



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, March 12, 2015**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, March 12, 2015

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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### INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Transatlantic Parliamentary Forum, held in Washington D.C., the United States of America, December 2 to 3, 2013.

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### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to its study of the review of the Canadian transportation safety regime, transportation of dangerous goods and safety management systems.

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

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, while we on the opposition side do generally support the recommendations of the report, we have provided for the House a supplementary opinion, because we believe that there are a number of recommendations that are not made or that are omitted, and that there are number of recommendations that do not go far enough.

As an example, the railway companies should conduct risk assessments and route planning, and operate their trains at lower speeds where it is of risk to the public. In addition, we believe that the government should provide greater oversight to the railway companies and greater inspections.

**Mr. Larry Miller:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise again to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the supplementary estimates, 2014-15.

While I am up, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the main estimates, 2015-16.

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on National Defence in relation to the supplementary estimates C, 2014-15.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR CONCUSSION REDUCTION IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT

**Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-658, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy to reduce the incidence of concussions in amateur sport.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce a bill to reduce concussions. This bill is a major improvement over the previous version.

This bill calls on the Minister of Health to sit down with her provincial colleagues to adopt measures that will mitigate the scourge of concussions among young people.

[*English*]

It is important that the federal government show leadership on this file, and that the Minister of Health sit down with her provincial counterparts, which is what the bill asks, and puts into place measures that would help reduce concussions in amateur sports.

*Routine Proceedings*

As a former coach myself and as a fan of sports, it is important for parents and for young people to continue to enjoy all of the positive benefits of sports in a safe environment. This bill goes a long way to taking the steps in the right direction.

[*Translation*]

I hope that my government colleagues will support this initiative. We all love sports, and we all want our young people to be safe.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PETITIONS**

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am saddened to inform the House that 25-year-old Danille Kerpan was tragically killed by a drunk driver, a driver who chose to drive while impaired. Danille's family was devastated by this.

Families for Justice is a group of Canadians who have also lost loved ones killed by an impaired driver. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called what it is, vehicular homicide. Vehicular homicide is the number one cause of criminal death in Canada. Over 1,200 Canadians are killed every year by drunk drivers.

Families for Justice is also calling for mandatory sentencing for vehicular homicide and for Parliament to support Bill C-652.

## CANADA POST

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to give voice to the frustration, and dare I say, anger felt by many of my constituents about the Conservative government's decision to cancel door-to-door mail delivery and install community mailboxes.

Petitions continue to flood in, and I am pleased to be able to table 20 more today that were circulated at a recent public meeting organized by municipal councillors to lend their support to our campaign to save Canada Post. My federal NDP colleagues and I have been at the forefront of that fight since January of last year. We all know that we cannot save a business by cutting services and raising prices.

The petitioners are appalled that the Conservatives would allow Canada Post to eliminate home delivery for millions of customers, set up community mailboxes without taking residents' legitimate concerns into account, put thousands of employees out of work and then have the gall to raise the price of stamps.

Our postal service helps connect us, and these cuts will unfairly impact the most vulnerable in our society, including seniors and people with disabilities.

For all of those reasons, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to stop these devastating cuts to our postal service—

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, this is presenting petitions. This is not debate. All we heard was debate coming from the member.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I thank the chief government whip for his intervention.

Just a reminder to all hon. members when presenting petitions. I recognize the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain did put her remarks under the rubric of petitions and what the petitioners were requesting. At the same time, brevity is important given that we only have 15 minutes to get all the petitions registered in that short time.

To the degree that members can, keep remarks concise and remember that editorializing or providing one's own particular comments on the petition is usually considered out of order.

The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

• (1010)

**Ms. Chris Charlton:** Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to stop these devastating cuts to our postal service and look instead for ways to modernize operations.

The Conservatives continue to find millions of dollars for their well-connected friends, it is time they found a way to keep the mail coming to our doors.

## IRANIAN CANADIANS

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition signed by many constituents who expressed strong concern regarding the remarks by the member for Willowdale on the subject of Iranian Canadians. This petition is itself backed by an online petition, which is signed by more than 2,400 Canadians.

## MENTAL HEALTH

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today.

The first petition is from constituents in Surrey and Newton.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to create a ministry for people with disability and mental health issues.

Of those with mental health issues, only one-third who need services in Canada actually receive them. The petitioners feel that creating a ministry for these people would build a healthier, harm-reduction solution that is much needed.

Like the petitioners, I too want to see real leadership on mental health.

## IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from my constituents in Newton—North Delta.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to change the current drinking and driving laws. They want to implement mandatory minimum sentences for persons convicted of impaired driving causing death.

## CHILD CARE

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition is also from my Newton—North Delta riding.

The petitioners call upon the government to increase the number of good quality and affordable child care spaces. Like the petitioners, I too feel that quality child care and early learning can be the foundation for lifelong success.

Canada ranks last among comparable countries when it comes to public spending on child care, which creates a shortage of space and increases child care costs by up to \$2,000 per child. The question is not why we would invest in child care, but rather why we would disadvantage our children when it comes to their future opportunities.

## ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today from constituents throughout the city of Kingston and in my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

The petitioners are asking the House of Commons to launch a national inquiry on the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls so that we can deal with the issue of protecting the safety of this vulnerable group.

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. The first one has been signed by people who live in the Vancouver Kingsway area and all over Vancouver. It is a petition led by Ted and Cora Alcuítas. They have a lot of signatures from St. Mary's Parish in Vancouver, in my riding.

They are concerned and want the House of Commons to adopt international aid policies that support small family farmers, especially women, and recognize their vital role in their struggle against hunger and poverty and ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small family farmers, that they protect the rights of small family farmers in the global south to preserve, use and freely exchange seeds.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition is one signed by people from all across the country in support of the peaceful and democratic development of Hong Kong.

Petitioners call upon our Parliament to recognize the rights of people to exercise freedom of association and speech and to participate in free, fair and regular elections. They call upon the Government of Canada to encourage the Government of the People's Republic of China to honour its commitments to achieve full and genuine government for the people of Hong Kong.

● (1015)

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 958, 961, 978, 996, 1001, 1002 and 1014.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 958—**Mr. Don Davies:**

With regard to Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provisions under all international trade and investment agreements to which Canada is a party: (a) how many ISDS proceedings is Canada involved in (i) as a claimant, (ii) as a respondent; (b) for each year between 1994 and 2014, how much money has Canada spent (i) advancing its legal claims as a claimant, (ii) defending its legal claims as a respondent; and (c) how many ISDS claims has Canada lost as a respondent and how much money has it been ordered to pay to each successful claimant for each year between 1994 and 2014, with each claimant and award amount separately identified?

**Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to international trade, the government's top priority is creating jobs and economic opportunities for hard-working Canadians and their families.

Investor state dispute settlement, ISDS, has been a core element of Canada's trade policy for more than a generation.

Trade and investment agreements protect Canadian investors abroad, including against discrimination and expropriation without compensation. They provide Canadian businesses with access to impartial recourse to an independent, international body to resolve disputes. ISDS allows Canadian investors to seek remedies directly for violations of investment protection obligations.

None of Canada's trade and investment agreements prevent any level of government in Canada from regulating in the public interest, nor do they exempt foreign companies that operate in Canada from Canadian laws and regulations.

ISDS allows Canadian investors to bring claims directly against foreign governments. Therefore it is not possible for Canada to be a claimant in an investor state dispute. Canadian investors can and have been claimants abroad.

Canada has been a respondent in 22 investor state disputes: twelve are concluded, two were submitted to arbitration but were withdrawn, and eight are ongoing. The Government of Canada is committed to transparency in ISDS and therefore posts online information about all ongoing cases. For details, see: <http://www.international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/topics-domaines/disp-diff/gov.aspx?lang=eng>.

*Routine Proceedings*

ISDS allows Canadian investors to bring claims directly against foreign governments. Therefore it is not possible for Canada to be a claimant in an investor state dispute. Canadian investors can and have been claimants abroad.

Approximately \$27,350,446.22 has been spent relating to the defence of its legal claims as a respondent. In three cases, the tribunal ordered \$1,650,200.55 of these expenditure amounts to be reimbursed to Canada. This amount is not reflected here.

Since 1994, Canada has lost three investor state disputes as a respondent: *S.D. Myers v. Canada*, *Pope & Talbot v. Canada* and *Mobil & Murphy v. Canada*. In respect of these cases, Canada has paid the following: in the *S.D. Myers v. Canada* dispute, \$6.9 million Canadian plus interest for legal costs and damages; and in the *Pope & Talbot v. Canada* dispute, \$581,766 U.S., or approximately \$6 million Canadian plus interest for a portion of the arbitral fees and damages. No payment has been made to date to Mobil & Murphy.

To the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by litigation privilege, the federal crown asserts that privilege and, in this case, has waived that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total aggregate legal cost.

**Question No. 961—Mr. Don Davies:**

With regard to lands owned by the government or crown corporations: (a) what is the total number of distinct properties that exist within the municipality of Vancouver, broken down by (i) name, (ii) address, (iii) current use; and (b) what is the total number of distinct properties that exist within the boundaries of the federal electoral district of Vancouver Kingsway, broken down by (i) name, (ii) address, (iii) current use?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Directory of Federal Real Property is the central record and only complete listing of real property holdings of the Government of Canada.

The directory can be accessed at the following website: [www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/dfrp-rbif/introduction-eng.aspx](http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/dfrp-rbif/introduction-eng.aspx).

**Question No. 978—Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg:**

With regard to Canada Post and the process described on its “Canada Post Pay Equity Decision” webpage, further to the Supreme Court ruling of November 17, 2011, in favour of the Public Service Alliance of Canada: how many employees or former employees (a) have applied online; (b) have confirmed their postal code; (c) have been sent the information package; (d) have provided the information requested in the package; (e) have been sent their payment; (f) have not yet been sent their payment; and (g) have an active file that has not yet been closed due to a payment or a refusal of payment?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada Post has been working diligently on the pay equity file to ensure accurate data and process payments as quickly as possible.

Canada Post has sent out payments to almost 10,000 individuals identified as eligible. Every current and former eligible employee that Canada Post has been able to locate a current address for has been paid. Canada Post is working with the Canada Revenue Agency to find others that it may not have current information for, in order to complete any outstanding cases.

**Question No. 996—Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe:**

With regard to the Citizenship and Immigration Canada's pilot project for LGBT refugees: (a) to date, how many refugees have been sponsored through the project; (b) how many of the sponsored refugees are present in Canada; (c) how much of the

funding budgeted for the pilot project by the government has been spent; (d) how many sponsors participated in the pilot project; and (e) have any evaluations been conducted on the pilot project?

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, insofar as Citizenship and Immigration Canada is concerned, (a) to date, 32 refugees have been sponsored through the Rainbow Refugee Committee project and,

(b) 26 persons sponsored under this initiative have arrived in Canada.

(c) All of the \$100,000 budgeted for this pilot project has been spent.

(d) Five sponsorship agreement holders have participated in the pilot project.

(e) There has been no evaluation of the pilot project to date.

**Question No. 1001—Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to permanent frozen allotments: (a) which departments or agencies have been directed by the Treasury Board to permanently withhold spending on one or more specific initiatives in fiscal year (i) 2014-2015, (ii) 2015-2016, (iii) 2016-2017; (b) what is the official name for each frozen allotment in fiscal year (i) 2014-2015, (ii) 2015-2016, (iii) 2016-2017; (c) what are the details of each initiative subject to a permanent frozen allotment in fiscal year (i) 2014-2015, (ii) 2015-2016, (iii) 2016-2017; and (d) how much money has been frozen for each identified initiative in fiscal year (i) 2014-2015, (ii) 2015-2016, (iii) 2016-2017?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board acts on all matters relating to the general administrative policy in the federal public administration and financial management. As well, the Treasury Board reviews annual and longer-term expenditure plans and programs of departments, and the determination of priorities with respect thereof.

With regard to (a), Treasury Board is a cabinet committee and as such its decisions are cabinet confidences. The powers of the Treasury Board are laid out in the Financial Administration Act and do not include the power to direct departments and agencies to permanently withhold spending.

With regard to (b), (c) and (d), volume III of the Public Accounts will publish, for each departmental vote, the total amount that remained frozen at year-end, at which point all remaining frozen allotments will be considered to be “permanent”. The documents will be available at: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/index-eng.html>.

**Question No. 1002—Hon. John McCallum:**

With regard to frozen allotments: (a) which departments or agencies were directed by the Treasury Board to withhold spending on one or more specific initiatives in fiscal year (i) 2011-2012, (ii) 2012-2013, (iii) 2013-2014; (b) what is the official name for each frozen allotment in fiscal year (i) 2011-2012, (ii) 2012-2013, (iii) 2013-2014; (c) what are the details of each initiative subject to a permanent frozen allotment in fiscal year (i) 2011-2012, (ii) 2012-2013, (iii) 2013-2014; and (d) how much money was frozen for each identified initiative in fiscal year (i) 2011-2012, (ii) 2012-2013, (iii) 2013-2014?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, volume III of the Public Accounts published, for each departmental vote, the total amount that remained frozen at year-end, at which point all remaining frozen allotments are considered to be “permanent” for that year.

*Routine Proceedings*

Here are the links to relevant online documents.

For 2011-12, please see: [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public\\_accounts\\_can/html/2012/recgen/cpc-pac/2012/vol3/s10/bdgr-ffctn-eng.html](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/html/2012/recgen/cpc-pac/2012/vol3/s10/bdgr-ffctn-eng.html).

For 2012-13, please see: [http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public\\_accounts\\_can/html/2013/recgen/cpc-pac/2013/vol3/s10/dba-bda-eng.html](http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/html/2013/recgen/cpc-pac/2013/vol3/s10/dba-bda-eng.html).

For 2013-14, please see: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/2014/vol3/s10/dba-bda-eng.html>.

Question No. 1014—**Mr. Robert Chisholm:**

With regard to the home-equity assistance program administered by the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS): (a) what were the costs to TBS for the federal court case initiated by Major Marcus Brauer, broken down by (i) legal costs, (ii) staff costs; (b) what was the cost of the third party review of the Bon Accord real estate market order by Judge Richard Mosley; and (c) what is the estimated cost to the TBS for the class action suit for home equity assistance?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the home equity assistance program administered by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the legal costs to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat for the Federal Court case initiated by Major Marcus Brauer were \$58,646.26. This includes \$25,376.04 corresponding to Mr. Brauer's legal fees and disbursements and \$33,270.22 corresponding to the federal government legal costs. It is not possible to ascertain the staff costs attributable to this specific case.

The cost of the third party review of the Bon Accord real estate market order by Judge Richard Mosley was \$5,998.36.

The proposed class action suit for home equity assistance in *Dodsworth v. Her Majesty the Queen* is still at a preliminary stage before the Federal Court.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if a revised response to Question No. 738, originally tabled on November 19, 2014, as well as Questions Nos. 938 to 942, 944 to 946, 962, 972, 974, 998, 999 and 1013 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 738—**Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With regard to the government's support for the development and use of renewable energy for each year between 2006 and 2014 inclusive, what were the government's expenditures, broken down by (i) province and territory, (ii) department or agency, (iii) program?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 938—**Ms. Megan Leslie:**

With regard to the government's efforts from January 1, 2013, to December 31, 2014, to promote Canadian energy exports: (a) what is the estimated dollar value of

the government's efforts and initiatives to support or expand Canadian energy exports (i) in Canada, (ii) in individual government diplomatic offices outside Canada, (iii) in other locations visited by government officials, designated contractors, consultants, or other individuals involved in supporting or expanding Canadian energy exports; (b) for the amounts mentioned in (a), what is the estimated dollar value, broken down by the type of energy directly concerned, namely, (i) direct exports of coal, (ii) oil (including, but not limited to, bitumen, condensate, and other petroleum products), (iii) natural gas, (iv) export or construction of infrastructure associated with fossil fuels or the export of energy generated from fossil fuels (e.g., pipelines or export terminals for liquefied natural gas), (v) export of technologies or services associated with fossil fuels or the energy generated from fossil fuels, (vi) export of energy generated from renewable sources (including, but not limited to, hydropower, solar power, wind power, biomass, and geothermal power), (vii) export or construction of infrastructure associated with energy generated from renewable sources (e.g., transmission lines to carry hydroelectric power), (viii) export of technologies or services associated with energy generated from renewable sources (e.g., solar module manufacturing technologies), (ix) export of infrastructure, technologies and services associated with energy conservation and energy efficiency (e.g., smart grids or more efficient industrial process design engineering), (x) other types of energy export support that do not correspond to the categories above (e.g., general energy export advice or activities to support the construction of a transmission line expected to carry electricity generated from multiple sources); (c) for the amounts mentioned in (a), what is the estimated dollar value, broken down by (i) location where costs were incurred, (ii) department or agency that incurred those costs; (d) what is the estimated dollar value of all government employee time used to support or expand Canadian energy exports, broken down by the following activities, (i) planning meetings and briefings, (ii) monitoring issues, (iii) preparing materials, (iv) offering logistical coordination, (v) planning visits by delegations, (vi) providing training, (vii) undertaking research, (viii) engaging with representatives, (ix) engaging in communications activities and preparing communications materials, (x) engaging with members of the public, (xi) meeting with stakeholders, (xii) any other uses of government employee or contractor time; (e) how much money has the government spent on the purchase of advertisements to support or expand energy exports, and how much government staff time was required to develop such advertisements, broken down by the types of energy export support enumerated in (b); (f) what contractor services, including advertising firms, government relations firms, legal firms, or other professional service providers, has the government retained to support or expand energy exports, broken down by the types of energy export support enumerated in (b); (g) what is the cost of all hospitality (including, but not limited to, food, catering, beverages, and location rentals) to support or expand Canadian energy exports, broken down by the types of energy export support enumerated in (b); (h) how much has been spent reimbursing travel and accommodation expenditures for (i) non-government employees, (ii) government employees, to support or expand Canada's energy exports broken down by the types of energy export support enumerated in (b); and (i) what is the total estimated value of any other government efforts to promote Canadian energy exports, broken down by the types of energy export support enumerated in (b)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 939—**Mr. Dany Morin:**

With regard to the Health Canada decision not to certify citronella-based insect repellents: (a) what studies comparing the toxicity of insect repellents containing DEET with repellents containing citronella does Health Canada have at its disposal, and what are the findings of these studies; (b) during its citronella safety assessment, what groups did Health Canada consult to obtain scientific opinions; (c) did Health Canada receive solicited or unsolicited opinions, studies or documents from groups or scientists about the safety or toxicity of citronella used in insect repellent products and, if so, (i) from what groups or scientists did it receive them, (ii) on what date were these documents received, (iii) what were the findings of these documents; and (d) has Health Canada considered, or does it intend to consider, the possibility of creating a new category of products that would distinguish between chemical-based insect repellents and natural insect repellents, thereby allowing for the development of a separate safety certification process for natural products?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 940—Mr. François Lapointe:**

With regard to Canada Post and its equipment renewal for community mailboxes, further to the answer to question Q-471, obtained on June 5, 2014: (a) what were the reasons for selecting a new mailbox model and ordering 100 000 of them between 2014 and 2016; (b) is the mailbox model produced by Florence Manufacturing patented or licensed and, if so, (i) under what jurisdiction, (ii) is the patent or licence legally binding in Canada, (iii) could a Canadian company have acquired the patent or licence to produce the same model as the one produced by Florence Manufacturing; (c) if the model is not patented or licensed, (i) what regulations forbid or make it impossible for a Canadian company to acquire the patent or licence, (ii) does Canada Post know which companies have the licences required to produce the mailboxes and, if so, what are their names, (iii) what reasons led Canada Post to restrict the tendering process to companies that hold the patent or licence in question; (d) does Canada Post intend to use the same selection criteria for its next tendering process, expected in January 2015, for long-term mailbox production; (e) what reasons led Canada Post to choose new selection criteria; (f) was a study carried out to determine the reasons mentioned in (c), including forecasts for increased parcel delivery, and, if not, (i) why not, (ii) what factors did contribute to determining the criteria for producing new mailboxes; (g) if the answer to (f) is affirmative, (i) when was this study commissioned, (ii) when was this study completed, (iii) what are the details; (h) does Canada Post have a division or resources dedicated to research and development; (i) did Canada Post try to develop a prototype or prototypes together with its Canadian partners that would respond to the new selection criteria and, if so, what are the details concerning these prototypes; (j) if the answer to (i) is not in the affirmative, why not; and (k) if the prototypes mentioned in (i) do exist, (i) did Canada Post help fund these development projects, (ii) what were the costs, (iii) what were the development timelines, (iv) were they evaluated by Canada Post, (v) what was the content and what were the conclusions of these evaluations, (vi) were these prototypes pilot-tested in Canada? and Role

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 941—Mr. Paul Dewar:**

With regard to diplomatic postings by Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada: (a) what is the total number of vacancies in diplomatic postings; (b) which positions are vacant; (c) how long have each of the positions identified in (b) been vacant; (d) at which stage of the recruitment and posting process are the positions identified in (b); (e) what is the average length of time taken to fill a diplomatic posting in each of the last five calendar years; (f) what percentage of diplomatic postings in each of the last five years has been filled from within the Foreign Service; (g) what percentage of ambassadorial postings in each of the last five years has been filled from within the Foreign Service; and (h) what percentage of diplomatic postings requires ministerial approval?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 942—Ms. Ève Pécelet:**

