancing the environment. It also committed to giving people the opportunity to comment on proposed environmental measures and the right to seek a report on effective environmental enforcement, stand before administrative, quasi-judicial and judicial proceedings, and have access to remedies. Those are exactly the provisions that are in the bill before us today.

• (1720)

Canada already committed years ago to move forward and uphold these rights. Therefore, I have tabled this proposal over and over again to try to encourage the government to respond to the current trade law. In a minute, I will speak about what the government could have done and was asked to do.

There is a side agreement to the proposed new trade law. However, I am sad to say it has been downgraded from the existing one. All of the trade deals that have been signed and sealed since NAFTA have downgraded the environmental rights enshrined in the side agreements.

The United Nations Human Rights Council special rapporteur was asked to look into human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment. He travelled

the world for four years. On behalf of the Human Rights Council, he issued an environmental bill of rights framework for all nations to adopt. Guess what. It is exactly the framework in my bill.

Over 90 nations have extended these rights through constitutions, laws, court rulings, international treaties or declarations. Canada is far behind.

In 2009, the Aarhus convention was signed by many countries of the world, and in large part by European and Scandinavian nations. It committed the signatories to provide access to information, public participation decision-making and access to justice and environmental matters. Canada said it did not have to sign it because it was already extending those rights. In fact, it has not done that yet.

Recently, to the credit of many in this place, many members of Parliament signed the environmental rights pledge issued by the David Suzuki Foundation through the Blue Dot campaign. We had a big celebration on Monday night, celebrating the fact that so many parliamentarians were committed to enacting environmental rights.

This is something interesting. In 2018, the Liberals held a federal convention and passed a resolution. That resolution reminded the Liberals that in June 2010, all Liberals members of Parliament present in the House of Commons voted in favour of Bill C-469, which was my environmental bill of rights. The convention reminded the members that the United Nations recognized environmental rights as a basic human right. They then passed a resolution, saying that the Liberal Party of Canada urged the Government of Canada to enact legislation establishing a Canadian environmental bill of rights.

I have said all along, since the first day I was elected in 2008, that I would welcome the government of the day taking my bill and enacting a full-fledged bill. Here we are with a couple of weeks left in this place and nothing has occurred. That is why I am delighted I can debate the bill, and I look forward to the response of some of my colleagues.

To date, over 3,000 Canadians have signed petitions, both e-petitions and hard-copy petitions, saying that they support the enactment of this environmental bill of rights. Ecojustice, the David Suzuki Foundation and, most recently, the Social Justice Cooperative Newfoundland and Labrador have endorsed this bill and called for action by the government to enact this law.

I look forward to hearing the comments from other parties in the House. It has been my absolute pleasure to work with other members of Parliament on environmental matters. I know there are strong promoters of environmental rights here, and I hope to hear from them this evening.

• (1725)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is such an honour to put this question to my friend from Edmonton Strathcona, who has decided not to run again and who has done stalwart environmental work.

Private Members' Business

I think I first started working with the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona around 1984. We look younger than we really are. However, this is such essential legislation. She has tried so hard for so long. I want to commit to her that I will do everything possible, as leader of the Green Party, to promote the environmental bill of rights in the next election campaign. I do not think we can get it through this Parliament in the time remaining.

For those members from all sides of the House who recognize it is long overdue, I urge all of them to take a demand to their parties to include in their platforms in the next election a commitment to deliver an environmental bill of rights to Canadians, one which is long overdue.

I thank the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her tireless work. She will be missed in this place.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague. I thought we had been working since 1979, or I have been. She is a johnny-come-lately. We had a lot of fun working on many campaigns together.

The one thing I forgot to mention is that an endorsement of an environmental bill of rights is already in our party's platform. I am delighted to hear the representative for the Green Party say that she wants to put it forward in her platform. I am looking forward to it being in everybody's platform.

However, what I really want is for it not just to be in people's platforms. Whoever becomes government, if it is a minority and other parties are holding it accountable, let us hold it accountable to actually enact an environmental bill of rights.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton Strathcona for getting her bill before the House once again. It truly was a pleasure and an honour to work with her on the environment committee. We did a lot of good work together and struck a great friendship. I, too, will miss her very much in this place.

However, as we have discussed in the past, Ontario has an environmental bill of rights. A mechanism exists within that bill is an environmental review tribunal. The member will remember that during the amendment phase of Bill C-69, one of the areas that I was strongly promoting was to have an environmental review tribunal. Unfortunately, that did not happen. However, is that part of the framework that the member has looked to as being part of this bill as well?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his kind comments. It was a delight to work with him on the committee. He is one member who I will miss.

My bill was never intended to be the full environmental bill of rights. That is a job for the government. The Ontario environmental bill of rights is much deeper than mine and gives all the detail of the proceedings.

The framework of my bill would fully allow for the development of the mechanism of which the member is speaking. Many mechanisms exist at the provincial level that have not been carried forward to the federal level. It would be well worthwhile to have an open dialogue and consultation across the country about how best to

set up this law when a government becomes elected and moves forward to enact it. I would hope it would move expeditiously.

I should mention that other provinces have put some of these measures into their specific laws. Quebec specifically has an environmental bill of rights, but it is not terribly detailed. I believe that in both Yukon and Northwest Territories laws there is a form of an environmental bill of rights. Therefore, we have examples we can turn to in building a federal one. We do not have to start at zero.

• (1730)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the hon. member for Edmonton Strathcona for her work in introducing this bill and also for her advocacy and passion on environmental issues. We crossed over for a very short time when I was a brand new member of Parliament on the transport committee. I admired her intelligence, her work ethic and her ability to bring a perspective that represented her constituents' interests to every issue.

The proposed bill would establish a Canadian environmental bill of rights, and procedural rights would be built into that. Before I get too deeply into my remarks, I would like to advise the hon. member that the government is supportive of this bill at second reading to send it to committee. Of course, as the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands raised, there is a limited amount of time in this Parliament.

As the sponsor of the bill recognized in her remarks, our party membership at our convention in April 2018 was also behind this idea. It is deserving of an analysis so that we can better understand how adding a level of justiciability to environmental protections would enhance the quality of our environment for Canadians.

I note in particular that as a result of the committee study on CEPA done in 2017, the government tabled a response indicating that it would be undertaking consultations that would identify how to implement adding a rights-based approach to environmental protections under that piece of legislation. Those consultations are ongoing.

Before we get into the technical aspects, it is important to reflect on why this is important.

The environment is an important priority for any party that might find itself in government and for all Canadians. We rely on it for our livelihoods. We rely on it for our health.

It is not just us. Nature is important to protect for its own sake. I note in particular what an eye-opening experience it has been for me to serve in this capacity as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. One of the things that has jumped out at me every time I have read an article or visited a community that has seen the impact of wildlife loss is that since the 1970s, we have seen 60% of the world's wildlife lost. Canada, along with four other countries, represent three-quarters of the world's remaining wilderness. We have an opportunity, and in my mind an obligation, to do something about it.

Private Members' Business

I note in particular the historic investment of \$1.3 billion we have made toward protecting nature. This is the single largest investment in protecting our natural environment in the history of our country. We are seeing projects roll out that are protecting critical habitat. They are protecting spaces for multiple species that will benefit for generations. We have examples in my own riding, along the St. Mary's River or the Musquodoboit Valley, which are home to important ecosystems that house species at risk. They also serve as important climate-mitigation infrastructure that occurs naturally, and perhaps more effectively than mankind is able to develop on its own.

Of course, a healthy environment is not just about protecting nature and biodiversity. We have the looming threat of climate change as well. We cannot depend on human health if we do not have environmental health. When I see coal plants continuing to burn, potentially for decades, we know that we are putting our communities at a heightened risk for lung disease and for childhood asthma, among other things. When I see the storm surges on the east coast that pose a physical risk to the residents who live there, the heat waves that have taken lives in Ontario and Quebec and the forest fires that continue to rage in western Canada, I know that we have a responsibility to take action. It really does impact our right to live if we do not have an environment that allows that to take place.

That is why we have embarked on the implementation of an ambitious agenda to reduce our emissions. It is so we can reach the level of reductions to prevent the worst consequences of climate change.

We know that Canada is warming at twice the rate of the global average and that we are feeling the consequences today. That is why we are moving forward with a plan that includes over 50 measures to help reduce our emissions.

We talk at length in this chamber about the government's initiative to put a price on pollution. What we are seeing is that by 2030, we are actually going to have 90% of our electricity generated by non-emitting sources.

We have made the single largest investment in the history of public transit in Canada. At the same time, we are taking advantage of the opportunities in the green economy by protecting our environment.

If we are to believe Mark Carney, the governor of the Bank of England, there is a \$26-trillion global opportunity in the green economy. By positioning ourselves in the front of that wave, we can do the right thing by our environment, protect the health of our communities and capitalize on economic opportunity. It would be irresponsible not to take these actions, based on the crass economics alone. We also know that there is a moral obligation to take this action.

• (1735)

Turning more directly to the issue of the substantive and procedural protections that could arise under an environmental bill of rights, I want to point out that substantive and procedural rights exist under federal legislation and policies today that provide important rights to Canadian citizens that could potentially be complemented if we better understand how a bill of rights could add

to the protections, both substantive and procedural, that already exist.

I note in particular that under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, CEPA, there are opportunities for public participation when it comes to the pollutants we deal with in our society. We also know that there are protections for whistle-blowers who report those who violate the federal laws that are on the books. There are obligations around transparency for companies that use pollutants and there is an opportunity for individuals or groups to take civil action against offenders against the obligations laid out in that piece of legislation, and we are making efforts to enhance our transparency through proactive disclosure of information relating to the pollutants that we know are making their way into Canada today.

Good information is necessary. If we are not basing our decisions on facts, science and evidence, we cannot have much faith that the decisions we are making are going to lead to the outcomes we want.

It was disappointing for me during the last Parliament, before I got involved, to see that there was an effort to limit how much federal scientists could talk about their own research. In Nova Scotia, it was a big deal at home when we saw that the research that existed on the books at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography was being disposed of. This kind of information exists for a reason, and it is to help legislators make good policy that will improve the quality of our environment.

I note that there are other pieces of legislation at play as well that provide rights for the public to take part in discussions around the quality of our environmental laws. If we look at the Species at Risk Act, we see that any person can apply for a status assessment of a given species. A person could also request an assessment of imminent threat, and there is a duty on the government to make public the information about the status of different species. These are rights to allow the public to understand what information is out there and what research the government has done so that people can better understand what policies are being implemented, or perhaps not being implemented, and advocate changes that will help protect our environment.

Bill C-69 has come up over the course of the debate already. One of the things that this piece of legislation was designed to do was improve public participation in the decision-making process for major projects, including the need for early engagement. That gave the public an opportunity to take part before all of the decisions had been made, decisions that would eventually be litigated on the back end. In particular, we made a serious effort to help bring in the voices of indigenous communities across Canada to ensure that they have an opportunity to participate as well.

Bill C-69 would improve the public registry so that the public can have access in a timely way to the information about projects that are being proposed and can understand not only the opportunities for participation but also the current status of projects and the potentially adverse social, health or environmental consequences that could arise as projects go forward. It is all about making sure that good projects can proceed and that the economy can grow at the same time that we are making sure that the social outcomes we want—in particular, the protection of our environment—are not lost.

Private Members' Business

There are also laws, such as the Federal Sustainable Development Act, that put obligations on the government to enhance the accountability and transparency of the work of federal departments when moving forward with laws or policies that could have a negative impact on our ability to live sustainably in our environment.

The question is, why do we need to advance this piece of legislation to the next stage to better understand the consequences that could arise? The protections, substantive and procedural, that I just laid out exist, quite frankly, in a scattered way. The idea of having a central bill of rights that could allow the public to better understand where their substantive and procedural rights exist is appealing to me and deserves to be better understood.

There are people who are disproportionately impacted by decisions around the environment, whether it is elderly people, children who will disproportionately bear the consequences of climate change or expectant mothers who will experience a different impact on their personal health and the health of their child. These are serious things that we should be considering, and I think that this bill is worth sending to committee so that we can better understand how to best implement the procedural and substantive rights.

I look forward to continuing the conversation with my hon. colleague off-line to ensure that we do not lose the momentum behind this idea because, quite frankly, it is an important discussion to be had in determining whether we should move forward with an environmental bill of rights.

• (1740)

I want to thank the folks back home in Central Nova who have raised this with me. It is important, and I welcome their advocacy.

* * *

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): I apologize to the member, Madam Speaker. This will only take a few seconds.

[English]

I would like to inform the House that the opposition day designated for Friday, June 7, has been undesignated and will now take place on Monday, June 10, as was requested.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL BILL OF RIGHTS

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-438, An Act to enact the Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights and to make related amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, there are two people I want to thank. First, I want to thank the Leader of the Government for her apology. I understand very well that things can move quickly in such an intense period. I accept her apology, although it was not necessary. I want to thank her.

Next I want to thank my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment, who spoke before me. I asked him some questions earlier, but unfortunately I found his replies unsatisfactory. It is important to acknowledge the situation in order to take action. The Liberals have not wanted to tell Canadians the truth regarding the Paris targets, which Canada will not meet under the Liberals' current plan.

I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-438, an act to enact the Canadian environmental bill of rights and to make related amendments to other acts. First reading of this bill was on April 5, 2019, and I am pleased to contribute to this debate.

I thank my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona for being so passionate about the environment. I was sad to learn that I will not have the opportunity to work with this wonderful, passionate, sensitive and kind woman during the next Parliament, if the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier put their trust in me, of course. Dear colleague, I truly appreciated working on this with you. I am a bit emotional because there are some colleagues, regardless of political stripe or beliefs, who are extraordinary people. I wanted to say that publicly.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know that the member's comments were very kind, but he should still address them through the Chair.

The hon. member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier.

Mr. Joël Godin: Madam Speaker, I would like to tell my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona that I truly appreciate her and that I will miss her. She has been here for many years. She was elected in 2008, re-elected in 2011 and again in 2015. She is unfortunately leaving us at the end of this term. She is the NDP's critic for international development and the deputy critic for the environment.