With regard to Pre-Removal Risk Assessments (PRRAs) filed by individuals subject to removal from Canada, for each year from 2011: (a) how many PRRAs were submitted; (b) how many were approved; (c) how many were denied; (d) of those denied, how many were on the grounds of (i) posing a danger to the public of Canada, (ii) posing a danger to the security of Canada, (iii) administrative reasons, (iv) other reasons; (e) what were the countries of return of the persons applying for PRRAs, both approved and denied; (f) how many PRRAs applicants (i) were subject to an extradition order, (ii) were advancing a refugee claim, (iii) had a PRRAs rejected and did not leave Canada; and (g) what are the titles of employees at Citizenship and Immigration Canada responsible for deciding the outcomes of PRRAs?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 944—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to government funding allocated within the constituency of Timmins—James Bay: (a) what is the total amount allocated in fiscal year 2013-2014, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount; and (b) what funding projects were approved under FedNor between 2011 and 2014 inclusively, and what was their value?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 945—Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With respect to the drafting of the new liability provisions in Bill C-46, Pipeline Safety Act: (a) what are the names, positions, organizations or affiliations of all the stakeholders consulted leading up to the creation of this legislation; (b) what submissions, proposals or recommendations were made by stakeholders during the consultation process before the creation of this legislation; (c) other than Natural Resources Canada, what other departments were involved or consulted in the creation of this legislation; (d) what are the dates, times, and locations of the meetings with those individuals or organizations consulted before the creation of this legislation; (e) who proposed the \$1 billion limit for absolute liability; (f) who proposed that this legislation apply only to pipelines with the capacity to transport at least 250 000 barrels of oil per day; and (g) what evidence was used to determine that \$1 billion would be sufficient to clean up a spill?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 946—Mr. Craig Scott:**

With respect to the government's knowledge of rendition, detention and interrogation activities: (a) is the government aware of the existence of the United States' Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Detention and Interrogation Program (the Program) and, if so, (i) when was the government made aware of it, (ii) who had such knowledge, (iii) what was the extent of that knowledge; (b) if the answer in (a) is affirmative, has the government sent observers within the Program, or to act as a liaison between the Program and any government department, agency or intelligence entity; (c) at any point, has Canada been one of the "other nations" from which the Program "required secrecy and cooperation", according to the United States Select Committee on Intelligence's Study of the CIA's Detention and Interrogation Program, released in December 2014 (the Study); (d) has the government been aware of the role of "contract psychologists" in the design and execution of CIA torture programs, as revealed by the Study and, if so, is there record of anyone in Canada being a contract psychologist; (e) has the government been aware of the existence of a CIA detention and interrogation site known as Detention Site COBALT (the Site) and, if so, (i) when was the government made aware of it, (ii) who had such knowledge, (iii) what was the extent of that knowledge; (f) did the government send any employees or contractors to (i) observe activity within the Site, (ii) transfer persons to the Site, (iii) assist in the transfer of persons to the Site, (iv) learn of the transfer to the Site of persons who had, at any point, been in the custody of or detained by Canadian armed force personnel; (g) when the Program was terminated, was the government aware that, in Afghanistan, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) would serve as the continuation of the Program in close collaboration with the CIA; and (h) after the invasion of Iraq by forces of the United States and other countries in 2003, did any Canadian official, discuss with a person or persons employed by the Pentagon or by the U.S. Secretary of State for Defense the subject of collaboration in Afghanistan, most notably in Kandahar province, by Canadian armed forces personnel, notably special forces personnel, with US armed force personnel or the CIA in the capture and transfer of persons into CIA or NDS custody by, or with the involvement of, Canadian armed forces personnel?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 962—Mr. Dennis Bevington:**

With respect to the Northern Greenhouse Initiative, and specifically the Call for Expressions of Interest to access funding that closed on September 30, 2014: (a) what are the names and addresses of all those who submitted applications; (b) what were the complete terms of reference for this call for expressions of interest; (c) what are the complete evaluation criteria to be used; and (d) what are the titles or positions of those who will evaluate the applications?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 972—Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by the Canadian Space Agency since March 27, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

## Government Orders

Question No. 974—**Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Industry Canada since May 30, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 998—**Ms. Lise St-Denis:**

With regard to Statistics Canada: what are the details of all custom tabulations or data sets prepared for or at the request of any government department, agency, office, crown corporation, or other government body, since January 1, 2010, broken down by (i) the nature or description of the custom tabulation or data set, (ii) the date on which it was requested, (iii) the reason or purpose for which it was requested, (iv) the department, agency, office, crown corporation, or other government body making the request?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 999—**Ms. Lise St-Denis:**

With regard to contracts under \$10 000 granted by Library and Archives Canada since March 31, 2014: what are the (a) vendors' names; (b) contracts' reference numbers; (c) dates of the contracts; (d) descriptions of the services provided; (e) delivery dates; (f) original contracts' values; and (g) final contracts' values, if different from the original contracts' values?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1013—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With regard to the Venture Capital Action Plan for the fiscal years 2012-2013 to the current fiscal year: (a) of the commitment to invest \$400 million in the Venture Capital Action Plan over 7 to 10 years, how much has been invested; (b) of the commitment to invest \$250 million in new, large private sector-led national funds of funds, (i) what outcomes have been achieved, (ii) what are the names of the funds, (iii) how much money has been received so far; (c) of the \$100 million commitment to recapitalize existing venture capital funds, how much has been invested, broken down by fund; (d) of the commitment to make an aggregate investment of \$50 million in 3 to 5 high-performing funds, how much has been invested, broken down by fund; (e) what "additional resources" have been invested to continue developing a robust venture capital system and a strong entrepreneurial culture in Canada; (f) how many companies have applied for funding; (g) what is the total amount of funding that has been given out, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) electoral riding; (h) how many companies have been rejected for funding, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) electoral riding; (i) what is the success rate of funding applications, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) electoral riding; (j) what is the total amount of funding, broken down by application category of (i) clean tech and energy efficiency, (ii) information technology, (iii) healthcare; (k) what is the success rate of applications by application category of (i) clean tech and energy efficiency, (ii) information technology, (iii) healthcare; and (l) what is the average amount of funding granted, broken down by (i) fiscal year, (ii) electoral riding?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

**ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BARBARIC CULTURAL PRACTICES ACT**

BILL S-7—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC)** moved:

That in relation to Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, not more than two further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the Bill; and

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

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1 there will now be a 30-minute question period.

One minute will be allowed for each question and answer, and priority will be given to opposition members wishing to ask questions.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day again for Canadian Parliament. This is the 91st time the government has used closure, or time allocation, in this Parliament. It goes beyond any previous government in Canadian history. It is twice as bad as what was the previous worst government in terms of open intolerance of democratic debate in this House. The only solace for the Canadian population is that Canadians know that in 200 days, they will be able to vote the current government out of office and bring in a government that actually respects parliamentary traditions.

With the last three closure motions and time allocation, we have seen a real intolerance of debate. We have seen with Bill C-51 that the government is systematically refusing witnesses who could bring a lot to bear on the bill, which is a controversial piece of legislation. Yesterday in the House, the minister might as well have told Yukoners that the government will not accept any amendments to Bill S-6. The Conservatives want to make a show of going up to Whitehorse but have absolutely no intention of actually listening to witnesses and bringing amendments to Bill S-6.

My questions to the minister with respect to Bill S-7 are simple. Will the government hear from witnesses who want to come forward on this bill? Will it actually entertain amendments, or will it show the same disdain it has shown with so many other pieces of legislation by refusing amendments put forth by parliamentarians?

*Government Orders*

•(1020)

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. opposition House leader is forgetting one vital fact about Canadian democracy, and all effective functioning democracies in the world, which is that populations have the right to judge governments and decide whether they are getting good government not by the length of debate, not by the prolixity of debate or the level of obfuscation by the opposition, which in this House and Parliament has been enormous, but by the results achieved.

This bill would bring real results for Canadian women, those who are born here or who come here as newcomers and immigrants, and it has been debated. In fact, it was by listening to the report by one of the House standing committees on strengthening the protection of women in the immigration system, to which the NDP and all the opposition had ample opportunity to contribute, that we have come to the drafting of this bill.

The bill has been debated in the House and for three days in the Senate at second reading and three days at third reading. There were three full days at the Senate committee. Seventeen speakers have already spoken to it in the House. We look forward to hearing from many more and from many good witnesses at committee. This bill, which is urgently needed, is getting the democratic consideration it needs.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there has been a change in the way this House has operated since the Conservative/Reform Party acquired its majority. Since then, we have seen the government implement time allocation, which is closure. When the member said that there were three days of debate, that might work out to a few hours of actual debate. It is not 72 hours of debate, which is what the member might be trying to imply when he makes that simple statement.

The reality is that members of Parliament traditionally are afforded the opportunity to voice the concerns expressed, in good part, by the constituents they represent here on the floor of the House of Commons. Never in the history of the parliamentary system in Canada have we witnessed such a disrespect for allowing debate to occur on government bills, budget bills, and so forth.

My question is for the government House leader, and it is very simple. Why do the government and the Prime Minister not allow for genuine debate and dialogue on all forms of legislation brought to the House? Why are there limits? It is highly undemocratic.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. We are at a historical watershed in this place. We are seeing things we have never seen before, and we are seeing them from the Liberal Party of Canada. It claims to have the best economic interests of Canadians at heart. However, when we get a glimpse of what the Liberals' policies might be, they only want to raise taxes. The Liberal Party of Canada, which claims to be pro-immigration, has supported absolutely none of our reforms to the immigration system to clean up the mess it left us in 2006. The Liberals have complained about every single step forward we have made.

The Liberals have already said in this House that they support the bill. The member just stood to say that he wants an endless debate. He wants everyone to be able to express the same view over and

over again. He wants that inefficiency. He wants the time of this House to be wasted, even though that party has made up its mind. We have never seen such hypocrisy in this place before.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, just a few minutes ago, the minister said he was looking forward to hearing from witnesses at committee on Bill S-7. Well, I have some doubts about his comments that I would like to share, if I may.

First of all, just this week, some newspapers referred to a Conservative Party internal document that revealed that the Conservatives had already decided on the content of the report before the latest committee review even began. This proves how little the Conservatives care about the evidence given by witnesses.

Furthermore, during debate on Bill S-7, we had not even finished the second hour of debate when the minister said that the title was just fine as it is and it would not be changed.

When the minister says he is looking forward to hearing from witnesses, frankly, I do not believe a word of it, because we know very well that the Conservatives' minds are already made up and they have no respect for the parliamentary process or for the opinions of the experts who appear in committee.

This time allocation motion is just further proof of that.

•(1025)

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, not only are we prepared to hear from witnesses in committee and continue to debate here in the House, but we also based this bill on a committee report written in 2013 and 2014. That report was on protecting women in our immigration programs and on the issue of forced marriage. We had already heard from the opposition and various witnesses when we drafted this bill.

It is hard to understand why the NDP cannot come together and support a bill that is so positive for women and so warmly welcomed by women across the country.

We are confident in our position on our side of the House because we want to move forward with the necessary reforms to ensure that forced marriage, barbaric practices, underage marriages, and honour killings have no place in our country.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up the theme the hon. member for Winnipeg North was developing, and that is the issue of process and democracy in this place. I believe that the government has invoked closure on debate through time allocation more than 90 times in this Parliament. Over four years, that works out to 22 times per year. That, for Canadians who may be watching this, says that the government, 22 times a year, approximately, tells this House that we, as parliamentarians, cannot stand up in this place and represent our constituents and contribute to the debate and discussion in this place.

The consequence of that is that amendments, necessary improvements to legislation, which are contributions from all parties in this House, particularly the opposition, are not made. That is why there have been a record number of government bills that have been ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in this country, including Bill C-31, which I, in committee, warned the government would be unconstitutional. Sure enough, that was found to be the case.

In terms of making good legislation, I understand that the government has a majority, and ultimately it needs to get business done, and we, as a responsible opposition, co-operate with that. However, does the member not agree that good suggestions on this side of the House that can improve the legislation are things a responsible democratic government would want to welcome in this place, not for the good of the opposition but for the good of Canada and the good of Canadians?

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians understand that being elected to this place, having the right to stand in one's place and speak in this place, should not give any of us, any party, an unlimited right to obstruct and slow the business of this House.

The fact that closure has been invoked a number of times in this place has brought Canadians enormous benefits through changes to the tax system. There are lower taxes. It has brought protections, over 40 of them, through the justice system, with improvements to the Criminal Code that are bringing the crime rate in this country down. It has brought us free trade agreements, a record number, dozens of them, which is way beyond the record of any previous government.

On this particular issue, let us listen to the words of Aruna Papp. "Canada was designated the best country to be a woman".

We are morally bound to take a stand on behalf of all women who are victims of abuse, especially on behalf of young girls, the most vulnerable in our immigrant communities. That is why we are moving forward with this legislation. That is why we want it to become law sooner rather than later. That is why we agree that the Criminal Code needs to be changed to protect women.

We have a fundamental difference of opinion with New Democrats on this issue. They do not want to change the justice system. They do not want to strengthen it. That is their policy. Month after month, year after year, Canadians have rejected it. We will continue to listen to Canadians.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this may not be the last time that I say this, but I have sat in this chamber for 18 years and I have never seen a government that has shown such disrespect for democracy and the institution of Parliament. The government has imposed time allocation 91 times.

I would like to remind the Minister of Immigration that he was formerly the ambassador to Afghanistan. We sent our young soldiers there to fight for democracy, a parliament and freedom of speech for Afghans. This same freedom of speech is not being afforded to us as parliamentarians. It is as though the Conservatives believe that they have all the answers and that they will settle this with an election. Basically they are saying that they do not believe in the democracy of Parliament or in debate and they do not want Canadians to hear arguments against their bill.

However, it is a fundamental right in a democracy and the very purpose of Parliament. I am sure that when the Minister of Immigration was the ambassador to Afghanistan, he fought to give Afghans a parliament and freedom of speech. The Conservatives are stripping us of this constitutional right. What the government is doing is so very wrong. It is regrettable and Canadians are watching. It goes against our country's democratic tradition.

● (1030)

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, in no country has democracy ever given an elected official the right to do nothing about anything. If we were to do what the NDP proposes, this Parliament would have been much less productive. Canada's crime rate and tax burden would be much higher, we would have lost growth and we would not be in a position to create 1.2 million new jobs across the country.

If we were to open the door to inaction or paralysis, we would look much more like the Afghan government. Canada's standards are much higher than that.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the minister's time allocation motion, which would limit the time for debate on this bill. Since I am not running in the upcoming election, I would like to put something on the permanent record here in the House.

*[English]*

I believe that the quality of debate in the chamber could be improved. The government says that speeches are repetitive. That is its argument for limiting debate. I think what is going on is that the opposition is doing its job in criticizing the government's legislation. However, the speeches we hear, and I would say we hear this a lot from the government side, and to be fair, sometimes from the opposition side, are not real debate in terms of a clash of ideas, in terms of responding to each other in a give and take, back and forth exchange of ideas and a testing of ideas.

The reason the debate needs to continue is to have better-quality debate. If we had good-quality debate, we could finish it in a couple of days and would not need to limit the number of speeches.

*Government Orders*

We in the opposition are challenging the government. We are pointing out problems. We are bringing up facts and evidence, and we need a response from the government. If we got a proper response and had a back and forth debate, a real debate, instead of just reading speeches where we pass by each other, from an intellectual point of view, we would not need to limit debate.

Therefore, I call on the government—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, here I am and here we are, in debate with the opposition members, responding to their individual questions. I am not passing the hon. member in the night. I am not sticking to some prepared line. I am listening to him, and I am prepared to collide with his view.

The fact of the matter is that the Liberal Party of Canada has agreed to support this bill. The Liberals have not made any suggestions for improving it. They made some outrageous comparisons and engaged in some outrageous rhetoric in the Senate committee, which lowers their party's credibility. Now, they have turned around to support the bill, with one exception: they want to drop the word “cultural” from the title. We are not going to do that, and we have made our view clear.

There is nothing more to say from our side to the Liberal Party, because the Liberals have made no proposals on this bill. Why would they not be prepared to move forward? Why would they not be prepared to move on to another question where they do have views? Could it be that they simply do not have views on most questions, and therefore would rather tie themselves into procedural knots to disguise the fact from Canadians that on these issues, as on others—on protecting women, on enhancing the economy, on lowering taxes, on opening new markets—the Liberal Party of Canada—

• (1035)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. We have 13 minutes left and I see that a number of hon. members wish to participate, so I am going to enforce the one-minute rule more strictly as we go through these next 13 minutes.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Bill S-7 is the product of a report that came out after extensive study done by the citizenship and immigration committee in the House. We have heard extensive debate in this House, as has been heard in the Senate. To continue to hear regurgitated speeches that are not only repetitive but ad nauseam repeating of the same points over and over, does not add to the quality of the debate as the Liberal member was so eloquently trying to explain.

However, I want to ask the minister this question.

**Mr. Ted Hsu:** Do not disagree with your minister, please.

**Ms. Ève Pécelet:** Be careful. You are talking too long. The minister is going to tell you to stop talking. On Afghanistan, do not forget.

**Mr. Costas Menegakis:** Mr. Speaker, I did not heckle anybody when they were speaking. They like to heckle. This is the Liberal and the NDP way. When we bring up a valid point to which they do not have a response, they heckle. That is their style.

I have a very simple question for the minister. I understand the minister did country-wide consultations on this subject. I wonder if he could share with us some of the things he heard that have brought urgency to the fact that we need to pass this legislation in an expeditious way so we can respond to those folks who are victims of these—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary, who has done extraordinary work on this bill and across the board on immigration, citizenship, and passport issues, for that question and for engaging in this debate.

Let us listen again to Aruna Papp, who said that it is about time and she commends the government for its leadership, for taking a stand on a very difficult issue, and for defending the human rights of vulnerable women unable to speak for themselves.

[*Translation*]

In addition, according to Julie Miville-Dechéne, the president of Quebec's Conseil du statut de la femme, “This will allow us to address the phenomenon of young girls forced to marry when they are sent abroad during their vacation.”

[*English*]

Just on the question of civil marriage, we are making important changes here that we all agree on in this place: that there be a requirement for free and enlightened consent before two people marry; that there be a requirement for an existing marriage to end prior to someone entering into another marriage; and that there be a national minimum age of 16. That minimum age does not exist in this country outside of Quebec. We need to move on this.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually with a great deal of sadness that I rise in this House today to once again have to speak against another time allocation where the government is using its majority to shut down debate. It gets rather tiring when we hear, “Let us get it through this House; we will get it to committee because that is when we will have the in-depth study”.

I saw how that worked for Bill C-51. Once we got to committee, the government's proposal was no more than three meetings. On top of that, the Conservatives kept the Privacy Commissioner from testifying there.

What I am finding confusing is that the minister said it is absolutely imperative that they take action on this right now. We already have legislation prohibiting marriage before the age of 16. We already have laws saying that one can only be married to one person at a time. All of this rhetoric is so divisive and meant to create a milieu that the Conservative government is doing something, when all it is doing is feeding fear and suspicion and trying to pretend it is fixing something that is not broken in Canada.

*Government Orders*

●(1040)

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, there we have it again. The NDP position on this bill is to do nothing; it is not important; life is perfect in Canada for women and girls, and so nothing needs to be done.

That is what the member just said. The member said that there is no need to do anything because it is not broken.

One settlement agency in Toronto, in its workload, identified more than 200 cases of forced marriage. Dozens of settlement agencies across this country have identified dozens, and potentially hundreds, of cases of polygamy so far without even really looking into this in detail.

Marriages are not being dissolved before other marriages take place. Free and enlightened consent is not being given. Marriages of people under the age of 16 are not prohibited from occurring in this country. Girls are still being removed from this country to be forcibly married elsewhere against their will and then brought back to Canada.

We need action on this if Canada is to live up to its standards.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** My goodness, the minister is not actively listening this morning, Mr. Speaker. It is rather discouraging.

I rise to speak to this time allocation motion because I take exception to the idea that we in the NDP are not concerned about matters of justice. On the contrary, as the justice critic, I can tell you that every bill introduced in the House by the government is studied carefully. The only difference between the Conservatives and us is that we try to be consistent with the Criminal Code.

What my colleague from Newton—North Delta said quite eloquently is that these provisions already exist. It is not that the NDP does not want to stand up against forced marriage, polygamy and honour crimes, it is that all these provisions already exist. The Conservatives are playing with people's heads, and it is insulting. We have carefully reviewed all the justice bills and we even supported a number of these bills, including the one introduced by the Conservative member for Yukon on fetal alcohol syndrome. Perhaps because we supported it, the Conservatives decided to withdraw it.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking here about Bill S-7. We are talking about women and girls facing forced or underage marriages. The members opposite from Gatineau and Newton—North Delta keep saying that the justice system already offers enough protections.

What should we tell the hundreds of women and girls who are victims of this type of crime and had no protection? They were literally taken from their homes, forced to leave Canada, forced to marry abroad without their consent and return here, against their will, to spend their life with that person. The existing protections are not enough. That is what people and stakeholders across the country told us quite clearly.

Why is the NDP not listening to those people?

[*English*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in terms of Bill S-7, the Liberals will be proposing an amendment that, instead of the bill's short title referring to "barbaric cultural practices", the word "cultural" be eliminated and it simply be "barbaric practices".

The reason for this is that such practices are not limited to any one community. There is Bountiful in British Columbia, which is Christian. There was a Jewish group in Quebec.

The word "cultural" is taken to be demeaning to the Muslim community, among others perhaps. I know the minister is highly aware of insults to the Muslim community in which he has indulged, not appearing to know the difference between a hijab and a niqab.

However, the general point is that I do not think the word "cultural" is necessary. It can be taken away. I wonder if the minister would agree to that amendment.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, we will not, as we have said in this place many times, remove the word "cultural" from the title of this bill, because the defence of these barbaric practices is often mistakenly made in the name of culture.