I had the opportunity to work with her on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and in writing my speech I learned that she had a lot of experience and knowledge about the exciting world of the environment. I am unfortunately discovering this now, but I did notice it when we worked together on the committee.

I want to give an overview of her career. She worked for the Environmental Law Centre in Edmonton, she was an international law consultant, she was chief of enforcement at Environment Canada and she was the assistant deputy minister for renewable resources for the Yukon government. She clearly knows her stuff. Hats off to her, once again. I want to express my heartfelt congratulations and love for her.

With respect to the bill, my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona recently wrote to us about it. She explained that the bill would enshrine the right of all Canadians to a healthy, ecologically balanced environment. She added that, some years ago, Canada accepted the principle endorsed by the World Commission on Environment and Development that all human beings have the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being. This principle is reiterated in many environmental conventions and agreements signed and ratified by Canada.

Private Members' Business

It is important to mention this because I support this principle. In fact, I support this principle as a Conservative member. That is not all. I am also wearing a Blue Dot lapel pin, which I was given on Monday night when I participated in an activity with my colleague and the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. Three members from three different political parties attended this event hosted by the David Suzuki Foundation.

Last fall, Blue Dot asked me to sign a pledge. When they invited me to speak on Monday evening, I was obviously pleased to do so and to say that the Conservatives believe in the environment and will take the necessary steps to meet the Paris targets. Here is the pledge that I signed and proudly hung up in my office:

The Pledge for Environmental Rights responds to the growing movement in Canada and around the world for legal recognition of the human right to a healthy environment.

Environmental rights are based on the simple yet powerful belief that everyone has the right to clean air and water. It is one of the fastest-growing fields of human rights internationally. More than 150 countries now recognize the legal right to a healthy environment, but not Canada.

More than 170 Canadian municipalities have passed resolutions recognizing their citizens' right to a healthy environment, and 9 out of 10 Canadians agree that Canada should recognize environmental rights in law.

I hereby pledge that, as a Member of Parliament, I will support the recognition in law of the right to a healthy environment for all people in Canada.

Members from other parties have also signed this pledge.

Bill C-438 features a number of poorly designed provisions that could very well put a lot of stakeholders in a tough spot. Not to mention that financial adjustments would have to be made. The legislative process will give us the opportunity to fine-tune the bill so that it can pass. However, with the current Parliament coming to an end, I have some doubt as to whether we will be able to get it across the finish line before then; my colleague has certainly been through this before.

That said, I would like her to know that I am committed to doing what needs to be done to effectively represent Canadians and to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to protect the environment.

• (1745)

I understand why the NDP has concerns about the government and cares so much about the environment.

In 2015, when the Liberals were campaigning, they promised to be thorough and respectful, to bring in measures to protect the environment, and to do everything in their power to reduce their carbon footprint.

In 2019, nearly four years later, they have little to show for it. They did take one tangible action when they invested \$4.5 billion in an existing pipeline that belonged to Americans. That money went to the country of Uncle Sam. It was supposed to help move another pipeline project forward, but nothing is working. We are not making any progress.

What was the point of investing \$4.5 billion in an existing pipeline?

If I were the government, I would have invested \$4.5 billion in innovative projects on green technologies. What I am saying is that the government should have invested that \$4.5 billion in reducing our footprint and doing research and development. Many businesses that appeared before the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development showed that they had the technology to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Furthermore, the Liberal government added a tax. It is using the environment as an excuse to take more money out of the pockets of Canadians. History has already proven in Quebec and British Columbia that this does not work.

This is not a carbon tax or an environmental tax. It is a tax to try to recover some of the money they spent so recklessly.

The Liberals are not telling the truth about the environment. As I said earlier, they refuse to admit that they will not be able to meet the Paris targets. If they cannot even admit that, they cannot bring in a plan to fix the situation.

As far as we are concerned, unfortunately, this is a governance problem on the part of the Liberal government. That said, fortunately for Canadians, it will last only a few more months, until the election on October 21.

There is so much more I would like to say, but I must wind up. I want to assure all Canadians and the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, as well as my colleague who is leaving us, that I will be here to take all the necessary steps to protect our environment for us, for our children and for our grandchildren.

• (1750)

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to start by saluting my colleague, the soon-to-be-retired member for Edmonton Strathcona, for her diligence and perseverance in bringing this bill forward over 11 years. This is perhaps the fourth time.

Of course, the Liberal government has had four years to study this bill, and here we are in the waning hours of this Parliament, which is very regrettable. If we are honest with each other, I think the chances of this bill being enacted are slim to none. However, that does not mean that it is not an essential, thoughtful piece of work. It is like a judgment that is in dissent in a court, and eventually, over time, that dissenting opinion becomes the law of the land, which is what I hope happens in this context.

This bill is not radical. The Province of Quebec has had section 46.1 of its Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms for years, which says, "Every person has a right to live in a healthful environment in which biodiversity is preserved, to the extent and according to the standards provided by law." That is what Quebec did. For many years, Ontario had a bill as well, the Environmental Bill of Rights. Unfortunately, over the last few months, the new government of Premier Ford has gutted that bill, to the eternal shame of that government.

Private Members' Business

However, that does not mean we at the federal level cannot get it right at last. In fact, a number of people wrote in a book called *International Law and the Environment* as follows: "The emergence of individual environmental rights marks perhaps the most significant shift in the focus of international environmental law." My colleague's bill would do just that.

I want Canadians to understand that this is not one of those feel-good bills with one sentence celebrating the heritage of one ethnic community that takes two sections to enact. This is a thoughtful bill, with 37 sections, 16 pages long. It was very thoughtfully changed in each Parliament to its status today, which is a fully thought-out bill that would do what other jurisdictions around the world have done.

Nor is this a new idea. I remember, back in the 1980s, writing a chapter in a book edited by the well-known environmental law scholar John Swaigen that talked about just this, and many of the principles in this bill were in fact discussed at great length in that book back in the 1980s. I salute my colleague for this excellent work.

The bill before us would create a number of specific rights, including my favourite, the right of access to environmental information in a reasonable, timely and affordable manner. As someone who has spent his career working on access to information, members can only imagine how happy I am to see that here.

However, I can tell members of the great disappointment of every single person who studied the Liberals' Bill C-58, that astounding reaction to the current Prime Minister's commitment to transparency. Every single commentator who has looked at that bill currently before Parliament has concluded that it is a travesty. It would take us backward, not forward. In fact, it is so ironic that the current Prime Minister, when in opposition, put forward a bill that would amend the Parliament of Canada Act and the Access to Information Act to provide greater transparency, but that bill goes in the exact opposite direction.

Other key things in Bill C-438 are things such as a public trust doctrine, which has been used so effectively in the United States of America to preserve lands, such as in a parks context and so forth. Another is an ability for individual Canadians to get an investigation of environmental offences. It is a thoughtful amendment to the Federal Courts Act that would allow standing for environmental groups, if there is a serious issue at stake and they have a genuine interest, to basically get rid of all the obstacles that have been put in the way of individual citizens wanting to judicially review decisions they think are wrong in the environmental context. There is also whistle-blower protection. These are just some of the key ideas that are put out in clause 4 of the bill.

However, there is so much more in this bill that needs to be saluted and praised. There are five paramount principles of environmental law that are listed. I do not have time to go over them all, but they are the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle, the principle of sustainable development, the principle of intergenerational equity and the principle of environmental justice. These are not just words; these are principles that would apply in the implementation of the bill.

● (1755)

As I said earlier, Quebec has had a very vigorous commitment to environmental justice, codified in its human rights legislation and in its charter of rights and freedoms. That is how important environmentalism and sustainability Quebec talks of biodiversity are in that context.

Ontario, for many years, has had an environmental bill of rights, which has also been vigorous in its application. Unfortunately, it has met its fate. The environmental commissioner created under that statute is no longer funded by the Ford government, therefore bringing to an end a very positive experience that the jurisdiction has had with legislation not unlike what my colleague has brought forward today.

In the interests of time, I want to summarize. This initiative could have been acted on if the government were serious about environmental justice. Parliament has had this legislation before it for 11 years, four years with the current government. Here we are at the very last moment. It truly is tragic, certainly regrettable that we are unable to see this forward. The government says that it will send it to committee. That means absolutely nothing.

With two weeks left of Parliament, Canadians need to be reminded that it is a complicated bill, thoughtful bill. It would need to go through committee. It would have to go to the Senate and the like. Frankly, it is too little too late.

If the government were truly committed to environmental justice, to the of principles of which I talked, to the very specific things that would make it easier for individual Canadians to be empowered to achieve environmental justice, it would have done something with this. However, it has not and here we are.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my congratulations to my colleague from Edmonton Strathcona on getting this bill onto the floor. I am privileged to have the opportunity to speak to it.

I would like to tell a story. It is a true David and Goliath story. It is a story that starts in a small rural community that is up against the world's largest waste company, Waste Management Inc.

It starts in 1998, when I was on the municipal council in Tynendinaga Township and Waste Management Inc. came to our council meeting to present a fantastic idea it had to build a 200-acre mega-dump that would take in 750,000 tonnes of waste and 250,000 tonnes of contaminated soil a year in, once again, a small rural community, which just happened to have a fractured limestone base that would be underlying this landfill. The site would have been on vertically and horizontally fractured limestone.

This is a pristine area of the country. This is a part of the country where every home, farm and business relies on wells for water. It is a site that would be upstream from the Mohawks at the Bay of Quinte and upstream from the Bay of Quinte itself, which has been listed by the U.N. for a number of years as one of the worst polluted bodies of water in the world.

Private Members' Business

When Waste Management Inc. had finished presenting, the reeve of the day, Margaret Walsh, and I looked at each other. They wanted to do what on fractured limestone? It was not going to happen on our watch.

We then proceeded to have multiple town halls to educate the area residents about this travesty: this mega-company wanted to build a mega-dump in a neighbouring community. Everyone, of course, was up in arms. It was plain wrong to build it on this site.

After those town halls, the Concerned Citizens Committee of Tynendinaga and Environs was born. A core group of individuals headed the committee, starting with the chair, Steven Geneja; Margaret Walsh; me; Ed File; Allan Gardiner; Mary Lynne Sammon; and Chief R. Donald Maracle, of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, because the Mohawks were very interested in this fight.

We also were very fortunate to have a brilliant professional team in lawyer Richard Lindgren, from the Canadian Environmental Law Association; hydrogeologist Wilf Ruland; and a toxicologist, Dr. Poh-Gek Forkert, who, by the way, actually wrote a book about this fight called *Fighting Dirty*.

We launched massive fundraising campaigns, sign painting campaigns, awareness campaigns and protests. Over the next eight years, we submitted over 6,000 documents opposing this landfill expansion and petitions. It was to the point that the former environmental commissioner of Ontario, Gord Miller, called the Richmond Dump “arguably one of the worst sites in Ontario to ever locate [a] landfill”. He went on to say that it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to monitor the site.

After eight years of fighting this battle, lo and behold, in 2006, the Ontario government decided to reject the expansion proposal, stating that there were significant environmental risks associated with expanding this landfill. Everyone, of course, celebrated, thinking that we had won the battle. No, we had not, because there was a 50-year-old leaky dump right next door to where they wanted to build the original landfill that was still open. We suspected that there was toxic leaching into the surrounding environment and local wells.

In 2007, I took over as chair of the committee. Colleagues need to understand that this was eight or nine years later, and volunteers are starting to get burned out. This was such a demanding fight for a small rural community to undertake, but there was still, thankfully, a hard-core group of individuals, including Mike Whalen, the present chair of the committee; Ian Munro; Marilyn Kendall; Jeff Whan; Steve Medd; Marilyn Carey; Janelle and Ken Tulloch; Carolyn Butts; Fred Whelan and Howard O'Connor. Once again, they were just hard-core individuals who deeply cared about our community and were willing to make whatever sacrifices necessary to ensure that we protected our community from this landfill.

● (1800)

Lo and behold, in 2010 the province announced the forced closure of the landfill. Unfortunately, the very same day, Waste Management came back and announced another terms of reference for an environmental assessment. It was the first time in Ontario's history that a company lost an environmental assessment and turned around and asked for another one in exactly the same location with virtually the same proposal.

We were appalled. We were angry. We were determined that we were not going to allow this project to continue. We redoubled our efforts to defeat what they called the Beechwood Road Environmental Centre. What an oxymoron, if I have ever heard one.

Early in 2012, the province finally came back and approved a deeply flawed environmental monitoring plan. Finally, we had had enough. We said, okay, this finally opens up the opportunity for us to ask for leave to appeal to an environmental review tribunal to finally have a semi-judicial process of environmental and legal experts studying this issue.

We then entered into a three-year period of negotiations with Waste Management to try to resolve the 36 recommendations. After that time, finally, in 2015, we had a trial and we finally had a judgment. Of course, the judgment fell completely our way, and we finally forced Waste Management to test for a chemical called 1,4-dioxane that only exists in leachate. We have to remember that leachate has up to 10,000 chemicals.

The company was always testing for chemicals that exist in the natural surrounding environment, so when there was a spike, they would say “Oh, it's just Mother Nature, not leachate.” Lo and behold, when they finally started testing for 1,4-dioxane, many of the wells were contaminated, including six residential wells. It was absolutely appalling that the company was able to hide this contamination for decades without anybody being aware of it.

Here we are in 2019, and we are still trying to delineate the contaminant attenuation zone. This is now massively off-site from the landfill. It is a kilometre south of the landfill so far from circumference of the landfill, and it is still continuing to move.

Why do I tell this story? How does this relate to an environmental bill of rights?

Dumps are the underbelly of a post-consumer society. As I mentioned, there are up to 10,000 chemicals in a landfill. Everybody thinks, “out of sight, out of mind; it is in a dump”. No, these chemicals exist within our environment. They exist in our homes, they exist in our workplaces, they permeate society, and we need to have a mechanism in place to actually deal with these chemicals.

In Ontario, we have an Environmental Bill of Rights, and we have a mechanism within that bill of rights called an environmental review tribunal. This is put in place so that citizen groups like ours could hold the government to account and could force a decision that will overturn a poor decision made by government. That is why it is so vitally important for us at the Canadian level to have a Canadian environmental bill of rights.