We want to point out that the only culture that is unacceptable here, and which we hope would be eliminated from Canada with this bill, is the culture of violence against women. There should be no defence of violence against women that makes a cultural reference. There is no room for any particular group to be insulted by this bill because, if they are engaging in violence against women, they are engaging in a crime, a barbaric practice, and all Canadians understand that it is wrong.

We, on this side of the House, are very clear about what we are trying to correct here. There are legal systems around the world that allow polygamy. There are 62 countries that allow polygamy in one way or another. Some of them are Christian-majority countries, many of them. Some of them are Muslim-majority countries. Some of them are mixed. We consider that a practice barbaric.

●(1045)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am so disappointed in what the minister has been saying this morning. At this point, everyone can see that there are good reasons the NDP has for years been calling for more funding for police forces and those working on the ground.

What we are hearing clearly this morning is that they want to stifle the debate and send out messages from an electioneering perspective. They want to pique the interest of the people their party is constantly sending messages to about current events and urging to donate money to their campaign.

There is a debate going on this morning, but we are being prevented from speaking. If the minister believes that Bill S-7 is a priority, then how does he explain the previous 90 times?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, I am always proud to talk about our government's productivity and the number of free trade agreements that have made their way through all of the government's decision-making bodies and been debated in the House. I am always proud to talk about the more than 150 tax cuts that the government has given to Canadians through debates in the House, the budget and other measures. That is taking action. That is what ensures Canada's competitiveness and growth, job creation, the protection of Canadian families and communities and, with this bill, the protection of women and girls in Canada.

**Mr. Pierre Nantel:** I listened to the minister's remarks. From what he said about this Parliament, one would think we were working in a sausage factory. This is not a war room; this is a parliament. We need to discuss and take our time dealing with these bills.

The interventions from the members on this side of the House this morning have brought a different, new and constructive perspective. I cannot imagine how the minister can in good conscience continue to ignore our message and forge blindly ahead, running roughshod over anything we say.

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Speaker, the only ones forging blindly ahead are of course on the other side of the House. Stubbornly and without due consideration, they insist on delaying every debate and the passage of every measure we propose to protect women.

[*English*]

We have just spent half an hour in this place talking about the need to move forward with the bill, and I have not heard a single comment from members on the other side indicating how they might improve the protection of women, how they might improve our work to ensure barbaric practices are not happening in this country.

Yes, I have always known the difference between a head scarf and a veil. Our policy will remain to ensure that citizenship ceremonies take place among people who have removed their face coverings. That is one of the practices in this country that protects women, protects girls, and protects Canadian values and traditions, and that is why we are taking action on this issue today.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

[*English*]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Call in the members.

● (1130)

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

(*Division No. 352*)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Boughen	Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Eglinski
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Perkins
Poilievre	Raitt
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trottier
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Loan	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	

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Williamson  
Woodworth  
Yurdiga

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Wong  
Young (Vancouver South)  
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Members

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Ashton  
Aubin  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Boulerice  
Brahmi  
Brosseau  
Caron  
Cash  
Chicoine  
Christopherson  
Comartin  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Dubourg  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Fry  
Garrison  
Godin  
Gravelle  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hsu  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)  
Nantel  
Nicholls  
Pacetti  
Perreault  
Rafferty  
Ravignat  
Regan  
Saganash  
Scarpaleggia  
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Choquette  
Cleary  
Crowder  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Day  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Foote  
Garneau  
Genest-Jourdain  
Goodale  
Grogulé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Julian  
Lamoureux  
Latendresse  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
May  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Murray  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Péclet  
Pilon  
Rankin  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Sgro  
St-Denis  
Sullivan  
Valeriote

**PAIRED**

Nil

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

SECOND READING

The House resumed from February 17 consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

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

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to a subject that is particularly crucial in the current debate. I would like to point out that Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, was introduced in the Senate, therefore by parliamentarians who were not elected by Canadians.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order. There is a lot of noise in the House. We are back on orders of the day. The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue has been recognized and is partway through her remarks, so I would ask all hon. members who wish to carry on conversations to make their way out of the chamber to the respective lobbies.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, Bill S-7, which I will be speaking to, was introduced in the Senate. It was introduced by people who were not democratically elected by Canadians. I also want to thank my colleague from Joliette, with whom I will be sharing my time, and who will speak at the end of my speech.

First, like the NDP member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, I think that no child should ever be the victim of violence, and that forced marriages, honour crimes, or any form of violence against women and children should not have a place in this country. In that sense, we all agree on the principle and the goal. People who commit such violence against children and women must be punished.

The battle to combat violence against women is one that must be fought on the ground. I tip my hat to the front-line workers, security personnel, border officers and, in short, everyone who works on the ground and witnesses this type of violence and crime. These are situations that are not easy to see or experience. We should commend these people for the work they try to do on the ground. They have to intervene to prevent these crimes and help victims. It is an ongoing battle. That is why I tip my hat to them. I hope they are prepared to keep up the fight to stop violence against women.

The Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights presented a report on this bill in which it points out that other measures are needed to address the problems of polygamy, forced marriage, or underage marriage. More specifically, the committee confirmed that we need to educate people, raise awareness and provide support services. However, Bill S-7 was passed by the Senate without amendment.

Faced with this major problem and such a complex issue, it is regrettable that all the government is doing is bringing forward legislation when, according to the Senate committee, education and public awareness should be part of this approach.

*Government Orders*

For people whose memories may not reach back that far, I would like to remind them that about 100 years ago in Canada there were many situations where women were victims of violence and forced to marry. How many young girls were forced to marry to cover up a pregnancy? The only way that they could leave the family home and hope to have a decent life was either to marry or to become a nun. Many women were forced to marry for cultural or socio-economic reasons.

Over the years, a change in attitudes and the education of parents has meant that men and women are equal today, even though there is still work to do on that. The principle of gender equality has been recognized even though in real life there is still work to be done.

As a nurse, I had the opportunity to work with seniors. When you talk to women who are 85 or 95 years old, you realize that their lives were completely different. There are women who were raped by their husbands every night because they were unlucky when they were told that it was time to marry, move on or enter religious life. There were some very difficult situations.

The experience of these women can help us end these practices. Unfortunately, what happened here is being completely ignored as though everything has always been fine for women in Canada. We must take this into account if we really want to change the mindset.

• (1135)

Over time, women have done some historic work to change the culture. This work was not done through legislation but through involvement, by changing attitudes and by getting people who work on the ground and in the communities involved in changing these practices. It could be beneficial for us to look at what has been done in the past.

One of the problems with this bill, especially with respect to polygamy, is that if we recognize that a man has engaged in polygamous relationships, his entire family can be deported. This part of the bill does not make sense. Either women are victims of polygamy or they are accomplices. Based on what I have heard from all members, included the Conservatives—unless I am mistaken, but I do not think so—everyone seems to think that women are victims of polygamy and are not accomplices. If they are victims of polygamy, why are they not allowed to stay here instead of being forced to return to their country with their polygamous husband? They are not even given the chance to stay here, even though we believe that they were victims. That does not make sense.

I think that is very important. We would like to amend the bill so that victims are exempt from fulfilling the requirements of conditional permanent residence, to allow the wives and children of someone who is deported for having lied to the authorities about his marital status to remain in Canada, where they are living. That is essential.

We must also be aware of the consequences. What will happen to a woman when the authorities realize that she is a victim of polygamy? What impact will her deportation to her country of origin have on her health and physical safety? Her husband may believe that it is her fault that he was unable to remain in Canada. What do my colleagues think? Will he give her flowers and a new dress or will he give her the beating of her life? It is important to think this

through. I believe that it is clear to all parliamentarians that women are victims of polygamy, and if they are victims, we must ensure they do not suffer any of the negative consequences that deportation may have on their health, their safety and even their lives.

This government has a responsibility to ensure that these women are not doubly victimized. We cannot tell ourselves that they may get the beating of their life but this will not happen in Canada so it is not our problem. That is not a responsible way of thinking. We must therefore make sure that we clearly understand the full scope of our actions when we impose consequences on women who are the victims of polygamy.

We must also ensure that the children who are left behind in their home country are eligible for immigration to Canada and that they have access to the Canadian immigration system. Moreover, we must provide prevention and support services to victims. I want to say that children should not have to suffer because they were born to the wrong one of their father's wives. Children should not have to suffer the consequences of the choices of their father, who is really their father and who, unfortunately, chose another one of his wives. Those children should have the right to settle here if they are not a risk to Canadian society.

I look forward to my colleagues' questions.

• (1140)

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

The hon. member mentioned a few problems with this bill. I think the biggest problem is in the title: Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act.

[*English*]

I find it misleading. We can disapprove of polygamy, but this is the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. It only directs itself to polygamy. What does the hon. member suppose the Conservative administration means to do by giving it this overblown and somewhat hyperbolic title?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is once again playing with words in order to whip up fear of strangers, fear of others.

These are practices that are still being used. I completely disagree with calling them “barbaric cultural practices”. As I illustrated, forced marriage was practised in Canada and in the British and French traditions. In that case, our own culture, our cultural heritage, is also barbaric. It is not the right word. The acts are barbaric, not the culture, regardless of who commits them.

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue for her speech.

Ten minutes is not a lot of time to get one's point across. Does the hon. member want to add anything she did not have time to say, but is important for Canadians to know?

*Government Orders*

• (1145)

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I think it would be a good idea to consult Canadian experts in women's history. They would be able to tell us exactly what happened in Canada that made people want to put an end to that kind of practice and focus more on gender equality.

We need to know what that process was like and how people's practices, culture and ways of thinking were influenced so that we can achieve the same results for immigrants. Immigrants may not have gone through a period that focused on their rights in their country of origin.

I think we have so much to learn, and there are lots of people who could give us much better advice about consulting and approaching the communities instead of merely considering a purely legislative approach, as always. These people could advise us on providing the financial means to create strategies and programs to fight this problem on the ground.

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of examples of barbaric cultural practices in the west, in our fabulous civilization that wants to tell everyone on earth how to live. For example, we have had two world wars, the Holocaust and the war in the Balkans.

Maybe there is a reason that we have been accused of all kinds of things. We should start by fixing our own barbaric cultural problems. For example, we should investigate the murder and disappearance of aboriginal women.

I would like my colleague to comment further on that.

**Ms. Christine Moore:** Mr. Speaker, that is precisely why I said in response to the question from my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands that the title is problematic. These are not barbaric cultural practices; these are barbaric acts that occur in many cultures. These acts are not an implicit part of the culture. Many people are very open-minded.

For instance, when I worked in Senegal, people were becoming very open. More and more men said themselves that they did not want to have four wives, but rather just one. Attitudes can change.

Of course, if you are a hypocrite and believe that you have always acted appropriately and you judge others without looking at yourself, your own history and what you have done in the past, then you do not have much credibility.

**Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we will talk about Bill S-7, but we will do so under the 91st gag order.

Considering what I heard earlier, before the vote, I hope that some people are watching us debate once again under a gag order.

I am pleased to rise today to share my opinion on Bill S-7. However, as in many cases in the past, I think the Conservatives are proposing an inadequate solution to a problem they see. This results in the politicization of a serious problem, and that is deplorable, to say the least.

Just look at the short title: zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. They must really like sensationalizing things to include those kinds of expressions in our legislation. I think such a title

promotes xenophobia in Canada and does not allow for a fair assessment of the problem.

Of course, I strongly oppose polygamy, forced and early marriages, and gender-based violence. I am a feminist and I have been fighting for women's rights for nearly 40 years, so of course I am not okay with forcing girls to marry.

In my family, some of my mother's sisters had to get married at 16 because families were large and these girls had to leave home. They had to leave because of the attitudes of the era. However, that does not mean that these women wanted to get married at 16 or 17 and be forced to have a dozen children.

This started to change with my generation, because women worked to forge a better society for themselves and for men as well.

That said, this is all about how we solve these problems. The experts who appeared before the Senate committee said that criminalization alone would not solve this problem and, on the contrary, it could make it worse. Why criminalize people who ultimately are victims of a certain mindset?

Instead of trying to score political points by fostering xenophobia, which does not involve much thought, the government could strengthen existing legislation. It should also undertake to implement a national action plan to combat violence against women and invest more in organizations that provide assistance to women who are victims of sexual violence.

At present, many aboriginal women are raped or murdered and disappear. However, nothing is being done about that.

The government is, quite simply, not on the right track to help women, who are the real victims of sexual violence. No woman should be subjected to gender-based violence, forced marriage or underage marriage.

Unfortunately, this bill may also have serious unintended consequences, including the criminalization of victims of polygamy, the criminalization and deportation of children, and the separation of families. Why criminalize the victims of polygamy? I do not understand. Perhaps we will get some answers to that today.

This is simply not the right approach, since we are missing an opportunity to do what we should be doing: protecting victims.

The Conservatives do not care about the plight of victims of gender-based violence because they would rather exploit these victims to promote their agenda focused on intolerance and sensationalism. They are prepared to sacrifice the future of women who are the victims of gender-based violence, all to score a few points, and in doing so they are affecting all of Canada by fuelling xenophobia.

Xenophobia leads to knee-jerk reactions, and when people fall prey to that mindset, they no longer think. That is why the Conservatives love to fuel xenophobia, since it allows them to score a few easy points.

*Government Orders*

I want to appeal to the intelligence of the Canadians watching us today. Instead of promoting a sensationalist bill that will not fix anything, should the minister not undertake some serious consultations? I am obviously talking about some real, serious consultations.

• (1150)

In my opinion, the government should hold extensive consultations in co-operation with community groups and experts in order to find an effective solution to the problem of gender-based violence. These groups could give us a lot of assistance in drafting a bill that protects women from violence.

If the government were acting in a thoughtful manner, it would also invest more in the organizations that provide support services, such as safe and affordable housing and assistance for families. Perhaps if we were to try to eradicate poverty and help families, there might be less violence and attitudes would change with time.

Just for a minute, let us put ourselves in the shoes of victims of gender-based violence. Imagine a young immigrant woman who just barely speaks Canada's official languages. If she speaks just one of the two languages, it can be hard for her to understand all of our bills and laws. She must defend herself in a complicated justice system and cope with immigration rules that are hard to understand. She needs some help. Instead, the government will tell her that what she is doing is barbaric and that she is the problem. For hundreds of years we have been hearing that women are to blame for violence against women.

This young immigrant woman will have to fight even harder against a government that could tear apart her family, deport her or separate her from her children. That is not the right solution. Gender-based violence is a very serious issue, and we cannot exploit these victims' misery for the sake of meaningless sensationalism.

The victims of gender-based violence—primarily women and children—need support, assistance and attention. They do not need to be turned into criminals overnight. These victims did not choose their situation, so we must help them through it instead of pushing them even further into despair.

There are a number of aspects of the current bill that could have devastating consequences. For example, the bill does not contain any provisions to allow women who are conditional permanent residents to remain in Canada if their polygamist partner is deported. That is a very clear sign that the government is going after victims. Furthermore, the bill does not allow for the reunification of families in instances where a polygamist man immigrates with one of his wives and all of his children, effectively separating mothers and children. UNICEF has also expressed concerns that the bill would impose criminal sanctions against minors who celebrate a forced marriage. Starting a life with a forced marriage is hard enough, but adding a criminal record on top of that is even worse.

Another pernicious effect of the bill is that it could impede the work of groups fighting forced marriages and gender-based violence. Criminalization does have that “tough on crime” angle that the Conservatives like, but there is a major downside to it too. Criminalization will prevent many victims—women and children—from coming forward for fear of being deported or having a

criminal record. As a result, it will be hard to do anything for these families, and the problem could end up getting worse.

Another problem with this bill is that it does not take into account the fact that immigrant women often have significantly less information about the rules than their sponsoring partners, which exposes them to threats and manipulation.

We want victims of forced and underage marriage to be exempt from the requirements of conditional permanent residence. We also want to enable the wives and children of an individual who is deported for having misled authorities about his marital status to remain in Canada where they have settled. We need to eliminate the amendments to the Criminal Code and allow children who are left behind in their home country by a father who dissolves a polygamous marriage to be eligible for immigration. Finally, we need to provide prevention and support services for victims of gender-based violence.

For all of these reasons, and in light of the shortcomings of Bill S-7, I have no choice but to oppose the bill.

• (1155)

[*English*]

**Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member misses the entire point of this legislation. The legislation is about preventing the victimization of women in the first place. Let us understand what is barbaric about this practice. It forces 14-year-old girls to get married to older men so that they can be raped over and over again. It is about preventing that from happening.

How does the member respond to the fact that she complains about victims being revictimized? We are trying to prevent that. Victims themselves of this barbaric act have come out to support the bill. How can she continue with the rhetoric the New Democrats have come out with and state in this House that they will not vote to support at least one more measure to protect women and girls from being victimized in the first place?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing is that those of us on this side never understand bills, as though we were not smart enough to figure out that yes, there is a serious problem with passing this bill. Women will continue to be victimized, and they will be deported to their countries of origin where they will continue to be abused, raped and killed.

We are against this bill, period.

• (1200)

[*English*]

**Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the oddest part of this bill is that it seeks to make illegal that which is already illegal. It is like making murder illegal twice to somehow cut crime in this country. It is a peculiar approach to preventative strategies.

*Government Orders*

The United Nations has just isolated a country and criticized it for committing a grave violation of the rights of women by failing to properly and thoroughly investigate the high levels of violence they suffer. I left out two words in that, which are “Canada” and “aboriginal” women.

Does the member find it passing odd that when it comes to violence against women who may not even live in this country, the government is investing in preventative measures, but when we ask it to take preventative measures to prevent violence against aboriginal women in this country, all it wants to talk about is prosecution after the fact, databases after the fact, and helping police after the fact? Why does the government want to take preventative action for women and pass laws that are already on the books but does absolutely nothing to prevent violence against aboriginal women when it has the opportunity?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Mr. Speaker, why introduce a bill when we already have everything we need to protect women and all Canadians? Why introduce a bill that will create even more difficulties for women and children who are victims of violence? Why introduce this bill? We already have everything we need. We just have to strengthen the laws that already exist. Why criminalize women in polygamous marriages, who will then be forced to return to their home countries? I do not understand that.

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have one brief question for my colleague. Everyone was horrified when the women in the Shafia family were murdered. What would have happened if Bill S-7 had been in force? The first wife and the young women would have been sent back to Afghanistan, where the husband could have arranged their murder in a country with no security, no justice and no legal system. He could have murdered them with complete impunity. Here at least, he got what he deserved.

I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

**Ms. Francine Raynault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for reminding us of the terrible tragedy that that family endured.

He is quite right; the women would have been deported back to their home country. That man would have been sent back as well, without any penalty. He could have continued doing what he always did, which was punish the women for not listening to him. Here in Canada, those days are over.

[*English*]

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Minister of State for Western Economic Diversification.

I am thankful for this opportunity to contribute to the debate on Bill S-7. Implementing the measures in this bill would provide more protection and support for vulnerable individuals, primarily women and girls. It would do so by amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act, and the Criminal Code.

I am sure we can all agree that Canada's openness and generosity does not extend to underage, forced, or polygamist marriages or to other harmful cultural practices that deny gender equality. In this country, we do not and should not accept spousal abuse, so-called

honour killings, or other gender-based violence. As legislators, it is our duty to uphold the equality of men and women under the law. I would go so far as to say that this is a fundamental Canadian value.

Nevertheless, we must recognize that thousands of Canadian women and girls continue to be subjected to violence and that barbaric cultural practices still exist as a reality for many Canadian women.

The Criminal Code prohibits some of these harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and most of the criminal behaviour involved in a forced marriage, including assault, forcible confinement, and uttering threats. However, to improve protection and support for vulnerable individuals, especially women and girls, it is important that the measures in this bill pass into law. These measures would include rendering permanent and temporary residents inadmissible if they practice polygamy in Canada; strengthening Canadian marriage laws by establishing a new national minimum age for marriage of 16 and by codifying the existing legal requirement for free and entitled consent for marriage and for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another; criminalizing certain conduct related to underage and forced marriage ceremonies, including the act of removing a child from Canada for the purpose of such marriages; helping protect potential victims of underage or forced marriages by creating a new specific court-ordered peace bond where there are grounds to fear that someone would commit an offence in this area; and ensuring that the defence of provocation would not apply in so-called honour killings and many spousal homicides.

In my remaining time, I would like to offer some details about the important measures Bill S-7 proposes.

First, I will address polygamy, a practice that has been illegal in Canada for many years and that represents a clear affront to Canadian values. Although it is against Canadian law to practice polygamy or to enter into a polygamist union, which is a form of marriage involving more than two persons, that is not the case in a number of source countries for immigrants to Canada. With that in mind, Bill S-7 would create a new inadmissibility under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act for practising polygamy. This would enhance the ability to refuse visa applications and to also allow removal orders to be made where there is evidence that the person is or will be practising polygamy in Canada on those grounds alone.

Additional measures in Bill S-7 would amend the Civil Marriage Act to address the problem of early and forced marriages. These measures would include setting a national minimum age of 16 for marriage, codifying the requirement that those getting married must give their free and entitled consent to marry each other, and codifying the requirement for the dissolution of any previous marriages.

*Government Orders*

There are measures in Bill S-7 that would help prevent forced or underage marriage by amending the Criminal Code. If these measures pass into law, it would be a criminal offence to knowingly officiate at an underage or forced marriage, to knowingly and actively participate in a wedding ceremony at which one party is marrying against his or her will or is under the age of 16, and to remove a minor from Canada for a forced or underage marriage.