I would like to finish up by recognizing a number of individuals who were deeply involved in this fight and who, unfortunately, are no longer with us. Margaret Walsh, Steve Geneja, Al Gardiner, Mary Lynn Sammon, and Howard O'Connor all passed during that time. The best years of their lives were wasted fighting this landfill, non-stop. It is an incredible burden to a small rural community to be up against the world's largest waste company.

However, it was not in vain. If we had not fought that fight, today, 21 years later, we would have 21 million of 25 million tonnes of waste that would be leaching into our local environments and contaminating our residential wells, our farm wells, our business wells, our children. That fight was not in vain.

We will continue to fight the good fight. We will fight on the side of the angels, on the side of you angels who are there now fighting with us to protect our beautiful, pristine rural communities.

As long as I am a member of Parliament, I will never stop fighting to have a Canadian environmental bill of rights.

•(1805)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise and talk about important issues. A number of days ago we had a fairly healthy and robust discussion with respect to our environment and how important it is to this government.

As members know, we brought forward a motion recognizing the state of emergency with respect to our environment. We all have a very important role to play. Yesterday was World Environment Day, which is recognized internationally. One of the things I have found over the years when dealing with environmental issues is that the people who have really taken that active interest spread across all the different social and economic strata in our society. There are young people, people who are not so young and people of different ethnicity or economic status in life, all of whom really care about the environment.

Over the years, I have seen the words sustainable development, and things of that nature, which we can never talk enough about because there are so many things we can do within budgets and legislation to encourage that sustainable development. We have a government that has demonstrated that over the last few years with a number of policy positions that have really had a profoundly positive impact and will continue to have an impact on the environment here in Canada.

The most obvious that comes to mind is the price on pollution. For the very first time, we have national assurances that there will be a price on pollution from coast to coast to coast. Prior to this government, the price on pollution was very much patchwork. Some provinces had it and other provinces did not. Through strong national leadership we will ensure that it is from coast to coast to coast.

Even within this most recent budget, we have an announcement to try to encourage Canadians to look at electric cars—

•(1810)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate hearing from the hon. member, but I understand

Adjournment Proceedings

from the rules that we should be speaking to the bill. Therefore, I question the relevance of this to the bill.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sure the hon. member knows there is some flexibility when speeches are given in the House, but I want to remind the member that his content has to be related to the bill in question. I am sure he will get to those matters very quickly.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would love to compare and contrast that point of order to one I raised the other day with respect to relevancy.

I can assure you and the member that my debate is absolutely relevant to having a bill of rights with respect to the environment.

I see you are anxious to stand, Madam Speaker. I suspect my time has already expired.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): At this point, the hon. member will have about seven minutes and 10 seconds the next time this matter is before the House.

The time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I suspect if you were to canvass the House, you would find unanimous consent at this time to call it 12 midnight.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Madam Speaker, housing affordability is one of the top issues I hear about from constituents in my riding, along with climate change.

The high cost of housing is making it increasingly hard for students, families and seniors to make ends meet. I have also heard from small businesses that the lack of affordable housing impacts their ability to recruit and retain employees.

I had an interesting experience in that regard. I held sessions in three of my communities and invited the MLA, the mayors and small businesses to talk about their concerns. In every community, the top concern was the lack of affordable housing. The second concern was the lack of affordable day care. This was for small businesses.

The Liberals' national housing strategy is not providing the help people need now and over the long term. It may not make it any easier for Canadians to find affordable housing.

Adjournment Proceedings

The rental construction financing initiative is one part of this strategy, providing low-cost financing to developers to build affordable rental units. However, how the affordability of projects is calculated under this program is problematic. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development advised that one way “affordable” was defined was “rents lower than 30% of the median family income” in a specified area. It is not appropriate to base affordability on median household income if we want to create housing that is affordable for low and modest-income people.

In my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, no projects have been approved under the rental construction financing initiative. However, it is questionable whether the program would create housing that would be affordable for many of my constituents, such as those living in single-income households or on a pension. These constituents have incomes well below the median.

There is clearly a need for more affordable housing in communities across the country. I know that is the case in parts of my riding, such as in the city of Nelson, which has the highest per capita rate of homelessness in the province. This is despite a lot of effort by community groups, such as the Nelson Cares Society and others, to provide homes for the needy.

If the government is providing assistance to private developers, we need to ensure the goal of increasing housing affordability will be met and maintained over the long term.

The NDP has a plan to address housing affordability for renters and put the dream of home ownership back in reach. Our plan would create 500,000 new units of affordable housing over the next 10 years, would provide rental subsidies to low-income Canadians spending more than 30% of their income on housing and would allow first-time homebuyers to choose a 30-year insured mortgage.

The NDP also has a plan to save Canadians an average of \$900 per year on energy costs by retrofitting all housing stock by 2050, with half completed by 2030. Our ambitious home retrofit program would also create jobs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which is critical in the fight against climate change, and supports the transition to a low-carbon economy.

What is the government doing to ensure that projects supported by the national housing strategy will deliver long-term, affordable housing, including for low and modest-income Canadians, today in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia?

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my NDP colleague for his question.

[*English*]

Every Canadian deserves a safe, affordable and accessible place to call home. However, as we all know, one of the hardest things for a first-time homebuyer is to scrape together enough funds for a down payment and cover the associated costs of a home purchase. That is why budget 2019 announced a number of new initiatives to make it more affordable for Canadians to buy a home.

This builds on Canada's national housing strategy by taking concrete action to increase access to housing that is affordable and to help middle-class Canadians realize their dream of owning a home.

To address the difficulty that young families may have in becoming homeowners, budget 2019, through Bill C-97, which is currently before Parliament, proposes a new first-time homebuyer incentive. With this extra help in the shape of a shared equity mortgage through the CMHC, Canadians can lower their monthly mortgage payments, making home ownership within reach. Qualified first-time homebuyers who save their minimum 5% down payment would be eligible for a 10% shared equity mortgage for a newly built home or a 5% shared equity mortgage for an existing home.

[*Translation*]

That means that first-time homebuyers will be able to save money every month, giving them more money to pay down their traditional mortgage sooner or to spend on their priorities.

It is expected that approximately 100,000 first-time homebuyers will benefit from this incentive over the next three years. The program criteria will make it easier for eligible first-time homebuyers to buy homes they can afford.

The even more generous incentive for new builds may also encourage home construction, which will address some of the housing supply shortages in Canada, particularly in our largest cities.

Bill C-97 also proposes to increase the home buyers' plan withdrawal limit from \$25,000 to \$35,000. That means first-time homebuyers will be able to withdraw larger amounts from their RRSPs in order to buy a home. This is the first time the withdrawal limit has been increased in 10 years.

In closing, the new measures set out in budget 2019 will make housing more affordable by lowering the barriers to home ownership for first-time homebuyers and stimulating the Canadian housing market.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1820)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Stetski: Madam Speaker, a couple of things are problematic. First, let us look at the struggles that millennials have these days. They generally have to pay very high rents. They often have children in day care, which can cost \$2,000 a month. They are trying to pay off their student loans. They have no free pharmacare at this point. When we put all that together, only 36% of millennials even have an RRSP. Saying to them instead of taking \$25,000 out of their non-existent RRSP, they can take \$35,000 out really is not helpful at all.