Bill S-7 would create a new peace bond giving courts the power to impose conditions on an individual when there were reasonable grounds to fear that a forced marriage or a marriage under the age of 16 will occur.

● (1205)

Finally, measures in this bill would also amend the Criminal Code to address so-called “honour killings”. So-called “honour-based” violence is perpetrated against family members, usually women and girls, who are perceived to have brought shame or dishonour to the family. Under the Criminal Code, someone charged with murder can raise the defence of provocation in order to obtain a reduction to the lesser charge of manslaughter. Measures in Bill S-7 would amend the Criminal Code so that legal conduct by the victim cannot be legally considered as provocation. This would preclude accused murderers, including those involved in honour killings, from trying to reduce the charges they face by using the argument that a victim's legal conduct provoked them into a heat of passion and that they killed while in that state.

In summary, the measures in Bill S-7 would strengthen our laws to protect Canadians and newcomers to Canada from barbaric cultural practices. That is why this bill is so important. By supporting these measures and ensuring that they pass into law, Parliament would send a strong message that we will not tolerate on Canadian soil any practices that deprive anyone of her or his human rights.

I have no doubt that everyone in this House would agree that in our capacity as representatives of the people of Canada, we have an obligation to always support victims of violence and abuse and to do everything that we can to prevent such practices from happening in this country. That is why I urge all members in this House to support these necessary measures and ensure that Bill S-7 passes into law.

● (1210)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I just want to say that the NDP is against polygamy, forced marriage and underage marriage.

That being said, I will say that the bill before us will not effectively combat these practices. In fact, it may do more harm than good. To support my comments, experts who appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights told us that criminalization is not enough to solve the problem and that it will in fact exacerbate it.

I want to know what my Conservative colleague across the way intends to do beyond criminalization to protect children from forced and underage marriage and women from polygamy.

[*English*]

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the position of the opposition in this case seems to be that if it is happening, we should just close our eyes and allow it to happen.

Bill S-7 would, first of all, change the provisions in immigration policy so that we could stop those who are in a polygamous relationship from coming to Canada in the first place. That is step one. Those people who are in Canada in a polygamous relationship would have the opportunity to report this relationship and have something done about it.

Many times it is about education as well, through such programs as those under our immigration and our justice departments. We have funded programs to reach out to different communities to people who may be in polygamous relationships and give them more information about their rights as Canadians and how they can deal with their situation.

It is important that we deal with these issues and not ignore them as the opposition members would do. It is important that we address them as barbaric cultural practices and ensure that they do not happen on Canadian soil.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be afforded the opportunity shortly to speak to the legislation. For now, my question for the member is in regard to the short title of the legislation.

One can question why the government has chosen to incorporate the word “cultural”. The title is “zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices”. In fact, there is no real need to have the word “cultural” put into the short title.

Can the member attempt to explain to this House and to Canadians why the Prime Minister and his government feel it is appropriate to incorporate the word “cultural”? Other meanings that could be taken from it are not very positive. I am curious as to what the argument is for having “cultural” in the short title of the bill.

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, in the title “culture” does not refer to any one individual culture. In fact, many of the issues we are concerned about are clearly present in a number of different cultures.

A number of people who have been accused of these horrible and barbaric practices tell the court that how they treat women or how they treat their daughters is part of their culture, so it is important to point out exactly what this is.

This question is coming from a party whose leader, the Liberal leader, did not want to call these practices barbaric. We will say exactly what this is. They are barbaric cultural practices and they have no place in Canada.

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for bringing forward and speaking to the bill today. Bill S-7 is really a landmark piece of legislation for women's rights in Canada, and as a member of the status of women committee, I am really proud of our government for putting it forward.

*Government Orders*

I could not believe it when I was sitting here listening to opposition members complaining against the bill and speaking out against it and calling themselves feminists. This is the kind of bill that feminists need, that women need, so that they can be protected and not be treated as chattels in our country and married off to people they do not wish to be married to and put in polygamous relationships.

I would like to ask the member if he could talk a little more about how the bill upholds our Canadian values and makes clear to women what their rights are in Canada as equal citizens.

• (1215)

**Hon. Tim Uppal:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary for the work she has done in protecting women's rights in the country.

I would point to the fact that many of the victims, especially those in forced marriages, are young women who are forced into marriages that they do not want to be in. This legislation would send a clear message to family members who may be forcing them into a marriage that it is illegal and not allowed here in Canada. It also gives information to the victims that they have rights in our country and can come forward.

It could be dealt with as a criminal matter, but it could also be dealt with through a peace bond. A peace bond could be put into place if an early or forced marriage might be taking place. There would be protection there. They could also be protected from being taken out of the country to be forced into a marriage outside Canada.

Having these laws in place would allow Canadian women to know their rights and would allow our police forces and others to also understand how to deal with these situations. This measure would ensure that all these barbaric cultural practices would not happen on Canadian soil.

**Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with profound sincerity and gravity that I stand today to speak in support of this bill, which provides additional legislation to address the disgusting, abhorrent, and deeply misogynistic practice of early and forced marriage as well as so-called honour killings.

Let us get to the heart of the matter, because the key piece of opposition resistance to this bill has been the use of the term “barbaric”. We have heard it over and over again from the opposition. In fact, the NDP status of women critic said in her speech:

The short title of this bill, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, is truly xenophobic. It isolates a community, calling it barbaric for its violence against women. This is a problem that exists everywhere.

This particular statement is hyperbolic. It clearly shows that the NDP has not looked at the form and substance of this bill, because there is no reference in it to any community.

What our government is trying to do with this piece of legislation is send a clear message that Canada, in a pluralistic culture that respects the rights of women and respects the rights of equality of personage, does not allow in any way, shape, or form this particular practice in our country.

What actually isolates women, when we talk about isolation in a community, is this practice. That is why it must end. That is why our law enforcement officials must have every tool at their disposal in order to be able to combat this practice.

Let us ask the question. Let us ask if this practice is barbaric. Let us talk about it right here and right now. “Barbaric” is defined as “savagely cruel and exceedingly brutal and primitive”.

I believe that taking away choice from a woman by forcing her into a marriage takes away the fundamental freedoms that we are afforded in this country as women enjoying equality of personage. This practice equates to women becoming property and being sold, and that is barbaric. That is not equal; it is primitive. It is well beyond where we are as a country.

I want to read some stats about what early and forced childhood marriage means to women.

Every year millions of girls—some as young as five years old—are forced into marriage.

One in every three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18. One in nine marries before the age of 15.

Complications in childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in the developing world.

Globally, between 2004 and 2014, an estimated 100 million girls will have been forced into marriage before their 18th birthday.

Girls who are married before 18 are more likely to report being beaten by their husbands and forced to have sex than girls who marry later.

Ninety percent of adolescent pregnancies in the developing world are to girls who are already married.

A study in Kenya and Zambia found that among 15 to 19 year old girls who are sexually active, being married increased their chances of having HIV by more than 75%.

Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women aged 20-24.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.” This is because we know that early and forced marriage takes young girls out of education. It removes their ability to achieve their full potential in their society. It isolates them.

Is this practice barbaric? Darned right it is. Our government will absolutely call a spade a spade on that. We will continue to ensure that people across this country and across the world understand that this is a leading cause of women not having full economic participation and full rights.

Is it barbaric? Yes.

My colleague across the way danced around the issue and talked about the use of the words “cultural practice”. The member for Pierrefonds—Dollard, in one of her speeches, said that she takes issue with the word “cultural” in the title of the bill and that so do many Canadians. The great irony in this debate is that it was the NDP status of women critic who cited the following study in her speech, a report entitled “Report on the Practice of Forced Marriage in Canada: Interviews with Frontline Workers”, which was prepared by Naïma Bendriss and presented to the Department of Justice in November 2008. Again, this was in the speech by the NDP status of women critic:

Although contrary to the law and an infringement of human rights under international law, forced marriage is most often the repetition of a cultural practice and a significant part of matrimonial traditions in families which practise it.

*Government Orders*

• (1220)

Again, New Democrats were probably reading a speech that was prepared for them and on which they did not do research. Right in the speech of the NDP's status of women critic, she acknowledges the reason this title is what it is. Let us look beyond the title, which I think calls a spade a spade and adequately says that this is a barbaric cultural practice, and talk about why it is necessary, because part of the other discussion that has come up is that the Criminal Code already covers these practices.

Let us go through some of the legislative components of this bill. Right now, temporary residents who practise polygamy in their countries of origin are generally allowed to enter with only one spouse at the time of seeking entry. Under this change, foreign nationals seeking temporary residence would be found inadmissible if they tried to enter with even one spouse.

Again, there are other things that are just so pertinent. The one I want to highlight is with regard to peace bonds. Right now, if there are any grounds for law enforcement officials to suspect that a forced marriage is about to occur, there are certain situations in which they can order peace bonds. We are looking at ways to make that easier and more effective so that people can end an abusive situation in a much more expeditious fashion.

In this legislation, where there are reasonable grounds to believe a person will specifically aid or participate in a forced, early, or child marriage ceremony involving someone else—for example, his or her child—or will take a young person out of Canada for the purpose of a forced or early marriage ceremony abroad, that individual could be brought to court and ordered to enter into a peace bond to keep the peace and be on good behaviour. A court would be empowered to make court orders that could be particularly useful in specifically preventing an early or forced marriage, whether in Canada or abroad, such as ordering the person to surrender travel documents and refrain from making arrangements or agreements in relation to marriage or to participate in a family violence counselling program.

There are several other measures in this bill, and I encourage the opposition to actually read the change from the existing legislation to the new legislation, which is as my colleague the Minister for Multiculturalism mentioned, taking away the provocation argument with regard to the defence of so-called honour killings.

Going back to the term “barbaric”, if someone murders a daughter or female relative because of her life choice in a free and democratic country, one should not be able to argue that the woman did something to offend the family's honour or delicate sensibilities, which is justified by murder. That is not Canadian. That is not part of our pluralistic culture whatsoever. That is barbaric. With these common-sense pieces of legislation and amendments to the Criminal Code, we are trying to prevent that practice and send a clear message that we do not support it.

One of the other arguments is that maybe we should look beyond the Criminal Code. There was another argument that we are not doing other things in Canada to support women who are in these situations, and I strongly disagree with that.

With the time I have left, I will discuss what we are doing both internationally and at home. Internationally, we have invested

heavily. Actually, our country is becoming a world leader in the fight against early, forced, and child marriage. For example, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced last year that Canada is contributing \$20 million over two years to UNICEF toward ending early childhood and forced marriages. There are several other international aid measures that we have done to support this.

Here at home, through special language programs for immigrant and refugee women, we were able to address issues such as family violence, spousal abuse, women's rights, and legal rights and responsibilities, as well as in several different initiatives through the Department of Justice, sector-specific workshops, and legal education pamphlets. Since our government came into office in 2007, we have provided, through Status of Women Canada, over \$70 million for projects to prevent and eliminate violence against all women here in Canada.

I will close with this. When we look at our record of preventing violence against women, we see that it was this government that stood up and gave first nations and aboriginal women the right to own property, which allows abusers to be moved from homes and women to have the same right as every other Canadian woman. It is our government that stands up on criminal justice legislation. It is the party across the way that consistently votes against this. We are standing up for women and standing up against misogyny.

• (1225)

**Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the government has no credibility whatsoever in preventing violence against women.

The member opposite cited Bill S-2, which related to matrimonial property rights on reserve. It was actually opposed by first nations and first nations women across the country because it does not protect victims.

We see the same problems in this bill, Bill S-7, which is supposed to prevent forced marriages. We see that this bill would have many adverse effects. Among other things, it would expel from Canada the victims of forced marriages and the victims of potential spousal abuse.

This Senate bill does not receive support from the very groups that represent the women that the Conservatives say they are helping. I hope the government would be open to amending this bill to make sure victims are not expelled from Canada and put into the even more precarious situation that this bill would put them in.

I would like to know why the government has not worked to put in place measures to prevent violence against women, and why it has not put in place services that would help the victims of forced marriages. Why does the government not have a plan to transmit these immigrant women information on services that are available to them, and services that are available to help their integration into Canadian society?

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, the member's last assertion was false. Our government has provided several different packages through Citizenship and Immigration Canada. It has provided pamphlets, educational materials, and workshops, and it has worked with immigrant services groups and local police services to help people understand that they have rights in this country. It is our government that has been standing up for them, while the opposition has been voting against them.

The second assertion that was false was that our government has not been funding programs to support violence against women. Just through Status of Women Canada alone, over \$70 million has gone to prevent violence against women.

I find it deeply embarrassing that my colleague opposite could stand up in this place and say that we should not support a bill that would give adequate and equal rights to first nations and aboriginal women that every other Canadian woman in this country has. It took over 20 years to get that piece of legislation. It is one of our government's proudest moments to stand up and say that there is equality in legislation and property ownership in that group of people.

It is so shameful.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will save some time for commenting on the whole aboriginal file in terms of abuse for later, when I get the chance to speak to the bill, but I do have a question for the member, which relates to the first question that I asked her colleague.

There should not be a link between domestic violence and abuse of women and the idea of culture. All societies have that gender issue. There is no society that does not have to deal with the gender violence issue.

My question for the member is this. Why does the government think it is necessary to incorporate culture, when it is, in fact, just not warranted?

• (1230)

**Hon. Michelle Rempel:** Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague opposite is why he finds it necessary to stand up behind a leader who dances around issues that are of deep and grave importance to the equality of women in this country, such as calling a spade a spade and saying that these particular practices are barbaric. It was his leader who took offence to calling these deeply misogynistic and disgusting practices what they are, which is barbaric. I dedicated five minutes of my speech to the topic.

Again, I refer him to the report from the Department of Justice that I mentioned earlier in my speech, which said:

Although contrary to the law and an infringement of human rights under international law, forced marriage is most often the repetition of a cultural practice and a significant part of matrimonial traditions in families which practice it.

Rather than argue over semantics, let us get on with the business of protecting Canadian women

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the last comment, if it were just an issue of semantics, as the hon. member just finished stating, then why not drop the word "culture"?

At the end of the day, the Liberal Party is supporting Bill S-7, and we have highlighted what we believe is a significant shortcoming in the name that has been associated with the bill.

The government's ability to defend its position has been found lacking. The government has not been able to clearly demonstrate why the word "culture" needs to be in the short title.

However, it speaks volumes about why the government is bringing forward legislation of this nature, from my perspective, at this juncture of the government's mandate.

There are a few things I would like to get on the record in debating the bill. I will start off by talking about the process we are in today. Once again we have a bill before the House for which the government House leader has moved time allocation. Never before in the history of our country have we seen a government abuse the rule of time allocation on legislation that Canadians are concerned about.

Ever since this Conservative/Reform Party acquired a majority, its attitude for this chamber changed dramatically. There is a lack of respect for democratic process in debating legislation, and it goes beyond the chamber. It goes into committees.

It does not matter whether it is a non-controversial bill, whether political parties are supporting the bill or are in opposition to the bill, the government continuously invokes time allocation, thereby preventing individual members, whoever they might be, from being able to participate and get engaged in the debate on the legislation.

Then we talk about the committee stage. Again, this majority Conservative/Reform Party is headed by a Prime Minister who says, "We do not accept amendments at committee stage". If we looked at the hundreds of amendments that have been brought forward to legislation at the committee stage, we would find that if it comes from the opposition side, if it comes from Liberals or New Democrats, then it does not have a chance of passing.

I have even seen legislation where Liberals have brought amendments to the bill and the Conservatives will vote them down in committee stage; then it will be the Conservative majority in the Senate that will ultimately have to bring in the very same amendment that the Liberal Party brought in at the committee stage, but they had too much pride. They have that directive from the Prime Minister's Office saying that they do not accept amendments coming from Liberals or New Democrats. It has to be a Conservative amendment.

I bring that up because this legislation, I would suggest, could use some amendments. The Liberal Party has talked at great length in regard to the issue of culture in the short title. We want to bring forward an amendment that will delete the word "culture". I am not overly optimistic, for the simple reason of the government's attitude toward amendments in general. Whether it improves the legislation or not, the government does not recognize the value that opposition amendments can, in fact, have at the committee stage, and it does that by continuously voting down every one. I find that most unfortunate.

*Government Orders*

●(1235)

We are in a debate in the House where once again the government has invoked closure on legislation. I know the government House leader will say that it is about too much repetition. Members on all sides of the House represent the people of Canada, our constituents, who want to hear what their members of Parliament have to say if they choose to address a particular issue. If it is somewhat repetitive, that is okay.

I can assure government members, in particular the government House leader, that when their party was in opposition, there was likely a considerable amount of repetition. There is nothing wrong with that.

What is wrong is when a government invokes closure time after time to the degree in which it has become part of the process. Closure has now been invoked 90 or 91 times. Imagine the number of hours we have had to vote on the motion of closure, some 45-plus hours, not to mention the question and answer portion, which would be another 45-plus hours. We are talking about weeks of a session just dealing with the government and the Prime Minister's desire to limit contributions to debate on very important issues. I have a difficult time with the government on that.

Here we are in the dying months of the Conservatives' mandate and the Conservative Party is desperate to give all kinds of impressions. I indicated the Liberal Party will support Bill S-7, and why not? When I look at the details, minus something like the short title, the content of the bill has some value. It deals with issues like polygamy, forced marriages, early marriages, domestic violence, and I will go into detail on those in time. These are all wonderful initiatives to take some action on.

However, why did the government wait this long? Conservatives have been in government for eight-plus years and in the dying months of their mandate, they decide to act on the issue. The issue has been there for three years. Why the sudden urgency now? Why has the government now brought in a bill and has forced through closure to limit debate and dialogue on it? Why is it doing it now? I suspect it has a lot more to do with politics than anything else.

This is somewhat unfortunate, but it is not the only case in the type of legislation the government is bringing forward in the dying months of its term to send out a political message. I will give the Prime Minister credit. No one can spend tax dollars like the Prime Minister when it comes to political spin. We have seen in excess of \$750 million tax dollars spent on advertising all about Conservative spin. Not only should it have been the Conservative Party paying for those ads, but the Conservative Party should also be reflecting on how it is abusing its office of governance. Canadians will be looking for change in 2015 because the attitudes of the government do not reflect well on its future.

●(1240)

The legislation has its merits, and I will provide some of those to the House, but before I do that let me make this suggestion with respect to priorities.

Although the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and a few others within cabinet are excited about this legislation and are keen to act, I have dealt with immigration for over 20 years as member of

both Parliament and the Manitoba legislative assembly. Over the past few years, my office has dealt with 400-plus immigration or temporary visa files on average in any given month. There are many serious issues with which the government has failed to deal, and they have a real impact on the daily lives of people. We are not talking about a few dozen or a few hundred people, we are talking about thousands of Canadians and permanent residents in every region of our country.

I do not question that it is an important issue. However, we have the political priority agenda of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and cabinet saying that this is it and that they want to force it through. However, where is that same attitude when dealing with the many other issues within the Department of Immigration, let alone the other departments?

I know of a young girl who has waited close to two years to come to Canada to be with her father. She was born in another country and is four or five years old today. She still has not been reunited with her father. I have had discussions with immigration officials through my office. Based on the explanations that have been provided to me to date, I am concerned about a process that does not allow a father to be reunited with his child for close to two years.

There are many examples I could give of spouses who are abroad, whether male or female, who are trying to come to Canada in a more timely fashion.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration seems to be keen on dealing with issues of this nature. Because of that, he has gone to the government House leader, or perhaps vice versa, although I suspect the link goes from the Prime Minister's Office to the government House leader to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, and has said that this is an important message to convey to the public and a good way to do that is to bring in legislation. Then, through all kinds of media attention, the government can show how tough it is on certain issues, citing this as an example and making it a priority issue. Many other priority issues have been found wanting.

I am a bit biased and have a passion for the immigration and citizenship file. However, contrary to all its bogus spin, the government has not done well on the immigration and citizenship file. I am afraid there is not enough time in the day, let alone the time limits I have for this speech, to go through some of the details with respect to that. However, it is important.

●(1245)

To get right to the bill and the part I highlighted at the beginning, it is unfair to link what is, at its core, domestic violence to culture. Every society struggles with gender-based violence. It is not confined to any specific cultural community. As the Liberal Party critic, that is why I and others within the party have challenged the government to amend the short title, "zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act". We think it should read "zero tolerance for barbaric practices act". There is no need to tie in the word "cultural". We need to recognize that every society has issues of violence that are gender-based, and there is no need to incorporate the word cultural.

I will outline why the Liberal Party will vote in favour of the bill.

*Government Orders*

Some research has been provided to me that deals with the issues of polygamy, forced and early marriages, and domestic violence. I will just expand on that.

We recognize that Bill S-7 would establish a national minimum age for marriage at 16 years of age. Most Canadians would be quite surprised to find that there currently is no minimum set age. Only Quebec has a legislated minimum age, while other provinces rely on common law definitions, some of which would allow marriage as low as age seven.

The bill would also codify the requirement for a free enlightened consent for a marriage or a divorce.

The legislation would also create new code offences for knowingly officiating a forced or early marriage; knowingly and actively participating in a forced or early marriage; and, removing a child from Canada for the purposes of an early or forced marriage. These measures are similar to the current laws related to bigamy in the actual code.

It should be noted that Bill S-7 would also create a peace bond regime with regard to early or forced marriage, which would allow a person to petition a court for a peace bond to prevent an early or forced marriage. Violating the requirements of this peace bond would be an offence, and justifiably so. The peace bond provision would create an opportunity for someone from outside the affected family to petition the courts. That would include social workers, or teachers or people of that nature, especially if they have been made aware of a certain issue.