I am quite interested in the equity portion of it. One question that was not answered when this was first announced was whether CMHC would keep that percentage of equity when the house is sold. In other words, if the house goes up in value, does CMHC keep a 10% value of the profits from that home?

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, additional information will be provided over the next few weeks with respect to my colleague's question. However, let me reiterate that our government has the responsibility to support a stable housing market and the economy. Recent federal policies help ensure that Canadians take on mortgages they can afford, even if interest rates rise or income changes.

[Translation]

These policies underpin stability for Canada's economy, financial institutions and families, benefiting all Canadians. These actions have also contributed to slower growth in house prices and reduced speculation in key areas, helping to limit the amount of debt Canadians must take on to buy a home and improve housing affordability.

[English]

Our government continues to closely monitor the effects of its mortgage policies to support access to housing, while safeguarding financial stability.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a huge honour to rise today to talk about issues related to veterans. We know that 75 years ago today, 359 Canadians were killed; 715 were wounded, and over 5,000 would die while fighting over the following two months in the liberation of France on D-Day.

Today, we took a moment to honour those who served for our country so that we could be here as members of Parliament and have the democratic system we have. We certainly need to recognize the heroism, the courage and the sacrifice of all soldiers, whether it be on D-Day or those who have served over many generations for our country. They will never be forgotten, lest we forget.

As we know, the right hon. Prime Minister, the leader of the NDP and other MPs are in France today. It brings us back to our veterans, who have shown courage and sacrifice while serving our country. It reminds us to never forget the sacrifices of those who served over many years in the history of our country, but also those who have come home recently.

In fact, Master Corporal Kevin Pavan from my riding and his 13-year-old son Laken are in France with elected officials to honour

those who sacrificed. I am glad Laken is there, because it will help him ensure that the next generation will never forget those who sacrificed. When they come home, we know it is our sacred obligation to take care of those who served our country and put their lives at risk for our freedom.

New Democrats raised a concern about veterans who have served and are not getting adequate benefits for the most extreme disabilities, which are between 3% and 5%. We need to ensure that those veterans get the full benefits they were promised by the Liberal government in the last election.

We have learned, since I asked the question, that the government is promising that all of those veterans will get more than they were promised. We want to hear the details. I am hoping tonight the government will talk a little about those important details. We want to ensure that veterans are getting the support they deserve.

I had the honour and privilege of serving as the NDP's critic for veterans affairs, and I must say it was one of the greatest honours of my life. As the member of Parliament for Courtenay—Alberni, I am committed to never stopping the fight for our veterans and the rights and benefits they are entitled to, and I will continue to work on that.

We were able to do some good work in the House when I was the critic, with all parties working collectively. All political parties unanimously supported a motion to end lapsed spending, to ensure that all of the money that gets carried over from year to year will go to the service standards that the government is not meeting. Right now, it is only meeting 25% of the service standards it set for itself. That clearly is a failure, so we have a lot of work to do.

We were also able to ensure that if veterans marry over 60 years of age, their spouses can get the benefits they deserve. These are important measures that the government is moving forward, but we have a lot of work to do. Today is a reminder of all the work we need to do and how important it is that we put our veterans first.

• (1825)

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my colleague's hard work, passion and determination. We truly appreciate those qualities.

Adjournment Proceedings

Like him, I would like to take a moment to recognize the 75th anniversary of D-Day. On this day 75 years ago, Canadian soldiers stormed Juno Beach in Normandy, France, forever changing the course of history. Nearly 14,000 Canadians participated in the landing, and, as many people know, 350 of them lost their lives and another 715 were wounded or captured. We remember all those who served and those who paid the ultimate price for Canada.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer confirmed that the pension for life is more generous and that most veterans will receive considerably more money from monthly benefits than they did from the previous program's lump sum payment. The pension for life, which came into effect on April 1, 2019, will invest \$3.6 billion in support of veterans. It is part of a holistic program that takes into account every facet of veterans' well-being. Benefits include compensation for the pain and suffering veterans experience because of service-related injuries and illnesses. For veterans in rehabilitation, the benefit also delivers 90% of their salary at release.

Veterans told the government what they thought was wrong with the new veterans charter. They said that their needs differ from those of 20th-century veterans. They also want it to be easier to submit applications and understand which benefits they are eligible for.

We listened to them and we took action.

In the last four budgets, we invested over \$10 billion in new and improved benefits to enhance veterans' well-being. We also added new benefits for career transition, employment, education and family support services, as well as for research into improving the quality of life of future veterans. We also included a significant increase in support and research into how post-traumatic stress and related mental health conditions are diagnosed and treated.

The well-being of veterans also turns on that of their families. That is why we have improved the programs and increased the benefits for families and caregivers, including a tax-free monthly benefit of \$1,000 for people who provide daily, essential care to veterans with service-related disabilities.

The families of medically released veterans have access to the veteran family program at all 32 military family resource centres across Canada, as well as the family information line and the website www.CAFconnection.ca.

In conclusion, these measures significantly improved benefits for veterans compared to the new veterans charter. More than \$5 million is paid every day in disability benefits.

Veterans Affairs Canada's most important job is to help Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans successfully transition from military service. With the pension for life, we are contributing to the overall well-being of veterans, which is what the veteran community asked us to do.

•(1830)

[English]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is a relief to hear the government make this commitment on the record, that through its new pension for life it will ensure that the most seriously injured veterans will get more.

We are glad to hear that the government is listening to New Democrats, who have been listening to veterans and bringing their voices to the House of Commons. We promised to bring the voices of veterans to the House. There is a growing backlog of over 40,000 veterans who have not received their disability benefits.

I want to thank all the veterans who have been working with me: the Legions in Tofino, Ucluelet, Port Alberni, Parksville, Qualicum Beach, Bowser, Courtenay and Cumberland; the many veterans who have spoken to me, notably Michael Blais, Barry Westholm and William Webb; and some of the victims of the serious issues we have seen, veterans who have fallen through the cracks, like my friend Cassandra Desmond, who is the sister of the late Lionel Desmond, who took his own life. I want to thank all of them for staying in touch with me. We will continue to advocate for all of them.

[Translation]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, most veterans are financially better off thanks to the financial benefits of the pension for life, as I mentioned earlier, compared to what they were receiving under the previous Veterans Well-being Act.

We are proud to have adopted the monthly pension that veterans asked for. We are also proud to have reopened the nine Veterans Affairs offices that the previous government shut down and to have opened an additional office. We are proud to have rehired more than 700 Veterans Affairs Canada employees who had been laid off by the previous government. We are proud of the work we have done since 2015 to improve benefits and services, rebuild trust with the veteran community and encourage our government to reduce costs to support veterans and their families.

[English]

SPORT

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, the government has heard from many athletes across Canada and it has heard from me. We are all pressing the minister for the same thing: that an independent body be established that has the mandate to investigate claims made by athletes of sexual abuse or harassment in sport.

I am sure we are all familiar with the history of sexual abuse and harassment in sport, so I will not go into the many well-documented cases that have been reported in the media in recent months. It is reasonable to refer to this situation as a crisis, a crisis that requires swift and decisive action.