Dealing strictly with polygamy, it is already illegal in Canada. We know that. However, Bill S-7 would address it by amending Canada's immigration rules through IRPA to make those planning to practise polygamy in Canada inadmissible to the country. It would also make it clear that those seeking permanent residence in Canada must stop practising polygamy and would be permitted to immigrate with only a monogamous spouse. A practical effect of these provisions would be that people who practised polygamy legally in their home country, seeking to visit Canada, would not be allowed to enter the country with any of their spouses.

It is important to recognize the gender violence issue. There is reference, which the Conservatives continually use, based on honour. It is important for us to recognize that Bill S-7 would further restrict the use of the provocation defence in order to combat gender violence.

●(1250)

I appeal to the government to recognize that the opposition should be allowed full and healthy debate on the pieces of legislation that come before the House. It is wrong of the Prime Minister and his office to use the tool of time allocation and abuse it to the degree he has.

I can only hope that we will see significant change in the fall, thereby restoring more confidence in the democracy of the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I can understand why

he is surprised and disappointed to see the government once again cutting short our speaking time on this sort of bill.

Does this urgency not make him think that the government wants to send another email to party members to encourage them to donate generously, by putting the word that my colleague is calling into question in the title of the bill? Does it not benefit the Conservatives to label their campaign with this type of terminology?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, my friend has got it right. In fact, I believe that the government, through the Prime Minister's Office, must have a group who determine how to name pieces of legislation. They come up with short titles for legislation to create positive Conservative spin to generate funds for their fundraising campaigns of emails, letters and so forth.

I do not say this lightly, but all one has to do is read some of the short titles of bills from the past to get a very good sense of what the current government's first priority is. The first priority of the current government has always been how to retain power, period, and there is a full stop there.

It should be about the desire to work with Canadians to build our country, and to have a vision. There are so many other things to be done when one holds the office of power.

I would challenge government members to reflect on the short titles and compare them to previous Houses, whether Progressive Conservative under Brian Mulroney or Liberal under Jean Chrétien or Pierre Trudeau. They will find that the names and the way legislation is named have dramatically changed under this administration.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if my colleague feels that this bill seeks to make things illegal when they already are, in order to give the impression that the government is solving a problem. If the government really wanted to solve the problem and help victims, it would train stakeholders on the ground.

Does my colleague feel that the Conservative Party is cloaking itself in virtue by introducing a bill that, in fact, will not provide more resources on the ground and will have no impact?

●(1255)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt there are some modifications within the legislation that would have very limited real effect, for example, the polygamy law, which has been cited. It is more about spin.

In response to one of the questions I had there were answers about our aboriginal women and girls and the need for a public inquiry. At some point I would love to see the Chamber get into more of a debate on this. The Conservatives talk about wanting to deal with violence against women and girls. We have premiers, mayors, chiefs, community members and many other stakeholders saying they would like to have a public inquiry on the thousand plus missing and murdered women and girls.

*Government Orders*

Just a few months ago it was highlighted again for the city of Winnipeg where a girl was sexually assaulted, thrown in the river and left for dead. She was able to pull herself out of the river. People are looking around saying they want leadership, that we need to deal with the problem.

We have been calling for a public inquiry, yet the government refuses. That is why I am so proud of the leader of Liberal Party saying a Liberal government would call for a public inquiry. Dealing with the issue of violence against women and girls is something we take seriously. That is why, at least in part, we recognize the bill does have some value and we will support it. However, there is so much more the government could be doing. If it really wanted to impress us today, it just has to call a public inquiry into the more than 1,200 murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls across Canada.

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my hon. friend's speech and there were a few points I think ought to be clarified.

If I understood him correctly, he indicated that the Liberal Party would support the bill because it thought it actually had some merits to it. One of the things he mentioned was he thought it codified a minimum age for marriage. I actually do not think that is correct. I am fairly certain we already have laws in every province in the country and federally as well that set a minimum age for marriage and require parental consent if there is an attempt to marry under those ages.

My real question is this. We have seen the Conservative government, particularly lately, play the worst kind of wedge politics where the Prime Minister and members of his cabinet and government are specifically segregating Canadians by their religion, their religious attire or their particular cultural preferences, whether it is the member who was referring to people as "brown people and whities", whether it is the Prime Minister talking about cultures that do not support women, or religious clothing. However, the member has spent a long time, I think very accurately and well, identifying the wedge problem and the offensive part of using the word "cultural" in front of "barbaric practices", yet the Liberal Party is going to support the bill anyway.

Therefore, I would ask him to clarify that for us and for Canadians watching. Why is the Liberal Party going to support a bill that he acknowledges right in the title plays right into the Conservative practice of segregating Canadians and trying to wedge culture against culture, when he so clearly acknowledges that these barbaric practices that the bill deals with have nothing to do with culture? However, the Liberal Party will play along and allow this very offensive practice of wedge politics to continue by the Conservatives. Could he explain why he is doing that?

• (1300)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Speaker, there is a judgement call that has to be made when we are looking at legislation.

In the past, New Democrat members of Parliament have voted in favour of legislation at second reading going into the committee stage, believing that they will be moving amendments at the committee stage. Even if those amendments do not pass at the committee stage, those members will still vote for a particular piece of legislation.

It happens far too often, but at the end of the day we have to make an overall assessment of the legislation and then base our vote on whether or not we feel it is in society's or Canada's best interest to see it pass. I suspect that in many ways we will find that the legislation will be amended.

I know the New Democratic Party members have moved numerous amendments on numerous pieces of legislation at the committee stage and had every one of their amendments rejected. Then at third reading, they will come back and ultimately vote for the bill.

I know it is very difficult at times, especially if the government does not accept good, sound amendments or if it refuses to acknowledge that the legislation could in fact be improved. Both Liberals and New Democrats have witnessed that first-hand.

Unfortunately, that means we will have to buy our time, allowing a bill to pass and supporting it, with the idea that we will make changes. Bill C-51 is a good example of a commitment to make changes if the government refuses to do that.

**Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

As an immigrant to Canada, I must say that the reason for coming to Canada was that this is such a glorious place. There is opportunity from every which way one wants. I am an example of that, having come to Canada some 25 years ago and having had the opportunity to be elected to Parliament. Unfortunately, many countries do not have the laws we have that give us the freedoms that make this country the best country in the world to live in.

Many countries have draconian laws related to the age of consent for marriage, the way women are treated, and many other things in those kinds of regimes. Canada is a magnet for many people who want to escape those systems, yet there are still some people who would like to continue those practices in Canada and change Canada. I am certainly against that, and therefore, I support Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

We should not and will not tolerate spousal abuse, so-called honour killings, and other gender-based violence in our Canadian society, and it is for this reason we are taking steps to strengthen our laws to help ensure that no young girl or woman in Canada, or proposing to come to Canada, becomes a victim of early forced marriage, polygamy, so-called honour-based violence, or any other harmful cultural practice. Our government is taking a strong stance against these practices and is leading international efforts to address them as a violation of basic human rights. Our government will continue to ensure that Canada is protected from harmful barbaric cultural practices and to protect Canadians vulnerable to these abuses.

*Government Orders*

As I have stated, we are not going to tolerate cultural traditions from other countries in Canada that deprive individuals of their human rights. Our government believes that subjugating a woman to repeated sexual assaults is indeed barbaric. Polygamy is also an affront to Canadian values and as such has been illegal in this country since 1890. This bill would provide immigration officers with the tools they need to render both temporary and permanent residents inadmissible for practising polygamy.

One of the things this bill also introduces is a different level for the defence of provocation. The defence of provocation is that someone was provoked into doing something violent against a woman, such as an honour killing. Now the threshold would be changed by increasing the threshold for when an accused could plead provocation for a lesser conviction.

Our government is taking a strong stand against perpetrators of honour killings. Under this piece of legislation, an accused could only use the defence of provocation if the victim was committing an act of violence that would lead to an offence indictable by five years or more. Our government is ensuring that wearing a short skirt or dating someone one's family does not approve of would no longer be the excuse that could be used as provocation. As such, we have actually tried to educate some of the immigrants coming to Canada. However, unfortunately, as I said, many countries have different values, different laws, and different systems that allow some of these things to happen.

I relate back to my own province of Kerala in India. I relate to that, because it is one of the few provinces that actually has a literacy rate of almost 100% for men and women. That is not the case in many other countries. In many countries, women are considered chattel and therefore are not educated and are not literate.

CIC has special documentation and special language programs for immigrants and refugee women that are able to address some of the issues, such as family violence, spousal abuse, women's rights, legal rights, and health care, including bridging referrals to other available services in the community.

● (1305)

Through publications such as the *Discover Canada* and *Welcome to Canada* guides, we clearly communicate that Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to harmful cultural practices. As such, forced marriages and other forms of gender-based violence are not acceptable.

Through information for sponsored spouses or partners, we advise immigrant women that those who are subject to conditional PR and who are victims of abuse or neglect do not have to remain in an abusive situation. This brochure informs them how to contact CIC and others and where they can find help. This is great, but the problem is that many of them do not have literacy or language skills, even though we insist on some of those being in place before they can come to Canada. As such, it makes it very difficult for them to communicate and let people know what is happening to them in their circumstances and situations.

This is an important thing we are doing. Even though we are doing a lot to make sure that, from a Canadian cultural point of view, information is available to all immigrants, many of them do not get

the opportunity to use it, because they are not literate and do not know the language. Some of these things are quite difficult when people come here.

Through the Department of Justice, our government has been holding sector specific workshops on forced marriage and honour-based violence with police, crown's, victims services, child protection officials, and shelter workers. These workshops will assist in front-line capacity building. The Department of Justice has also funded research papers on forced marriage and honour killing, including specific information on those forms of family violence in two public legal education pamphlets. One of these, *Abuse is Wrong in any Language*, is available in 12 languages. There are a variety of projects to prevent and respond to forced marriage and honour-based violence.

Unfortunately, as I said, many of these immigrants and victims of this violence may not actually even be able to read some of these documents, and because of their language skills, may not be able to contact those who can help them in any way.

Let me move on now to the action our government has taken to increase support for victims of crime, including through the victims bill of rights, which was passed, and the Safe Streets and Communities Act. Since 2007, a total of \$2.8 million has been approved through Status of Women Canada for community-based projects that address harmful cultural practices, such as honour-based violence and forced marriage. The RCMP has developed online training on forced marriage and honour-based violence for RCMP officers and plans to make it available to municipal police and other agencies through the Canadian Police Knowledge Network in 2014.

Are we targeting any specific community? Our government is clearly not targeting any specific community. Our government has been clear on its stance against polygamy and other barbaric practices that constitute gender-based violence. This is a victims rights issue rather than an issue based on ethnicity.

In August 2013, a report was released citing 219 cases of forced marriage in Ontario between 2010 and 2012. All the individuals in the survey who had been forced into marriages experienced violence. Most victims were young and from various cultures and religions. The majority of victims were unaware of their rights in the forced marriage situation.

● (1310)

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Conservative member knows, the Liberal Party objects to the world "cultural" in the short title. It is unfortunate that the short title of legislation should start to trigger emotional responses. I do not think that is a good way to write laws. Laws and the administration of justice should be as dispassionate as possible when we have the chance.

*Government Orders*

If the legislation really tried to address culture and changing culture, the Conservatives might want to put the word “culture” somewhere in the short title. Really, though, if they want to address domestic violence and abuse or forced marriages, why not just use the plain terms? Why restrict the offences we are trying to limit by calling them cultural? Why not just say that we want to fight domestic violence, domestic abuse, forced marriage, and honour killings? Why not just talk about what we are writing legislation about?

Why talk about culture, which potentially brings in all sorts of other biases we might have against certain groups?

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Mr. Speaker, I guess the question can be reversed in the sense that almost all of these activities tend to be based on culture, and that is why it is in the title. It is not that the general public is actually implementing all of these things. Cultural practice is what this is all about, and that is why it is in the title.

**Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about the provision included in the bill about the defence of provocation. We have heard from opposition members that this is an unnecessary provision in the bill. If the member could enlighten us, why is it needed, and why is it important?

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Mr. Speaker, the provocation provisions that currently exist actually allow people to use any excuse to say that they were provoked into doing what they did. This changes that by setting the standard at a much higher level, a level that would mean that most of these people would be prosecuted for what they have actually committed, which is murder, instead of trying to turn it into something less, with a lesser penalty. It is actually murder that has been committed.

It is important that we take that provision and make it much stronger. Under this legislation, an accused could only use a defence of provocation if the victim were committing an act of violence that would lead to an offence indictable by five years or more.

• (1315)

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Don Valley East specifically about the polygamy aspect of the legislation, because he mentioned the frightening statistics. While I understand that it has been illegal in Canada since 1890, does the bill provide extra tools for immigration officers to deal with these cases? If so, could he explain to the House how this would benefit Canadians and why this was included in the legislation?

**Mr. Joe Daniel:** Mr. Speaker, part of the issue is that many of the polygamist situations that arise from immigration are based on rules that apply to their countries, not to our country. We get polygamy propagated here, with even young children being married. This provision would prevent that. We want to bring it up to the Canadian standard of law in terms of the age of consent, et cetera.

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to have this opportunity to speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. Bill S-7 introduces important legislative measures to protect potential and actual victims of early and forced marriage. These measures would also provide protections against other harmful practices and forms of violence

that predominantly and adversely affect women and girls, such as polygamy and so-called honour-based violence.

Bill S-7 proposes to set the absolute minimum age of marriage at 16 in the Civil Marriage Act and codify in the same act the requirements that the marriage involve free and enlightened consent and that all previous marriages be dissolved prior to entering into a new marriage.

The bill also introduces changes to the Criminal Code to criminalize active participation in an underage or forced marriage and criminalize removing a child from Canada for these same harmful purposes.

Moreover, Bill S-7 would expand the peace bond regime in the Criminal Code to provide for a new court order designed to prevent an underage or a forced marriage from taking place in Canada and to prevent a child from being taken out of the country to be forced into a marriage.

Additionally, Bill S-7 proposes to limit the defence of provocation in the Criminal Code so that it could not be raised in cases involving so-called honour killing and in many spousal homicides, for which the alleged provocation often consists of verbal or offensive but otherwise lawful behaviour.

Finally, the bill puts forward important changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, IRPA, that would specify that a permanent resident or foreign national is inadmissible if they practice polygamy in Canada.

I would like to focus my remarks today on the proposed forced and earlier marriage peace bond provisions of the bill.

The prevention of violence has been a key aspect in our Conservative government's action on violence against women and girls. Expanding the peace bond regime in the Criminal Code by way of the proposed amendments in Bill S-7 is consistent with these important efforts.

Peace bonds are preventive court orders under the Criminal Code that require a person to agree to specific conditions to keep the peace. A peace bond does not require a finding of guilt or result in a criminal conviction unless the conditions of the peace bond are proved to have been breached.

When a peace bond is issued, the court imposes a mandatory condition to keep the peace and be of good behaviour, and may also impose any other reasonable condition necessary to ensure the good conduct of the offender.

*Government Orders*

The new peace bond would provide guidance to the court and the types of optional conditions that may be imposed. Some of these are the same as the other peace bonds in the Criminal Code—for instance, no contact or communication with a person who fears for their safety—while others have been designed for the types of circumstances that would specifically assist in preventing a forced marriage, such as preventing the defendant from leaving the jurisdiction of the court; preventing the defendant from making plans or arrangements related to the underage or forced marriage, such as booking a wedding venue or a plane ticket to leave the country for the ceremony; requiring the defendant to surrender passports or other travel documents to the court; and requiring the defendant to participate in a treatment program that includes family violence counselling.

The proposed peace bond could last for a period of one year, and up to two years if the defendant had previously been convicted of a forced or early marriage offence. Subsequent peace bonds could be taken out on behalf of a victim should the threat of an early or forced marriage persist.

The new peace bond would play an important role with respect to victims who might be reluctant to engage the authorities because they do not want their family members prosecuted. In some cases, family members may be otherwise law-abiding individuals whose actions are simply misguided and not intended to be harmful.

The availability of a peace bond would encourage potential victims to seek out the support of the criminal justice system without fear of criminally prosecuting family members. However, peace bonds are enforceable through the threat of a criminal sanction. A violation of the terms of the peace bond is an offence under section 811, punishable by a maximum of a two-year prison sentence. Bill C-26, the tougher penalties for child predators act, proposed to increase the maximum penalties for breaching a peace bond to four years of imprisonment on indictment.

● (1320)

The proposed forced marriage peace bond provisions in the Criminal Code are similar to the highly successful civil forced marriage protection orders available presently in the United Kingdom. Apart from that fact, the U.K. forced marriage protection orders are civil, while the proposed forced marriage peace bonds in Bill S-7 would be under the Criminal Code. However, they are otherwise alike in many respects. For instance, both are preventative court orders that do not constitute a criminal charge. Both are available by way of an emergency application on behalf of the victim, and conditions can be applied against a defendant prior to a hearing on the merits. Both require a hearing before the court and both rely upon a civil standard of evidence, which is the balance of probabilities, as opposed to a criminal one, which requires establishing the facts beyond a reasonable doubt.

It should be noted that any individual may make the application, including the victim, relatives, or any other person. The victim would not be required to apply for the peace bond personally. In many cases, it would be expected that a police officer would swear the information against the defendant, although a child protection or victim service worker might also do so.

As members can see, peace bonds are just one essential part of this very important piece of legislation.

It is this government, under this Prime Minister, that is taking steps to strengthen our laws to help ensure that no young girl or woman in Canada becomes a victim of an early or forced marriage, polygamy, so-called honour-based violence, or any other form of harmful cultural practices. While the opposition refuses to even call these acts “barbaric”, our government is taking action.

I hope that all members appreciate the importance of this bill, and I encourage all members to give Bill S-7 their full support.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the NDP is opposed to forced marriage and polygamy and that we want to discuss this issue further.

Since the debate on Bill S-7 began, we have raised a number of problems with the bill, but the Conservatives always seem to deny that they exist. However, this bill will have unintended consequences. For example, the victims—women and children—could be deported from Canada if this bill that criminalizes the aggressors goes ahead.

Many expert groups are saying that they wish they had been consulted because there are no resources that provide direct support for the women, who are not necessarily familiar with all of the Canadian laws that could protect them. No support services are offered. Not much is being done in the way of prevention and there are no support services available after the fact. Many of these expert groups work with battered women or women who have experienced these problems.

The Conservatives are only making things worse by limiting debate for the 91st time on a subject that is so important: a bill that is supposed to help victims of violence in forced or polygamous marriages.

It is really frustrating to see the Conservatives sensationalizing such a serious issue, rather than really addressing the root causes of the problem and proposing solutions that will actually help women.

● (1325)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Opatz:** Mr. Speaker, I of course acknowledge that all members in this House stand against violence against women and girls. Those are Canadian values, and that is what we stand for.

No government and no prime minister has been stronger in making sure that our Canadian values, our laws, and, as I just mentioned, peace bonds are in place to protect victims. They are in place to protect the sanctity of women and girls and to protect them from being forced into marriages or otherwise subjected to barbaric practices that are against Canadian values everywhere in this country.

*Government Orders*

Although I appreciate the hon. member's point of view, I reject the premise of her question. This government stands for women and young girls. We stand firmly against violence and barbaric practices, which are against Canadian values. Bill S-7 supports all of those things.

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ever since I was kid, and especially when I was a kid, my parents tried to tell me about Chinese culture, because our family immigrated from China. They wanted me to learn about it, understand what it was, and even pass it on to my own kids.

One of the things I remember they would also tell me about was how life is so good here and that in the old days, many generations ago, everybody used to have arranged marriages. Of course, this is not something people would ever contemplate today, and my parents would say that we are very fortunate in not doing this anymore.

However, I believe they would be insulted, and I am insulted, when somebody calls that a barbaric cultural practice. It may be wrong. It may be wrong for society today, but to call it a barbaric cultural practice is going too far. For example, there are reasons that some marriages, a long time ago, may have been arranged. Some societies do not have a lot of extra wealth to put into choosing mates in the way that our society does.

To completely classify that sort of activity as a barbaric cultural practice is going too far. We can say that domestic abuse, domestic violence, forced marriages, and all these things are wrong and against the law in Canada, but to condemn cultures in that very general way is not needed in this law.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, I am entirely confused by what the member actually stands for. That might actually epitomize the third party.

We are a nation of values. We are a nation of laws. We are a nation of freedom, democracy, and human rights. We allow people to have free choice and personal liberties. That is what this government stands for.

Nobody should be forced into any practices that violate Canadian laws. I understand some of these other practices may occur around the world, and many of them are barbaric. Many of them do not stand in Canada, because they violate Canadian values and they violate Canadian sensitivities. We will not stand for that. Bill S-7 will not stand for that. This government will not stand for it.

• (1330)

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and be part of this debate today on Bill S-7, which intends to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts. The short name of this bill is the “zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act”. I am pleased to speak to this today. I will be sharing my time with the member for Newton—North Delta.

I think all of us the House would agree that domestic violence is a problem in all of Canada, not just in some communities as this bill seems to imply. We see violence at all socio-economic levels in society, in all cultural communities. It is not just among certain populations. Clearly, I think we would all agree that no woman

should be subjected to gender-based violence, regardless of her race, religion or citizenship status. That violence would include being subjected to a forced or underage marriage.

I will preface my remarks by saying that if the government sincerely wants to address the issues of violence against women, first we would call on it to immediately hold an inquiry into the more than 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. That would be a good start. Second, it should bring in a national action plan to end violence against women in Canada. Those two measures would go much further than the Bill S-7, which would be to benefit all women in Canada.