Recently publicized was an open letter from “a coalition of multi-sport organizations, researchers and retired athletes [that proposed that the government establish] a single, independent, arm's length system of education, investigation and compliance.” The NDP also calls for the establishment of such a body. The letter said:

Adjournment Proceedings

Canada is at a crossroads in its efforts to eliminate the scourge of gender-based violence in sport. It is clear that the 1996 Sport Canada policy to prevent harassment and abuse in sport has not been effective.

Sport-by-sport self-regulation means that there will be as many different approaches to gender-based violence as there are sports bodies, a situation that is inconsistent with the principles of uniform treatment and the values of Canadian sport.

Here is the process now for an athlete who has been sexually abused or harassed.

First, the athlete must go to his or her national sport organization with the harassment or abuse complaint, and the NSO hires an investigator to investigate. The organization can either find its own investigator, and many admit that they do not know how to do this, or it can go to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada and access the list of investigators it has compiled, which it has spent a considerable amount of time compiling. Either way, the athlete has no input into who will do the investigating, while the NSO has total control and pays for the investigator.

Second, the SDRCC mainly deals with disputes between national team athletes and their NSOs. It does not hear disputes for anyone who is not a national team athlete, and that means over 99% of all athletes. Only Athletics Canada has its own ombudsman office, which hires independent investigators and publishes their reports.

This is not an athlete-centred approach to dealing with this crisis. It is doubtful that many young people would subject themselves to it, knowing that they must go through their national sport organization first. This set-up would discourage those who have been abused from coming forward.

The minister must make this more independent and athlete-centred. She must change the process so that athletes can go directly to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre and make the complaint, after which the SDRCC would help to choose, with the athlete's approval, the investigation team. The SDRCC, not the NSO, would pay for the investigation, and the report would be made public. This is the approach the government would take to this serious issue if it were serious about addressing it. The minister is giving most of the authority in this endeavour to the organization that represents virtually all abusers, as history tells us: the Coaching Association of Canada.

Additionally, all people with a complaint about harassment or abuse in sport could use this service, not just national team athletes and not just athletes. Employees, volunteers and everyone who has alleged abuse or harassment within Canadian sport should have access to this investigative service.

When women started coming forward about a certain former Canadian Olympic Committee executive, most of them were not athletes. They were employees, consultants and volunteers. The COC interviewed every one of them, but to this day it has not made the report public and most complaints would probably be resolved through mediation and would not require a lengthy investigation.

The point is that the government has chosen to completely ignore advice from leading sports researchers and scholars in this country.

● (1835)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member's time is up, but I am sure she will be able to continue during her last minute.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for her important question.

It gives me an opportunity to clarify the measures that our government has taken to address the problem of harassment, abuse and discrimination with all stakeholders.

This issue is a priority for our government, for the sports community, and for all the provincial and territorial governments.

We all need to do a better job. We have a historic opportunity to change the culture of sport in Canada and to support similar changes around the world. Harassment, abuse and discrimination are complex problems that require a logical and well-thought-out approach that will respect our Constitution, governments, and the roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder.

We have heard the calls from athletes, experts, the sports community and researchers, and we are taking action. There is no magic pill that will eradicate these terrible behaviours, and that is why we need a comprehensive approach.

I would like to highlight some of the key elements of our government's approach, which we started implementing over the past year.

First, we worked with the sports community. Last June, we jointly announced new measures to enhance existing mandatory policies on harassment, abuse and discrimination. These new measures specifically included the creation of a third-party process. Every federally funded sport organization will now be required to provide access to a third party process when a case is reported to it.

In March, we also launched two important new initiatives to combat harassment, abuse and discrimination in sport. We set up an independent investigation unit, and our strategy also enabled us to create a national toll-free confidential hotline for victims and witnesses of harassment, abuse and discrimination in sport.

I will close by saying that there is obviously still more work to be done, but our commitment and determination are clear. We will ensure that our athletes can train in a healthy environment free from all forms of harassment.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1840)

[*English*]

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, it is good to hear the response that there is firm resolve to move forward, to work on this issue and solve this crisis. Indeed, that means we will have to listen to the athletes and the expertise.

Many scholars have taken a very serious and academic approach to what has happened. I held a symposium on Parliament Hill and I brought in many of those experts. Indeed, we need an independent investigative body that frees up all the stigma and financial burden on these sporting organizations. In fact, if the process I described earlier is not satisfactory, there is the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport. It already manages the drug testing system for athletics. We could make another—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Unfortunately, the member's time is up again. It is quite an interesting subject, and I did try to allow for a little more time.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Massé: Madam Speaker, I would also like to applaud my colleague for her work. Her commitment is unmistakable.

In closing, we need a model code of conduct to harmonize our efforts. That is why we supported cross-country consultations and an earlier national summit on the creation and possible implementation of a model code. We also provided funding to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada in support of two major pilot projects.

We are convinced that these measures will lead to third-party solutions and we will continue to look for ways to put an end to harassment, abuse and discrimination, especially by raising public awareness and providing training.

We listened to those who sent us their comments on this important issue. There is obviously no place for abuse, harassment or discrimination in sport.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 28 and pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:43 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, June 6, 2019

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28659
Committees of the House	
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. McDonald.....	28659
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Ellis.....	28659
Public Safety and National Security	
Mr. McKay.....	28659
International Trade	
Mr. Eyking.....	28659
Petitions	
Natural Resources	
Mr. Richards.....	28659
Rights of the Child	
Ms. Quach.....	28660
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Eglinski.....	28660
Afghan Minority Communities	
Mr. Eglinski.....	28660
Geoduck Aquaculture	
Mr. Johns.....	28660
Plastics	
Mr. Johns.....	28660
Pensions	
Mr. Zimmer.....	28660
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Kmiec.....	28661
Pensions	
Mr. Julian.....	28661
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Manly.....	28661
Justice	
Mr. Manly.....	28661
Palliative Care	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	28661
Agriculture and Agri-Food	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	28661
Pornography	
Mrs. Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster).....	28661
Rights of the Child	
Mr. Boulерice.....	28661
Animal Welfare	
Mrs. Zahid.....	28661
Human Organ Trafficking	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	28661
Animal Welfare	
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	28661
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	28661

Afghan Minority Communities	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Canada Summer Jobs Initiative	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Health	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Afghan Minority Communities	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Human Organ Trafficking	
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28662

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Budget Implementation Act, 2019, No. 1	
Bill C-97. Third reading.....	28662
Mr. Genuis.....	28662
Mr. Bagnell.....	28663
Mr. Vaughan.....	28663
Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands).....	28664
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28664
Mr. Dhaliwal.....	28664
Mr. Kmiec.....	28665
Mr. Blaikie.....	28666
Mr. Gerretsen.....	28666
Mr. Easter.....	28666
Mr. Aboultaif.....	28667
Mr. Blaikie.....	28668
Mr. Nantel.....	28668
Mr. Vaughan.....	28669
Ms. Quach.....	28670
Mr. Johns.....	28670
Mr. Vaughan.....	28671
Mr. Kmiec.....	28672
Mr. Tabbara.....	28672
Mr. Vaughan.....	28672
Ms. Quach.....	28674
Division on amendment deferred.....	28675
Customs Tariff	
Mr. Rodriguez (for the Minister of Finance).....	28675
Bill C-101. Second reading.....	28675
Mr. Lightbound.....	28675
Mr. Carrie.....	28677
Mr. Johns.....	28678
Mr. Strahl.....	28678
Mr. Boulерice.....	28679

Mr. O'Toole.....	28679
Amendment.....	28682
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28682
Mr. Duvall.....	28682
Mr. Maguire.....	28683
Mr. Duvall.....	28683
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28686
Mr. Carrie.....	28686
Mr. Boulerice.....	28686
Mr. Sheehan.....	28686
Mr. Weir.....	28687
Mr. Sheehan.....	28687
Mr. Weir.....	28688
Mr. Duvall.....	28689
Mr. Bratina.....	28689
Mr. Fast.....	28690
Mr. Duvall.....	28691
Mr. Fast.....	28691

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Royal Regina Rifles	
Mr. Weir.....	28693
Nanaksar Gurdwara Gursikh Temple	
Mr. Peschisolido.....	28693
Member for Battle River—Crowfoot	
Mr. Sorenson.....	28693
Portuguese Heritage Month	
Mr. May (Cambridge).....	28693
Suroit Beer Festival	
Ms. Quach.....	28694
Portuguese Heritage Month	
Mr. Sangha.....	28694
Don Barnard	
Mr. O'Toole.....	28694
Portuguese Heritage Month	
Ms. Dzerowicz.....	28694
Centenary of the CN Railway	
Mrs. Romano.....	28694
Status of Women	
Ms. Harder.....	28695
HMCS <i>Kitchener</i>	
Mr. Saini.....	28695
Human Rights	
Ms. Vandenbeld.....	28695
75th Anniversary of D-Day	
Mr. Paul-Hus.....	28695
Filipino Heritage Month	
Mrs. Zahid.....	28696
75th Anniversary of D-Day	
Ms. Hardcastle.....	28696

75th Anniversary of D-Day	
Mr. Brassard.....	28696
75th Anniversary of D-Day	
Mr. Erskine-Smith.....	28696

ORAL QUESTIONS

75th Anniversary of D-Day	
Ms. Raitt.....	28697
Mr. Blair.....	28697
Taxation	
Ms. Raitt.....	28697
Mr. Goodale.....	28697
Ms. Raitt.....	28697
Mr. Goodale.....	28697
Mr. Rayes.....	28697
Mr. Duclos.....	28697
Mr. Rayes.....	28698
Mr. Duclos.....	28698
Canada Revenue Agency	
Ms. Brosseau.....	28698
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	28698
Mr. Blaikie.....	28698
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	28698
Veterans Affairs	
Mr. Blaikie.....	28698
Mr. Blair.....	28698
Ms. Brosseau.....	28699
Mr. Duclos.....	28699
Government Priorities	
Ms. Bergen.....	28699
Mr. Champagne.....	28699
Ms. Bergen.....	28699
Ms. Ng.....	28699
Small Business	
Mr. Deltell.....	28699
Mr. Lightbound.....	28699
Mr. Deltell.....	28700
Mr. Lightbound.....	28700
Taxation	
Mr. Poilievre.....	28700
Mr. Lightbound.....	28700
Mr. Poilievre.....	28700
Mr. Lightbound.....	28700
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Dusseault.....	28700
Mrs. Lebouthillier.....	28700
Indigenous Affairs	
Ms. Ashton.....	28701
Mr. Vandal.....	28701
International Trade	
Mr. Berthold.....	28701
Ms. Bibeau.....	28701
Mr. Berthold.....	28701

Ms. Bibeau	28701	Ms. Hajdu	28707
Foreign Affairs		Infrastructure	
Mr. O'Toole	28701	Mrs. Caesar-Chavannes	28707
Mr. Oliphant	28701	Mr. Champagne	28707
Mr. O'Toole	28702		
Mr. Oliphant	28702	Points of Order	
		Oral Questions	
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship		Ms. Damoff	28707
Ms. Sansoucy	28702		
Mr. DeCoursey	28702		
Ms. Kwan	28702		
Ms. Hajdu	28702		
Status of Women			
Ms. Bendayan	28702		
Ms. Khera	28703		
Democratic Institutions			
Mr. Kent	28703		
Ms. Gould	28703		
Mr. Kent	28703		
Ms. Gould	28703		
The Environment			
Mr. Godin	28703		
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28703		
Mr. Fast	28703		
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28703		
Mr. Boulerice	28704		
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28704		
Mr. Nantel	28704		
Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28704		
Auditor General of Canada			
Mr. Paul-Hus	28704		
Mr. Goodale	28705		
Mr. Kelly	28705		
Mr. Goodale	28705		
Mr. Kmiec	28705		
Mr. Lightbound	28705		
International Trade			
Mr. Dhaliwal	28705		
Ms. Ng	28705		
Telecommunications			
Mr. Albas	28705		
Mr. Bains	28705		
Mr. Choquette	28705		
Mrs. Jordan	28706		
Infrastructure			
Mr. McLeod (Northwest Territories)	28706		
Mrs. Jordan	28706		
Human Rights			
Mr. Sweet	28706		
Mr. Oliphant	28706		
Temporary Foreign Workers			
Mr. Beaulieu	28706		
Ms. Hajdu	28706		
Mr. Beaulieu	28706		
		GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
		Budget Implementation Act, 2019, No. 1	
		Bill C-97. Third reading	28707
		Amendment negatived	28708
		Motion agreed to	28709
		(Bill read the third time and passed)	28709
		Business of the House	
		Ms. Bergen	28709
		Ms. Chagger	28709
		Criminal Records Act	
		Bill C-93. Third reading	28710
		Mr. Eglinski	28710
		Mr. Casey (Charlottetown)	28711
		Mr. Johns	28711
		Mrs. Vecchio	28712
		Mrs. McCrimmon	28713
		Mr. Johns	28713
		Mr. Manly	28714
		Mr. Barrett	28714
		Mrs. Lockhart	28715
		Mr. Stetski	28715
		Mr. Reid	28716
		Mr. Reid	28716
		Mr. Dubé	28717
		Mr. Lamoureux	28718
		Mr. Carrie	28718
		Mr. Dubé	28718
		Mr. Hardie	28721
		Mr. Dusseault	28721
		Mrs. Lockhart	28721
		Mr. Lamoureux	28722
		(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed) ..	28722
		PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS	
		Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights	
		Ms. Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	28722
		Bill C-438. Second reading	28722
		Ms. May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	28724
		Mr. Bossio	28725
		Mr. Fraser (Central Nova)	28725
		Business of the House	
		Ms. Chagger	28727
		Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights	
		Bill C-438. Second reading	28727
		Mr. Godin	28727
		Mr. Rankin	28728

Mr. Bossio.....	28729
Mr. Lamoureux.....	28731

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Housing

Mr. Stetski.....	28731
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)...	28732

Veterans Affairs

Mr. Johns.....	28733
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)...	28733

Sport

Ms. Hardcastle.....	28734
Mr. Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)...	28735

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