The issue the bill pretends to address, which is underage and forced marriages, is not really addressed. What gets heard by people who are learning about the bill, and certainly by the communications that surround this bill, is that it targets a particular culture. People hear that as being very xenophobic, very unwelcoming. Of course, we all stand together in opposing underage marriage, forced marriage and gender-based violence.

Let me be clear that Bill S-7 contains no new tools or resources to help front-line workers and organizations, the very people who are actually working with the women who are the victims of forced and underage marriage. They have expressly argued against the provisions of the bill because they know it would help fewer rather than more women in that situation.

Not only would this bill not solve the problem of gender-based violence that it seeks to address, but if passed, could very likely and in all probability make the situation worse by driving those victims of forced and underage marriages further underground, leaving them even less able to seek assistance.

In 2013, a clinic in my area in downtown Toronto, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario, released a report on forced marriage after conducting an analysis of the surveys that it gave to support providers in order to collect data on forced marriages. It was a survey of the people who worked with and directly helped victims of forced marriage. Of the recommendations accompanying the report, one in particular was not to further criminalize forced marriage, that these women were already very marginalized.

That may sound counterintuitive. Why would we not say that this is against the law? Because most of the perpetrators of forced marriage are in fact their family members, their husbands and sons, et cetera. Victims reported their hesitation to criminalize members of their own family. That is a very real situation with which communities deal. In fact, victims reported that they would be “hesitant to seek any outside assistance if this would result in criminal...consequences for family members”. We must remember that these may be women who have children with the people who have forced them into this marriage situation.

*Government Orders*

• (1335)

No one is suggesting that forced marriages should be allowed; clearly, they should not be allowed. No one is suggesting that they do not ever occur in Canada; they do occur in Canada. We believe there is a role for government. However, rather than helping the victims of gender-based crimes, which is based in a rather patriarchal view of the role of women in society, the government is too focused on criminalizing this behaviour, locking people up and throwing away the key, instead of eliminating it.

Since this legislation has been introduced, we might ask if there is not other legislation that already covers this situation. The government could have beefed up the enforcement of existing legislation, because obviously polygamy and forced marriage is already illegal. For example, uttering threats, forcible confinement, procuring a feigned marriage and polygamy are already prohibited and illegal. Spousal and child abuse are aggravating factors. The Civil Code of Quebec and the common law of other provinces already require free and enlightened consent for marriage. In other words, this provision already exists in law so the bill is redundant. All the bill serves to do is sensationalize this issue without getting to the root of the problem and helping people.

I referenced a report from the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario. The government could have implemented many of the recommendations in that report. For example, it found that 50% of the clients who sought its services were not even aware of their existing rights with respect to forced marriage. Therefore, educational campaigns about their rights aimed at service providers, such as social workers, police, teachers and guidance counsellors, to help them understand the warning signs and the pressures faced by victims of forced marriage would have gone much further in terms of preventing forced and underage marriage than the bill does.

There is no allowance for the wives and children of an individual found to be committing these crimes. What happens to them? Those who are found to be engaged in a forced marriage are deported, whether or not they are the perpetrator or the victim of the marriage, which seems very unfair and makes it much less likely that anyone would report that situation or go to the police. That leaves little room for women who are fleeing violence or want out of that situation to officially report that they have been subjected to a marriage against their will. This is especially so if they have children.

Another way the government could have addressed this problem would have been to add forced or underage marriage to the definition of family violence for the purpose of seeking housing. That would have provided women greater flexibility to leave this kind of oppressive situation as they would be given preference for housing along with other people fleeing domestic violence.

Simply put, the legislation does nothing to address the real problem of forced and underage marriage. There is no help for victims, only the threat of deportation and the criminalization of their family. There is no help for enforcement. It would be a very different bill if the government only sought to prosecute by using the laws that are already on the books. There is no help for organizations and government service providers who work with newcomers and citizens to identify and prevent forced and underage marriage to assist victims who are fleeing these situations.

After 10 years in office, the Conservatives have taken Canada in the wrong direction, and the bill just continues along that path. The Conservatives are taking Canadians down the wrong path. Canadians can trust the experience and the principled leadership of the New Democratic Party leader to replace the Prime Minister and address the real issues of gender-based violence in a meaningful way.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there are a few little things that I do not understand.

From the title of the bill, one has to wonder whether it is attacking certain types of crime or certain cultures. My colleague raised another interesting point in her comments and that is the issue of aboriginal women. The Prime Minister himself has categorically said that this is strictly a crime problem that must be resolved by the police and the justice system, but all of a sudden it becomes a cultural issue.

I do not understand that and I would like my colleague to try to shed some light on the matter.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

I will never know what the Prime Minister and his caucus members are thinking. However, I completely agree that this bill targets a culture rather than a crime. It is dangerous for a government to try to divide people and foster a backlash against a certain culture.

If the government really wants to do something effective, it can conduct an inquiry into the murdered aboriginal women. That is what the communities want and that is what we want. This is already long overdue, but it must be done as quickly as possible.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, I do not understand why the NDP sees things in the bill that are not there and seems to be blind to the things that are in it.

The last time the bill was debated in the House, members of the official opposition kept saying that the bill would marginalize victims. The truth is that actual victims of these barbaric practices, like Aruna Papp, an amazing woman whom I have had the honour to meet, and Lee Marsh support the bill. How does the opposition justify using this kind of rhetoric when actual victims are coming out and supporting the bill?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. The executive director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, for example, says:

We wish the government had consulted with some of us prior to drafting this legislation, and we hope that there will be respectful consultation between the government and community groups so that a concerted effort can be made to address the issues of violence against women.

*Government Orders*

There are several community agencies that deal everyday on the front lines with newcomer women who are affected by violence, who are affected by forced marriage, who are facing all kinds of challenges. If the government had had the respect to hear from their experiences and their recommendations, we could be debating a very different bill today.

I would ask my colleague opposite to consider the experience of front-line women and to respect that. Let us work together to try to get rid of the xenophobia in the bill and help the women who the bill supposedly is designed to help.

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak on a bill, the title of which I find quite abhorrent, the title being zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices. I do not know when this kind of language started to enter the House when we talk about legislation that is going to impact the lives of many people.

Let me first say that nobody on this side or that side of the House will tolerate any barbaric practices, but to say that barbaric practices are embedded in one culture or the other seems a little bizarre to me and, in the present context, seems to be very inflammatory in light of the comments made by backbenchers, the Prime Minister, and other people.

I want to take the tone down, because I take this issue very seriously. Gender-based violence is a serious issue, and all of us know there is enough research to show that it crosses all social, ethnic, and cultural boundaries. We always excuse it when we put the word “cultural” in front of it, that somehow it only happens in other countries and not across our communities.

I also want to say at this stage that it seems a bit strange to me that I have got up to speak on this bill without mentioning something significant that happened in my riding over the last 48 hours. There have been five shootings in my riding in recent hours. The RCMP has brought in extra police, who are very working very hard, and the community is very worried. When I look at the context, I keep thinking there are so many things we should be addressing right now in this country. My heart goes out to all those in my community who are worried, and I thank the members of the RCMP who are putting their lives at risk in order to make our communities safe right now.

There is a link with what I am talking about happening in Surrey and this bill, and it is called resources. Many times I have stood in the House and asked for additional resources for the City of Surrey so it can get the additional policing it needs, because it has incredibly low ratios. It is those kinds of resources that help with preventive work and stop the shootings that have been taking place over the last 48 to 72 hours.

I want to talk about domestic violence. First, let me assure everybody across the aisle, before anybody decides to point fingers—because I have experienced that before—that there is no one on this side of the House who supports gender-based violence, no matter which cultural group one may belong to. There is no one on this side of the House who supports child or forced marriages, and there is no one on this side of the House who supports polygamy.

Now that I have put those issues out there, I am going to tackle them one at a time. When it comes to domestic violence, we know

that we have laws right now, and if passing one more law, saying all domestic violence shall end, would actually eradicate it, I think all of us would be rushing to vote for it.

We have laws already, but I would say what is lacking now are resources and enforcement. I say resources because we know that if we want victims to come forward, we have to provide them with a support system, and this bill would not do that. As a matter of fact, this bill could have the collateral damage—language my colleagues across the way sometimes use—of making victims go underground and not speak up because they know that if they speak up, either the victims or their children could be deported and criminalized.

● (1345)

Once again, one thing I know as a teacher and counsellor is that, if we really want to talk about domestic violence and to end gender-based violence, it starts with education, information, and with having laws that we actually enforce, but for that we need people to come forward with evidence. We need to put a support system in place so that the victims, the women and the children, have safety and security while they are going through the system and tackling the abuse that is going on at home.

Also it is also very offensive to see that word. Of course any kind of domestic violence is barbaric. However, to relate it to culture is going over the top and is the kind of politics I have been hearing a lot about, whether it is talking about brownies and whities, or brandishing all Muslims across the globe as being anti-women, or the extreme reach of Bill C-51, or not even allowing the Privacy Commissioner to give evidence because it might not agree with my colleagues across the way.

We already have laws and if they need to be tightened up, that is where the focus should be. If they need to be resourced, that is where my colleagues should be bringing forward legislation, if we really want to tackle gender-based violence. It is my understanding that we already have laws to prevent forced marriages and child marriages. There is an age of consent before the age of 16, and surely we do not have laws that put up with people forcing themselves on minors. We have legislation like that. Once again, this is another one of those window-dressing bills to appeal to a base, where they believe they can collect millions of dollars from hard-working Canadians.

The other issue I want to tackle is the issue of polygamy. Mr. Speaker, forgive me if I do not have this right and I am sure you will correct me if I do not, but it is my understanding that in Canada, we actually have laws that prevent people from being married to more than one person at a time. This legislation is not for what happens in other countries; it is about what happens within Canada, a Canadian law to apply to those living in Canada.

*Statements by Members*

We live in a country where people get married, the marriages do not work out, and they end up getting divorced. We are not saying they do not get married again, but under Canadian law we can have only one wife at a time. I have a very vivid memory of this because, in the case in B.C. over Bountiful, I was one of the witnesses. It shocked me when I was reading the bill that we have a government that believes polygamy is okay in Canada. That is why Conservatives are bringing the bill forward. This is absolute nonsense. We do not have polygamy in our country. If people want to get married again because a marriage does not work out, that is okay, but it is one marriage at a time.

We already have laws against polygamy, so really what is the bill all about? Once again, what the Conservatives want to achieve in the bill could have been done in other ways, but it would not have given them the sound bites they needed to go to the media and say, "We are against barbaric cultural practices". We on this side are against barbaric practices, period, without any modifiers and without any excuses.

• (1350)

**Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, listening to the member's intervention on this particular piece of legislation, Bill S-7, I find it abundantly obvious that she does not have a good grasp of it. For example, on the issue of polygamy, she correctly stated that polygamous marriages and unions are not permitted in our country. However, this legislation deals with someone who shows up in Canada with three or four wives from the country he is coming from, and it would prevent that from happening.

This is something that the member opposite seems to have missed in the legislation, as well as a whole bunch of other things. I would be pleased to sit with her and give her a better briefing, outside the confines of the House, so that she has a good understanding.

This legislation is the product of a very extensive study done by the citizenship and immigration committee. It would be wise if the member spent some time with the NDP members of that committee so that she can be briefed on the recommendations that came out of the report.

The member also seems to want to allude to the fact that this piece of legislation is somehow an affront to one particular culture or group of people. There is no reference to one particular culture, cultural group, or multicultural unit within Canada. As a matter of fact, I personally know of several people who would fall under this, who are from different communities.

Perhaps the member is going to elaborate on that.

• (1355)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, through the Speaker, for offering his time to brief me on what is in the legislation. Maybe he will give me the time so that I can go through the bill and tell him why it is not needed and why it is so overarching and not necessary.

We are not the only ones who are saying this. He said when people come here "with three or four wives". What is our immigration department doing letting people into the country

bringing three or four wives with them? In my riding, people find it hard enough to bring one wife with them, and for those who get married overseas, it takes months and years to bring their spouse over; yet, according to the parliamentary secretary, we now have people coming into the country bringing three or four wives with them from other countries as their wives, because I do not see how else they would be entering the country.

The parliamentary secretary needs to go and have a word with the immigration officers to make sure that is not happening.

Second, he talked about the victims and the fact that we do not understand the bill. We do understand the bill. Of course we are against any kind of violence. However, when we look at the rhetoric in this bill, we see it is definitely meant to inflame and not address real issues.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the short title, because I think it has really offended a great number of Canadians. We live in a very multicultural and tolerant society, and the government has chosen some fairly strong wording for the short title, "zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices".

I want the member to focus on the word "culture". I would argue that there is no link between domestic violence and culture. In fact, every society has some form of gender-based violence. There is no argument whatsoever to be made that the word "culture" should be incorporated.

Would she not agree with that assessment?

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:** Mr. Speaker, I absolutely do agree with my colleague that the very title is so offensive. Once again, it creates that culture of fear, suspicion, and divisiveness. Once again, as I have said over and over again, domestic violence crosses all socioeconomic and ethnocultural barriers, and it is a scourge that we need to address in all society.

Using terms like "barbaric cultural" does nothing but appeal to the base, where the government wants to collect more money.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The 5 hours for 20-minute speeches has now expired.

[*Translation*]

All speeches that will follow will be ten minutes with five minutes for questions and comments.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### FIRST ROBOTICS CANADA COMPETITION

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise to congratulate the hard-working students from Martingrove Collegiate Institute's robotics team on their fourth place finish at the FIRST Robotics Canada competition in Toronto last week.

*Statements by Members*

Under the mentorship of technology teacher Mr. Dean Gunby, the robotics team, the Iron Bears, worked long and hard, giving up their weekends and free time over several months to build a robot and compete in this tournament.

Our government's economic action plan has invested in programs like FIRST Robotics, which has inspired over 30,000 Ontario students across 725 school teams to cultivate a passion for science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and entrepreneurship. This program partners students with engineers, programmers, and technology entrepreneurs to imagine, design, and build robots that compete in regional tournaments across North America.

I would like to thank the team for inviting me, as their member of Parliament for Etobicoke Centre. I was very proud to see these brilliant young Canadian minds compete, achieve, and realize their potential under the guidance of caring and dedicated teachers and professionals.

Go Iron Bears go.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

**HAMILTON ART CRAWL**

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Hamilton is ready to welcome the Juno's to our city this weekend and to share Hamilton's thriving art scene with people from across the country.

One of Hamilton's premier art events is the Art Crawl, on James Street North. Once a less desirable and more rundown part of town, James Street North has been revitalized by the influx of grassroots art galleries, studios, shops, and restaurants. On the second Friday of each month, thousands of people come out to celebrate the arts community. The amazing history of Art Crawl's organic growth is captured in the documentary *Hearts*, a film about Hamilton's Art Crawl, which features the people and places that make James Street North so special.

I would like to particularly recognize Bryce Kanbara, Colina Maxwell, Dave Kuruc, Matt Jelly, Kevin MacKay, Zena Hagerty, Dr. James Dunn, Cody Lanktree, Graham Crawford, Alex Zafer, Cynthia Hill, Dane Pedersen, Tim Potocic, and Rich Oddie for their contribution to the documentary and for all their time and dedication to fulfilling the vision of "Art as the New Steel".

The next Art Crawl is tomorrow, Friday, March 13, and I invite everyone to come out and join one of Canada's most diverse and dynamic cultural experiences.

\* \* \*

**NOROUZ**

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to wish all Canadians, especially those of Iranian descent, a happy and joyous Norouz.

For those Canadians of Iranian background who chose to make Canada their home, they chose a nation that represents freedom, democracy, prosperity, peace, and a strong embrace of one another's ancestry and culture.

While our government has condemned the actions of the Iranian government for its human rights record, its support of terrorism, and its drive for nuclear arms, we stand squarely with the Iranian people and in the corner of Canadian Iranians, who on a daily basis contribute immensely to our social fabric in academia, business, culture, and so many other avenues of Canadian society.

Norouz is a time for people to refresh and rejuvenate themselves. Once we are open to that sense of renewal, we can look beyond the coldness and darkness of anger and bitterness and get on with the springtime in people's souls that will bring peace, *solh*; love, *eshgh*; and freedom, *azadi*.

*Norouz pirooz*; happy Norouz.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in two weeks, hundreds of highly skilled agricultural workers who harvest mushrooms must leave Canada for their home countries, leaving other supply chain jobs in jeopardy and the industry risking losses in the tens of millions of dollars.

According to the George Morris Centre, this sector has a \$900-million impact on the Canadian economy. The six to 12 months it will take to train skilled and productive replacement workers will be devastating for farmers trying to fill their orders. Mushroom farming is a 365-day-a-year operation and needs special attention from the current government. While they are willing to talk a good game about how distinct the agricultural sector is, when it comes down to it, the Conservatives are not acting on the farmers' need for a base of skilled, experienced, and reliable agricultural labour.

On this side of the House, we believe it is time for the government to support Canadian farmers by finding a solution to permanently address this crisis. At the very least, government should do the right thing and provide an extension for these agricultural workers, as it has done for others.

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF ACTUARIES**

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries. On March 18, 1965, federal Senate Bill S-45, sponsored by lawyer and actuary Senator Wallace McCutcheon, was given royal assent, thus creating the Canadian Institute of Actuaries.

For decades, actuaries working at the heart of some of the country's most important employers, including banks, pension plans, and insurance companies, have been a quiet, powerful force involved in building and strengthening Canadian business and society.

[*Translation*]

As experts in risk management, who are responsible for assessing the financial impact of uncertain future events and providing advice in that regard, their role has never been as important as it is today.

*Statements by Members***ADDICTION RECOVERY**

● (1405)

*[English]*

On March 18, the government, on behalf of all Canadians, would like to congratulate the institute on 50 years of actuarial excellence in Canada.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***OUTDOOR ADVENTURE TOURISM**

**Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in 2013, I launched the “OnVeutDesDouanes.ca” campaign, which calls for a complete customs service at the Bagotville airport.

People want this to happen. Local economic and political stakeholders are becoming impatient, as am I, with the Conservatives, who are preventing customs clearance of planes with 30 or more passengers.

Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean is at a crossroads and it must be able to carry out its own development. Our beautiful region has all the amenities required to be a major player in outdoor adventure tourism.

Opening itself to the world by improving access to foreign tourists and increasing the mobility of people here is a simple means of taking concrete action in my region, whose economy has slowed down and where jobs are precarious. In fact, attracting foreign investment and positioning ourselves as the doorway to northern development will ensure our prosperity, maintain current jobs and create jobs for future generations.

The Conservative member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean lacks vision by opposing this tourism development project. We have the potential to ensure our prosperity, but we must be bold, have a vision and set up a complete customs service in Bagotville. That is a clear vision for the future.

\* \* \*

*[English]***L'ORÉAL-UNESCO FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE AWARD**

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply proud of the leadership Canadian scientists are displaying on the world stage. Last week, as we celebrated International Women's Day, we saw one of our own scientific innovators, Dr. Molly Shoichet, recognized as one of five recipients, from around the world, of the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Award. She is a global leader in an area of Canadian health expertise, stem cell science. She has distinguished herself not only as a role model for women and girls around the globe but as a world-class innovator who stands shoulder to shoulder with the very best in her field.

Our Canadian scientists have consistently been on the front lines expanding our knowledge and finding new ways to improve the health of Canadians. We are forever proud to recognize the achievement of notable Canadian scientists. We congratulate Dr. Shoichet.

**Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on January 27-28 of this year, individuals from across Canada came together in Ottawa to create a united vision for what addiction recovery means in Canada. Hosted by the CCSA, one of their declared visions was that recovery is real, available, attainable, and sustainable.

I bring this to the House's attention because just over 26 years ago, I took my last drink. My life had spiralled out of control, but by the grace of God, I stand before this House and all Canadians to give hope to all those who suffer with addiction that they can find a path that will provide them with a daily reprieve from their addiction.

Today I can say that I would not trade my best day drunk for my worst day sober. Today I reach my hand out to anyone in need, rather than pushing them away. Most importantly, I accept life as it is, not how I think it should be.

May we all come together and support those in recovery.

\* \* \*

**B.C. FERRY**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government continues with their neglect of Canada's coastal communities. On the west coast, they have shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, the busiest in the country. They are also closing the marine communications and traffic service centres along B.C.'s coast, creating unnecessary risks in marine and environmental safety.

Now the Conservative Party whip is engaged in a public dispute with B.C.'s Minister of Transportation regarding the eligibility of B.C. Ferries to receive federal infrastructure funding under the building Canada fund. Struggling with rising costs and a \$3-billion capital plan over the next decade, B.C. Ferries is seeking the federal government's help to keep fares low, improve service, and allow it to continue offering robust service to many coastal communities.

New Democrats recognize the importance of Canada's coastal communities to the economy, the environment, and our national identity. Unlike the Conservatives, we are listening to British Columbians and are committed to partnering with the provinces to improve transportation infrastructure.

*Statements by Members***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced the retirement income security benefit, which will provide financial stability to veterans who are moderately to seriously injured and their families. This benefit, in addition to existing services and benefits, will establish a continuum of support that spans a disabled veteran's entire life.

The president of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 4 in Fredericton said that it is going to help in the future and is needed for the protection of our service people.

The Veterans Ombudsman said:

...this will be a game-changer for Canada's most seriously injured veterans and their families.

I am immensely proud that our government is standing up for veterans and their families and is ensuring that they get the support and services they need, when they need them.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

**ST. PATRICK'S DAY**

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a few days from now, we will celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

I would like to recognize the strong, deep roots of the Irish community in my riding, Jeanne-Le Ber, especially in the Pointe-Saint-Charles neighbourhood. Many St. Patrick's activities happen there in March, such as the mass of anticipation at the historic St. Gabriel church.

Every year, the United Irish Societies of Montreal organize one of the biggest St. Patrick's Day parades. This festive community event is part of our cultural wealth.

[*English*]

With St. Patrick's Day approaching, on behalf of the entire Irish community of Jeanne-Le Ber, I invite one and all to celebrate with us at this year's St. Patrick's Day parade, and to take a moment to remember Montreal's Irish heritage with a visit to the Black Rock in the heart of Point St. Charles, in the area once known as Goose Village.

\* \* \*

**LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader's divisive comments this past week continue to draw fire from both the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, or CIJA, and B'nai Brith Canada.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs says that the Liberal leader's comparison of current debates to the turning away of Jewish refugees in the 1930s and 1940s is "inaccurate and inappropriate".

B'nai Brith Canada says the Liberal leader's comparison is wholly inappropriate and states:

Such language is divisive and only does a dis-service to Canadians interested in dealing with pressing issues of the day.

B'nai Brith also says the Liberal leader:

...is the latest in a long line of politicians who fall into the trap of drawing highly-inappropriate and offensive Nazi-era comparisons by using the term 'none is too many' haphazardly.

The Liberal leader's comments are divisive. We hope the Liberal leader will do the right thing and apologize for them.

\* \* \*

**COUGAR FLIGHT 491**

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of the tragedy that unfolded off the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador six years ago on March 12, 2009.

On that fateful day, 17 of 18 passengers and crew lost their lives when a Cougar helicopter, Flight 491, crashed into the frigid North Atlantic Ocean while en route to the *SeaRose* FPSO and the Hibernia platform.

Among the 17 who died were my constituents Wade Drake and Burch Nash, both from the Burin Peninsula in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have long looked to the sea to make a living, whether by fishing or working in the oil industry. Unfortunately, all too often the sea has claimed the lives of many men and women who bravely risked their lives to provide for their families. The sadness that continues to be felt by the spouses, children, and members of the extended family of the 17 victims who died so tragically is shared by all who remember the tragedy.

I ask all members of the House to join me in remembering this solemn occasion and again offer our sympathies to those who lost loved ones.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our economy is still on the road to recovery. Bringing in higher taxes and higher debt is not the path we believe ordinary Canadians want to be on. Unfortunately, the Liberal leader and his Liberal counterparts in the province of New Brunswick believe want to bring in a Liberal carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything for families, including groceries, gas, and even pet food.

Yesterday the finance minister of the Province of New Brunswick, where I live, said he would consider bringing in the idea of a carbon tax. New Brunswickers cannot afford another Liberal tax hike. This is not the way to manage the economy, but it is the Liberal way.

On this side of the House, we agree with New Brunswickers that bringing in a job-killing carbon tax would mean an increase in the lives of all citizens. We stand with New Brunswickers. Unlike the Liberal leader, we will never punish Canadians with a job-killing carbon tax.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if Canadians can bear to do so, it takes some time to look at the terrible Conservative record when it comes to the economy. Truly, it is a record only a mother could love.

We have record highs in temporary foreign workers and record-low job quality for Canadians. We have record-high household debt and record-low access to employment insurance. The Conservatives continue to hurt the economy, but it is Canadian families who pay the price.

Somehow the Conservatives have managed to go from bad to worse. In this House last night, we had a New Democrat motion calling on the next federal budget to help create good-paying jobs for Canadians, yet the Conservatives found a way to vote against it. Which part did they hate the most? Was it that we are calling for good-paying jobs for Canadians, or was it that we are calling for a budget at all, which seems to be such a problem for the current government?

It is time for the Minister of Finance to get off the bench and do his job. All the economists he is relying on are saying that the excuses are over. Let us get to work and give Canadians a budget that helps get them back to work.

If the Conservatives are so unwilling to do it, let us just wait until the fall of 2015. New Democrats will be happy to give Canadians the government they deserve.

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### IRAQ

**Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP made a mistake this week. Earlier this week he said, “All that was ever asked for of Canada by the Iraqis was that we help with the humanitarian crisis”.

This is completely false. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was recently in Iraq and was thanked by the Iraqi government for all of Canada's efforts, including our air strikes and military training efforts. In fact, Iraq's foreign minister made a formal request for assistance to the UN in order to “...support the effort to eradicate [ISIL] and restore stability to our country.”

I call on the leader of the NDP to apologize for this inaccurate comment. Our government will never back down from protecting Canadians from the threat of ISIL at home and abroad.

### Oral Questions

## ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the foreign minister of Turkey stated that someone working for an intelligence agency within the coalition against ISIS may have attempted to assist three British schoolgirls in joining that terrorist organization. According to some sources, the spy involved may have ties to Canada.

Is the minister aware of this matter and can he tell us if this information is accurate?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

I am indeed aware of these stories. That being said, the member knows that I do not comment on national security activities. However, I invite her to support Bill C-51, because the bill will allow us to continue to keep Canadians safe from terrorist threats, with monitoring mechanisms to protect people's rights and provide a framework for the activities of our intelligence agencies.

[English]

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the foreign minister of Turkey stated that someone working for a foreign intelligence agency has been detained for attempting to assist three British schoolgirls in joining ISIS in Iraq.

Reports allege that the person being detained was working with Canada. We have heard the minister is aware of these reports. Is Canadian intelligence involved, and why are there persistent reports from the Turkish media on this?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of these stories. As the member knows, I do not comment on an operational matter.

We are fully aware that high-risk travellers are travelling and willing to join terrorists. That is why we are putting on the floor of this House Bill C-51, which will give better tools to our law enforcement and police officers to prevent Canadians from committing terrorist acts abroad and coming back here to be a bigger threat to our country and our safety.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of National Defence refused to say clearly whether the scope of the military mission in Iraq would be expanded beyond training and support for Kurdish forces. Our troops are already on the front line and being shot at by Islamic State militants. Canadians have the right to know.

Will the minister rule out an expansion of the military mission in Iraq or not?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has not made a final decision on the continuation of our mission against the Islamic State. Obviously, when we make a decision, we will move a motion in the House for debate, as we have done every time we have deployed troops for this type of mission.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that Canada has a role to play against this genocidal terrorist organization, which has declared war on Canada and poses a real threat to our security and global security.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the Conservatives do not know where they are headed.

That also applies to the economy and job creation. Today, private sector economists are saying that the government has no reason to delay the budget. Canadians are losing their jobs and bankruptcies are on the rise. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are dithering.

What is the government waiting for to table a budget and measures to breathe some life into the job market?

*[English]*

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is lowering taxes. We are providing benefits directly to families. We are protecting and creating jobs to help families make ends meet.

We know that the plan by the New Democratic Party and the Liberals to raise taxes, reverse pension income splitting for seniors, and introduce a carbon tax will have a negative impact on jobs and on the economy.

Under our Conservative government, every family with children in Canada will stand to benefit from our tax breaks, which include increasing and expanding the universal child care benefit and the family tax credit.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, private sector economists say that there is no excuse for delaying the budget. The Minister of Finance refuses to face the facts, but Canadian families do not have the luxury of avoiding reality, because they are facing record household debt and deteriorating job quality. They want their government to act, but the Conservatives voted against an NDP proposal to make good jobs a focus of the next budget.

When will the minister end his delay and when will he table a budget?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, our Conservative government has a low-tax plan for jobs and growth in all sectors of the Canadian economy, and that plan is working. It is going to return Canada to a balanced budget this year. As we have stated, we will not bring forward the budget any earlier than April.

Again, while we are focusing on balancing the budget and creating jobs, the New Democratic Party and the Liberal leader are

pushing a high-tax, high-debt agenda that will threaten jobs and set working families back.

Canadians families know they are better off with this Conservative government.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, racist comments are nothing new for the member for New Brunswick Southwest, who has used such terms as “the teepee republic” and suggested that there were no alternatives to residential schools. His racist comments should not surprise anyone, especially not the Prime Minister, who chose him as director of communications.

Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and remove this member from his caucus?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has already apologized.

However, one member has yet to apologize. The Leader of the Liberal Party made disgraceful comments about the Holocaust. Two national Jewish groups have already called his comments inappropriate.

I will now give the Liberal leader the opportunity to do the honourable thing: apologize.

*[English]*

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of Liberal Party said nothing about the Holocaust, and he gave a great speech in Toronto.

Two of the Prime Minister's Conservative colleagues from Calgary have used strong words to denounce their colleague's language, labelling it racist and damaging to all of us. Yet the Prime Minister has remained silent. Does this mean the Prime Minister tacitly condones these racist remarks, or will he finally act and remove the member from his caucus?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has done the right thing in apologizing. Now there is an opportunity for the Liberal leader to stand in the House and apologize.

Let me quote B'nai Brith, one of Canada's leading Jewish organizations:

[The] Liberal leader[s]...comparison of Canada's current immigration policy to that of the 1940's which saw Jews barred from the country is wholly inappropriate.

B'nai Brith went on to call those comments divisive.

The Liberal leader has an opportunity to make right all of the wrongs that he carried out in that speech, and I invite him to stand now and apologize.

• (1425)

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently we heard three things from the Conservatives: first, the Prime Minister appears to condone racist language; second, as is clear from their own document, Conservatives see their base as anti-immigrant; third, the Prime Minister keeps attacking Muslims.

Is the Prime Minister so deeply mired in his Reform Party roots that he is totally unable to promote an inclusive Canada, or will he expel that member from his caucus?

**Hon. Tim Uppal (Minister of State (Multiculturalism), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing about is the Liberal leader's divisive speech, about which B'nai Brith Canada was prompted to say:

[The] Liberal leader[s]...comparison of Canada's current immigration policy to that of the 1940's which saw Jews barred from the country is wholly inappropriate".

It went on to say:

Such language is divisive and only does a dis-service to Canadians interested in dealing with pressing issues of the day.

When will the Liberal leader stand up and apologize to Canadians for his divisive politics?

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### PRIVACY

**Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-51 will have a significant impact on the rights and freedoms of Canadians, and yet the Conservative government refuses to hear from a key witness: the Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien, who believes that Bill C-51 is "clearly excessive".

Daniel Therrien was appointed by the Prime Minister. He is a specialist who was presented to us as someone who is able to strike a balance between security and privacy. Why then is his expertise being ignored when those issues are at the very heart of Bill C-51? Why this selective listening on the government's part regarding this bill?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians expect the government's left hand to know what the right hand is doing. When it comes to protecting rights and freedoms, our bill contains many provisions, including one that gives the Security Intelligence Review Committee the mandate to investigate all threat reduction activities.

For all intents and purposes, we are the only country among our allies that does not already have measures in place to effectively combat terrorism and prevent radicalization in certain cases. We look forward to hearing evidence from experts and any constructive comments that they are sure to have on our bill, which is very important for Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we will give the minister a second chance. The minister may not like what the Privacy Commissioner has to say, but that is no reason for the Conservatives to block him from the committee.

Bill C-51 would make sweeping changes that would have serious privacy implications for all Canadians. The Privacy Commissioner has warned that this bill would give the government, in his words,

#### Oral Questions

"virtually limitless powers to monitor and, with the assistance of Big Data analytics, to profile ordinary Canadians".

Why are the Conservatives refusing to allow the Privacy Commissioner to appear before the committee so all Canadians can hear his concerns?

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when we were drafting one of the parts that deals with the exchange of information already in the government's possession that could threaten national security, we submitted our work and our proposals to the Privacy Commissioner. I had the privilege of meeting with him yesterday, and we intend to carry on a constructive dialogue to ensure that the bill is an effective tool to protect Canadians against the terrorist threat while still upholding their rights and freedoms.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, so much for putting public safety first.

The Conservatives have allowed the RCMP to work with a severely outdated criminal records database for six years. Apparently, it will not be fixed until 2018.

It is great that the minister wants to transition the RCMP to an electronic database—welcome to the 21st century—but what he has done instead is create a disastrous backlog. The police cannot wait another three years for current criminal records. Where is the plan to fix this dangerous situation now?

• (1430)

[Translation]

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague should know that the police centre that collects the information includes all of the provincial and federal police forces across the country. It does important work and our government is proud to have provided financial support in the amount of \$180 million to make this important transition.

Unfortunately, we did not get the support of the NDP, but we are aware that transferring all of that data will be a significant challenge. Yesterday, police representatives assured us that they would be able to successfully carry out their important mandate.

[English]

**Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is funny. The government did not need our support to prove its failure.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Those are fine words, but when it comes right down to it, the minister has not solved anything. This has been an ongoing problem since 2009. It currently takes two years before criminal records are updated, yet they are a basic police tool. Police officers are currently working in the dark.

What is the minister waiting for? When will he resolve this problem and ensure that our police officers and Canadians are safe now?

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is time for the NDP to wake up. We have been working on this problem for some time and we have invested \$180 million. The NDP opposed an investment to ensure that information is available electronically instead of mouldering in the basements of courthouses.

We are working with every provincial and federal police force and with the provinces to ensure that our police officers, along with the entire legal system, have the information they need in real time. We will continue to support the efforts of our police officers.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is appalling that the Conservatives are using public money to reward their friends and punish their enemies.

Former Conservative senator Patrick Brazeau revealed that Nigel Wright and the Minister of Public Works politically interfered in the Jean Bosco Centre file. We do not know what happened, but we know the result: the funding promised disappeared into thin air when Lawrence Cannon was defeated. Unbelievable.

Can the Prime Minister explain why his chief of staff interfered in this file?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it would be no surprise to see the New Democrats increase taxes to finance all of their grants without any assessments. If the New Democrats want to hand out grants simply because Patrick Brazeau is lobbying, they are the ones who need to explain themselves.

We respect taxpayers' money and we protect their money by choosing sound investments and spending responsibly.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that proposals do not meet departmental officials' criteria is no obstacle to helping the Prime Minister's good friends. Such things can be overlooked, which is what happened in Markham after the Prime Minister's former chief of staff got involved.

However, when an opportunity arose to punish voters who turned their backs on the Conservatives, a project that Lawrence Cannon had promised suddenly failed to meet the criteria.

Seriously. Is there one set of rules for the Prime Minister's friends and another for his enemies? Is Nigel Wright in charge of enforcing those rules?

*[English]*

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the NDP is siding with Patrick Brazeau to try to break the rules, but it is not surprising that the NDP would have to raise taxes to pay for this kind of irresponsible spending decision.

The NDP would say yes to anything just because someone lobbied for it. On this side, we make investments that are justifiable after we go through evaluations. That is why we have been able to balance the budget and cut taxes for Canadians. We will keep doing that.

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Ève Péclet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Employment and Social Development is describing is exactly what the Minister of Public Works and Government Services did.

Since the ethics commissioner's damning report was released, memory loss has run rampant. The minister says she does not recall talking to Nigel Wright, and the Prime Minister does not even remember the project.

However, it was important enough for three of his ministers and two of his close advisors to intervene on behalf of a good friend of the Prime Minister and overturn a decision made by departmental officials.

If that is not favouritism, then how does the Prime Minister explain the fact that three ministers and two staffers got involved in awarding a grant?

● (1435)

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said several times, I have always believed that this project to improve access to the Markham centre for people with disabilities was worthwhile and in the public interest.

I myself made the decision, and I have always believed that this project was good for the people of Markham.

*[English]*

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been found guilty and here is the problem with her defence. She says that she cannot remember speaking to Nigel Wright about the project. Then she said, "Don't worry, there was nothing political", which raises this question. Why was Nigel Wright phoning her about the project in the first place?

Let me try to jog her memory. She took a rejected project from the bottom of the pile and pushed it above 160 other qualified projects. Will she at least tell the House what was it that caught her eye about this rejected proposal? Why were so many key Conservatives so keen to give one of their friends so much public money?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud to have launched the enabling accessibility fund, which has helped millions of people across the country to have full inclusion and the ability to participate. It is unfortunate that the NDP voted against this program that has benefited virtually all of their constituents.

I always knew there was value in this project. I always believed it would be in the public interest. I co-operated fully during the three years of this investigation.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, she hides behind disabled children to explain why she was feeling guilty for breaking the rules to give money to her friends—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The member for Timmins—James Bay has the floor. He may want to be judicious with his language to avoid prompting that type of reaction, but he still has the floor. He still has some time left and members need to come to order to allow him to finish putting the question.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure about what part of the truth hurt her so much, but as the Prime Minister would say, let us sort it out.

We have this dodgy project sitting at the bottom of a pile of a bunch of worthy projects, and we have three cabinet ministers, Nigel Wright, the principal secretary, and the Prime Minister's Office, who all get their paws on this one dodgy project.

What is the connection with the promoter of this project that made her light such a fire that she has been found guilty of breaching the Conflict of Interest Act? What was it?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had actually read the report, he would have found that the commission made it very clear that neither I nor any member of my family or my friends had any personal interest in this particular—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Mr. Speaker, she also found that not only was I not friends with Rabbi Mendelsohn, but, in fact, we had never met.

I believe that this project to improve accessibility for the disabled in Markham was a worthy project.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think she is missing the point. A failed funding application was fast-tracked and approved for over \$1 million only after the Prime Minister had told chief of staff Nigel Wright to “sort it out”. Why? We know, because it benefited the Conservative Party.

Just a reminder that out of 167 applications, this project came in 163rd. The common thread, just like with Duffy, is the involvement of the Prime Minister's closest adviser acting on the explicit instructions of the Prime Minister.

How can the Prime Minister defend this corruption?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the ethics commissioner made it very clear that the Prime Minister had no participation in this decision,

which projects were evaluated, or even how they were evaluated, and what was awarded any funding.

When it comes to corruption, I would remind the member that he is sitting in a party that used be government, and when it was government, it took \$40 million of taxpayers' dollars that is still unaccounted for.

● (1440)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that the Mike Duffy cover-up began only after Nigel Wright allegedly stated, “We are good to go from the PM”.

Funding of \$1 million for a project that helped the Conservative Party but failed miserably when compared to the others was granted only after the Prime Minister allegedly asked Nigel Wright to deal with this file.

How can the Prime Minister defend this corruption?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the ethics commissioner said, the Prime Minister had absolutely no involvement in the funding of this centre to improve accessibility for the handicapped in Markham. That was very clear.

All along, I believed that this project was a worthwhile one that was in the best public interest.

**Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister is the most controlling in Canada's history. Nothing happens in the government without his approval.

RCMP documents show the PM's direct involvement in the Mike Duffy cover-up. The ethic commissioner's report shows his direct involvement in funding a failed project that benefited only the Conservative Party.

This is corruption at its highest level. How can the Prime Minister defend this?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get her facts right. What the ethics commissioner said in her report was, in fact, that the Prime Minister had absolutely no involvement in the decision making on this project to help the disabled have better access at the Markham centre.

That decision was mine. I did so believing, as I always have, that this project was in the best interest of the community. It was a worthy project and it was in the public interest.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for seven years, the Fynes family has been coping with a smear campaign as a result of their son's suicide.

*Oral Questions*

However, that is nothing compared to the pain that the family felt when they were finally able to read the report of the Military Police Complaints Commission. In that report, investigators blamed the family. Frankly, that is appalling and unacceptable.

Will the minister do the only acceptable thing under the circumstances and apologize to this family?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the question is about the report of the Military Police Complaints Commission, I want to say that we just received it. It is over 1,000 pages long and I look forward to reading it. The summary of the report is clear: not all of the allegations were confirmed.

That being said, what happened with the military police is unacceptable. I intend to work with the military to ensure that it changes its policies and practices so that such an incident does not happen again.

[English]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the previously secret board of inquiry report was released to the Fynes family yesterday.

Incredibly, it blames the parents for the death of their son, though he had attempted suicide five times and was being cared for by the military. Sheila Fynes says that this conclusion is gratuitous and outside the accepted bounds of humanity, decency and civility. This comes on top of this week's findings of an incompetent follow-up investigation by the military.

Will the minister apologize to the family for this additional insult to the memory of Corporal Stuart Langridge?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the particular document to which the member refers. I would be happy to look into this matter. I did tell him at committee yesterday that we just received, 48 hours ago, a report that has taken over three years to compile with over 1,000 pages. I obviously have not had a chance to review that in detail yet.

The member, and all members, have my assurance that I will review the report closely and work with the Provost Marshal of the Canadian Armed Forces to make whatever changes are necessary to ensure that the totally unacceptable conduct that occurred in this matter does not repeat itself.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, every veteran with an amputation loathes receiving the big brown envelope of paperwork from Veterans Affairs, asking them if they still have limbs missing.

It is bad enough that the minister thinks he has fixed the issue because now these veterans will only have to prove to Veterans Affairs every three years that they lost a limb. The minister does not seem to understand that veterans also rely on different programs from DND, programs that are still asking for proof every year.

Does the minister think that this is even remotely acceptable?

• (1445)

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have learned a lot from the case Paul Franklin has brought forward, and I thank him for raising these concerns with respect to the veterans independence program.

We are already making changes. In fact, I have stood up a veterans-centric task force to revisit every piece of correspondence that goes to a veteran and their family to make sure it focuses on their wellness, is easy to understand and, for serious cases, to see whether we can eliminate it entirely.

I will also be asking the insurer for the Canadian Forces long-term disability program to try to adopt the same approach.

[Translation]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, the Conservatives are heartless and have no respect whatsoever for veterans.

For example, they are asking veterans with amputations to confirm that they still have limbs missing. These veterans are required to fill out hurtful questionnaires in order to continue receiving their benefits. No one in the government seems to understand what it means to have a disability.

Will the minister immediately put an end to this completely ridiculous practice and stop humiliating our veterans?

[English]

**Hon. Erin O'Toole (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if that member who sits on the veterans affairs committee had been following this matter, he would know that one month ago I already said that no such letter would ever be sent to a veteran or their family, full stop.

In fact, we are revisiting all of the types of forms we send to our veterans and their families to make sure they promote their wellness and are simple. In complex cases where there is a case manager assigned to the veteran, I want the forms eliminated entirely.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned of a very troubling terrorist plot. An Islamic State-inspired extremist had plans to bomb the United States consulate in Toronto, as well as other buildings in the financial district. My constituents are very concerned that the international jihadist movement has declared war on Canada and her allies.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please update this House on measures that the government is taking to keep Canadians safe?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Pickering—Scarborough East for his service as a member, but also for serving under the flag as a Canadian Armed Forces member.

Today, I also want to thank the RCMP, CSIS and especially the CBSA members who have done incredible work to ensure the safety of Canadians in that case and prevented a horrific tragedy.

Troubling cases like these are precisely why our government is putting forward this new legislation to provide our police and national security agencies more tools to protect Canadians against the jihadist terrorists who would seek to harm us.

[*Translation*]

I thank our police forces—

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

\* \* \*

**RAIL TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport has announced some new rail safety standards. We were expecting a more ambitious plan and more stringent standards. Regulations for brakes on tank cars were completely ignored. Furthermore, the rail cars involved in the accidents in Ontario, which the Transportation Safety Board of Canada has said are not strong enough, will still run on our rails until 2023.

How does the minister plan on reassuring the public, when we will have to live with unsafe rail cars for at least another eight years?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, I was very pleased that the department posted online an update with what it is doing with the new, improved, very sturdy tank cars that we will be building in this country in the future.

Regarding the brakes, to which the member alluded, following the consultations commenced last year, it was agreed to place these brakes into a different track, that is, working with operating rules. We will continue to have these technical discussions with the United States to make sure that what we get is the right product.

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the latest series of train derailments has communities across the country concerned for their safety. The transport committee report is clear. We have inadequate rail inspection. The Auditor General's report is clear. We have inadequate rail inspection.

While the transport of oil by rail has grown exponentially, Transport Canada has hired just one additional rail inspector since 2013. Does the minister think that is sufficient to protect Canadians? Is this what the minister calls working diligently to protect the safety of Canadians?

• (1450)

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the member has indicated is absolutely false. The Auditor General did not speak of the number of rail inspectors. The Auditor General talked about the auditors involved.

We put it all together in terms of oversight. That is what is important here. What is important is that the rail safety directorate last year planned to conduct over 32,000 inspections on our rail system in the country. That is a significant number. We are well staffed for that. We have provided \$1 million extra in operating money to rail safety alone. The department has indicated this is the number of officials it needs, and that is what it has.

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**CANADA REVENUE AGENCY**

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last night while Conservatives turned out to the Politics and the Pen gala to praise the power of political writing and the importance of free expression, the Canada Revenue Agency was busy conducting a witch hunt against another organization, Pen Canada, which defends freedom of political expression.

I am hearing from Canadians from coast to coast who are feeling the chilling effects of CRA audits and wondering just whether they will be targeted next. When will the government give up its unjustifiable attack on Canadian charities?

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the rules around charities and how they conduct themselves are long-standing. It is the job of CRA to ensure that charitable giving from charitable Canadians is used for charitable purposes.

In a recent message to all CRA employees, and I think this is important, the commissioner and deputy commissioner said:

To be clear, the process for identifying which charities will be audited for any reason is handled by the Charities Directorate alone and, like all our audit activities, is not subject to political direction.

Why is the NDP attempting to score cheap political points at the expense of professional public servants at the CRA?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives showed up in droves yesterday for the Pen Canada gala, which celebrates Canadian authors and literature.

I hope they were at least a little embarrassed when they showed up in their tuxes and bow ties, since they have accused the organization of being too partisan and have tried to revoke its right to issue charitable tax receipts. The government always seems to be targeting the progressive organizations that stand up for the environment, culture and human rights. Enough with this witch hunt.

When will the Conservatives stop targeting anyone who does not share their opinion?

[*English*]

**Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that CRA audits occur at arm's-length. They are conducted free of any political interference or motivation. Rules regarding charities and their activities are very long-standing.

*Oral Questions*

In 2012 alone, \$14.24 billion was tax received from approximately 86,000 charities. Charities must respect the law. The CRA has a legal responsibility to ensure that they do. The audit activity for any reason whatsoever is less than 1% of those charities in a year.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance says he is delaying the budget because of volatile oil prices, but the private sector economists advising the minister say that there is no reason to delay the budget, that slow growth and low oil prices will be with us throughout 2015. Therefore, what is the minister's real reason? Is he incapable of creating a plan for jobs and growth, or is he ragging the puck in order to limit parliamentary scrutiny before the House rises in the spring?

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I think all Canadians know that they are better off with this Conservative government, and I will tell members why. It is because our government has a low-tax plan for jobs and growth for all sectors of the Canadian economy, and that plan is working. It is going to return Canada to a balanced budget this year.

As we have stated, we will not bring forward a budget any earlier than April. However, we understand why the Liberals are worried about a budget date. It is because they see the budget date as an opportunity to take more money from Canadians, an opportunity to bring forward high debt and high-tax plans.

We are not going to move off our strategy of low-tax—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remember when finance ministers used to answer budget questions. I also remember when finance ministers actually introduced budgets in this House.

Alberta's economic and fiscal framework is far more dependent on oil prices than that of Canada. Yet, Alberta's finance minister is set to deliver a budget on March 26.

Therefore, if Alberta's finance minister can introduce a budget before the next fiscal year starts, why can Canada's finance minister not do the same thing?

• (1455)

**Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, we know that the Liberals want to hike taxes on families and force every Canadian to pay more tax to fund Liberal Party spending schemes. However, members do not have to take my word for it. Here is a quote: "Liberals believe Canadians will not be bothered by being taxed more and more...."

Do members know who said this? It was the Liberal finance critic, the member for Kings—Hants.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Conservatives shut down debate on Bill S-6, legislation that would gut the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act.

There was no real consultation with first nations, and nearly all of Yukon's first nations are opposed to Bill S-6. In fact, they are already preparing to fight it in court.

At what point did the Conservatives decide that nation-to-nation consultation with Yukon's first nations did not matter anymore?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member said is completely false. First nations in the Yukon and in Nunavut—I mean, everyone was consulted plentifully. As a matter of fact, \$100,000 of taxpayers' money went to those first nations to participate in the consultation process.

Therefore, the consultations have taken place. The bill is now before the House, and I hope the NDP will stop preventing the progress being made in northern Canada.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, another flawed bill and another long and wasteful court fight with first nations: that is where the minister is going.

It is not just first nations that have a problem with the legislation. In a letter sent to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development last fall, the president of Casino Mining expressed concerns about the "negative impact this is having on the territory's mineral industry". The Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon is also opposed.

Why pursue a bill that will not stand up in court and is opposed by both first nations and businesses? Where is the certainty in that?

**Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member can choose a few quotes, but the fact of the matter is that industry, the Yukon government, the Nunavut government, NTI, and all of these groups support this legislation, because for the first time, this Conservative government has taken steps to level the playing field so that those resources in the north can be exploited for the benefit of northerners. This would change the regulatory system to attract investment and create jobs and long-term prosperity, which is our objective.

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**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we believe the Canadian justice system exists to protect Canadians and their communities and not to coddle violent criminals.

Yesterday, as part of our ongoing commitment to keeping Canada's streets and communities safe and to bringing the rights of victims back to the heart of the criminal justice system, the Minister of Justice tabled the life means life act.

*Oral Questions*

Could the minister please speak to this House as to the rationale for this important legislation?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the life means life act would ensure our public safety by ensuring that Canada's most violent offenders would face mandatory life imprisonment without parole.

The bill would help rebuild public confidence, would bring certainty to our criminal justice system, and also would ensure that those who have lost loved ones, as victims of the most extreme acts of violence, are not subjected to repeated and hopeless parole hearings.

Consistent with our Criminal Code, our sentencing principles, and the constitution, this bill would remove the worst murderers from Canadian society permanently.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the C. D. Howe Institute made it clear: low immunization rates in parts of Canada are a major health concern.

Only one province, Newfoundland and Labrador, has achieved the 95% vaccination coverage needed for herd immunity. Quebec is in the midst of a serious measles outbreak: 119 people, with another 700 at risk.

The report recommends better public education and real-time information on who is and who is not immunized.

Will the government implement, on an urgent basis, the C.D. Howe recommendations?

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government is working very closely with the provinces and territories, especially in the area of innovative tools that will allow for the digitization of health records, including the work that is done by Canada Health Infoway.

Obviously we continue to ensure vaccine safety, support research, and promote immunization.

As I am sure the hon. member knows, as a former family doctor, the best thing families can do is get vaccinated. Certainly we have all witnessed that it is a miracle of modern medicine and it saves lives.

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**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, British Columbians are being shortchanged by the Conservative government when it comes to essential transportation infrastructure.

The Conservatives are refusing to make building Canada funds available to B.C. Ferries, even though these ferries are the backbone of coastal communities and British Columbians are struggling with skyrocketing fares.

Will the federal government step up and make the building Canada fund available to B.C. Ferries?

**Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Of course, Mr. Speaker, the new building Canada plan is eligible to support the B.C. Ferries organization.

Of course B.C. Ferries as an organization is a provincial responsibility. It is eligible to apply under the program. I would suggest it do that. It needs to submit an application, and the province needs to deem it a priority.

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals and the NDP vote against our important infrastructure initiatives, our government continues to deliver results that are improving the quality of life for hard-working Canadians.

Today, the Prime Minister made an important announcement for Saskatchewan. Can the parliamentary secretary please update the House on this important announcement?

**Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague for his hard work on this important matter for Saskatchewan.

Today, the Prime Minister announced funding for the twinning of Highway 7 in Saskatchewan to four lanes west of Saskatoon to Delisle, which will generate economic and social benefits for the province.

The twinning of approximately 26.5 kilometres of Highway 7 to four lanes, and the construction of 7 kilometres of a new four-lane divided highway north of Vanscoy will create jobs, improve safety, enhance traffic flow, and reduce travel time.

This is yet another example of how our government is delivering for the people of Saskatchewan—I know you appreciate that, Mr. Speaker—and for the people of Canada.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I regularly get requests for help from organizations in the riding of Montcalm hoping for grants to help cover the cost of renovating their buildings to make them accessible. However, the enabling accessibility fund is inconsistent. Calls for proposals are issued at unpredictable intervals, and this does not allow organizations to prepare applications for specific projects in advance.

Will the government consider keeping this program open year-round and letting people know when the program will be accepting new proposals?

**Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question. We certainly should be working to improve quality of life for people with disabilities and mobility issues.

*Business of the House*

That is why we created the fund to help community groups do renovations, and that is also why we created the registered disability savings plan for families with a child with a disability.

I am certainly available to work with the hon. member to improve these initiatives, and I thank her once again for her question.

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**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, law enforcement agencies in Canada work hard to fight organized crime, but police officers have to deal with budget and legal constraints.

In addition, aboriginal women are overrepresented when it comes to violence and tragic disappearances. Here too, the police would like to have new legislative tools from the government.

With Bill C-51, the government is overlooking key safety issues and sidestepping other serious problems.

Does the government think it makes sense to combat terrorism when so many other situations also require expanded legal powers?

• (1505)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a government's primary role is to protect its citizens.

Women in particular are often targeted by terrorists, which is why we need to do everything in our power to protect them as much as men. That is why I invite my colleague to support Bill C-51. If she has any questions on that, I would be glad to answer them.

I was happy to appear before the committee for two hours. This is an important bill that promotes the rights and freedoms of Canadians, while also protecting them.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have bad news and I have good news.

The bad news of course is that, as we just saw, this is the 91st time that the government is imposing time allocation and closure in this session.

The good news is that there are only 200 days before Canadians have their say about this government, throw it out of office and vote in an NDP government on October 19.

[English]

This week we have seen repeated closure through the use of time allocation at record levels, levels that are twice as bad as the previous bad record of any previous government in Canadian history.

We have also seen the denial of witnesses to speak on Bill C-51. Members will remember the Conservatives saying in the House that they would do a thorough vetting of Bill C-51. They are even denying having the Privacy Commissioner come before the public security committee.

There are other things as well. As members know, we have no budget and no plan at a time in Canadian history when Canadian

families are struggling under a record Conservative debt load that is the worst in our history, and we have the worst quality of jobs that we have seen in Canada in a generation.

As well, Conservative scandals are multiplying. We have the Senate scandals. The Duffy trial is starting. We have the Public Works scandal. We have the Centre Jean Bosco scandal. We have a range of scandals.

However, as I mentioned, the good news is that there is 200 days before Canadians can choose to throw the current government out of office.

My question to the government House leader is simply this. What will the government's agenda for the next sitting week be?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really must correct my friend in terms of government. We are on track to balance the budget. We have the lowest debt of any of the G7 countries as a share of our economy on a per capita basis. In fact, Canadians are very well off, particularly when compared with countries that have had socialist governments and that labour under much more severe long-term debt loads.

This afternoon we will continue debating Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, at second reading. As the House knows, this bill confirms that Canada's openness and generosity does not extend to early and forced marriage, polygamy or other similar practices. The debate will continue on Monday, March 23, when we return from the upcoming constituency week.

Tomorrow, before we go back to our ridings, we will complete third reading debate of Bill C-2, the respect for communities act. While the opposition steadfastly refuses to let ordinary Canadians have a say when drug injection sites are proposed in their communities, I am pleased to see our government's legislation to allow for that public input. I know the member was saying that he thinks he values public input, but that is from everybody except Canadians apparently. We will ensure that Canadians do have some input and some say when a request is made to put a drug injection site into their community.

*Government Orders*

On Tuesday, March 24, we shall have the seventh and final allotted day of the current supply cycle, when the House will debate an NDP motion. I would have been really happy if we could have continued the debate that the NDP brought on Tuesday, where they debated the economy, our family tax cut, and the things we were happy to talk about. Unfortunately the NDP House leader decided, pursuant to Standing Order 81(16)(b), that he wanted to cut off the debate after just a single day, once again time allocating a debate by the NDP far more severely than we have ever seen from the government. For 79 times the opposition has failed to allow more than a single day of debate, despite the fact the Standing Orders allow it. In fact, the opposition has taken advantage of the Standing Orders to limit those debates to a mere single day in every single case. That Tuesday the House will consider what will no doubt be yet another time allocated opposition motion, the 80th since the last election.

• (1510)

[Translation]

That evening, we will consider the necessary resolutions and bills to give effect to this winter's supplementary estimates as well as interim supply for the incoming fiscal year.

On Wednesday, March 25, we will have the second day of third reading debate on Bill C-26, Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act. This legislation, which builds on the government's efforts to protect children from sexual exploitation and online crime, will strengthen penalties for child sexual offenders. Child sexual exploitation is unacceptable, and we are determined to do more to better protect our youth and our communities and to punish sexual offenders to the full extent of the law.

On Thursday, March 26, we will start report stage for Bill S-2, Incorporation by Reference in Regulations Act. After question period, we will resume third reading debate on Bill C-12, Drug-Free Prisons Act.

I will give priority on Friday, March 27, to any debates not completed earlier that week.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### ZERO TOLERANCE FOR BARBARIC CULTURAL PRACTICES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill S-7, an act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code and to make consequential amendments to other acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would remind all members that we have now moved to the speeches of ten minutes, and five minutes of questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today and speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. Among other things, this

bill strongly condemns underage and forced marriages, which are deplorable human rights violations that are regrettably taking place with Canadians and may even be taking place on Canadian soil.

A forced marriage is one in which at least one of the two spouses is entering the marriage without his or her free and enlightened consent. There is a clear distinction between forced and arranged marriages. In an arranged marriage, both spouses consent to the marriage.

There have been various studies and reports on forced marriage that demonstrate that this is an unfortunate reality in Canada. In August 2013, the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario published a report that found that front-line service providers in Ontario had encountered 219 instances involving persons in forced marriages between 2010 and 2012. In 92% of the cases, the victim of the forced marriage was a female, and in 30% of the cases the victim was under the age of 18. All of the individuals forced into marriage experienced violence.

A study conducted for Justice Canada that was based on interviews with service providers from Montreal and Toronto in 2008 also confirmed that there were Canadians who had been subjected to forced marriage, and concluded that, "...it is the government's duty to address the problem of forced marriage and to protect those who are threatened with it or are already its victims".

Another study for Justice Canada, conducted in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver in 2010, concluded:

Based upon the estimate from service providers who are dealing with the incidence of forced marriage in Western Canada, our conclusion is that forced marriage is not sporadic in Western Canada. ...half of the respondents said it is "widespread" or "common" or "becoming common".

The victims of this deplorable practice are most often young women, and occasionally men, who are being forced, usually by their own parents or other family members, to marry someone they are unwilling to marry. These young people are sometimes even made to abandon their education for the purpose of being married against their will. Some victims are told that they are going overseas to a relative's wedding, only to discover upon arrival that the wedding ceremony is, in fact, their own. Indeed, Canadian consular affairs has received over 100 requests for consular assistance from Canadians abroad related to forced marriages since 2009.

International studies show that girls who marry early are at far greater risk of experiencing complications in pregnancy and childbirth, including higher maternal mortality rates; experiencing violence in the home; and having their education disrupted. It is clear that underage marriage violates girls' basic human rights and prevents them from fully participating in society.

There is currently no national minimum age below which marriage may be legally contracted in Canada. Federal legislation applicable only in Quebec sets the minimum age at 16. Elsewhere in Canada, the common law is unclear but appears to set the minimum age at 14 for boys, 12 for girls, and sometimes as low as 7 years of age.

*Government Orders*

Bill S-7 would introduce a national minimum age for marriage of 16, below which no marriage may be contracted under any circumstances. Setting the minimum age to marry at 16 across Canada is consistent with current practices in like-minded countries, such as the U.K., Australia and New Zealand. Provincial and territorial legislation would still impose requirements for marriages between the ages of 16 and 18 or 19, depending on the age of majority in the province or territory. Requirements such as parental consent or a court order would provide added safeguards to permit mature minors between the ages of 16 and 18 to marry in exceptional circumstances, such as where they have a child together and wish to marry.

However, parental consent to the marriage of a minor may not be sufficient to protect against forced marriage because it is typically the parents who are forcing the marriage upon the unwilling child. As a result, the Minister of Justice has engaged his provincial and territorial counterparts in a discussion with respect to enhancing legislative measures that fall within their constitutional jurisdiction to protect against forced marriages by requiring judicial consent in all marriages involving a minor.

• (1515)

Last fall, the House debated my private member's motion, Motion No. 505, to request that the government ban the use of proxy, telephone, fax and Internet marriages as a means to spousal sponsorship. Such marriages are not legally recognized when performed in any Canadian province or territory, but they are currently recognized by Canadian immigration law when conducted outside of Canada in the countries where they are legal. The unfortunate reality is that these practices can be used to force individuals into non-consensual marriages.

When I spoke to people in my riding and across Canada about my motion, I gave the example of a young man who lives in Canada, and was born and raised in Canada. What often happens is that he has a cousin in a country where this practice of telephone, fax or Internet proxy marriages is legal. The family of this young man might want the cousins, aunts, uncles and relatives to be able to immigrate to Canada and become new Canadians, which is obviously a desirable and good goal to have. There are many people who are applying for status in Canada.

In this case, what the family would do is force their son to marry by signing a fax or by signing on to Skype and marrying someone who he has perhaps never met and who is in another country. Sometimes, it is someone who is already related, such as a cousin, for example. After that marriage is performed, the family would ask that young man to then sponsor his new bride for a spousal application for citizenship to Canada.

Frankly, this was a huge loophole in the immigration regulations that I believed needed to be fixed. Not only was this a loophole, but the motion would prevent those marriages from being forced. It is just not in line with Canadian values of openness and gender equality. People get married to someone who is not even in the same room at the time. We at least want to ensure that they have met.

To be clear, Bill S-7 is about barbaric cultural practices. It is not about arranged marriages, neither was my private member's motion.

It was certainly a proud day when my motion passed in the House of Commons in December 2014. I look forward to the government amending the necessary regulations in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to protect these young women and men. As I said, this was an important fix that needed to happen.

Speaking of forced marriages, we have seen the tragic consequences of young people who refuse a forced marriage. Some run away and go into hiding. Some are beaten or even murdered because of a misguided belief that their refusal to enter into or continue in a forced marriage has somehow tarnished the family's honour.

On January 2, 2010, a young woman was brutally beaten by her uncle and three cousins in Calgary because she refused to marry a man her uncle had chosen for her. They were convicted of assault causing bodily harm in 2013, three years later.

On April 17, 2009, a 19-year-old woman fled her home in Montreal, terrified because her parents were going to force her to marry a man she did not want to marry. A few months later, on June 30, 2009, that same woman, her two younger sisters and her father's first wife in a polygamous marriage were brought together on the pretext of a family vacation. Their bodies were found in a car submerged in the Kingston locks. This barbaric honour killing of the young Shafia sisters and their stepmother came as a shock to the whole country.

• (1520)

Preventing such tragedies from occurring again is the primary objective of this laudable bill. It contains tools to protect potential victims from an impending forced or underage marriage in the form of specific peace bonds, which can be ordered by a court when there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person will participate in an early or forced marriage or will take a child out of Canada with the intent of subjecting the child to an early or forced marriage. I can talk more about peace bonds later.

Our government will not tolerate spousal abuse in so-called honour killings or other gender-based violence. While the opposition refuses to even acknowledge these practices as barbaric, our government is taking a strong stand against these practices and is leading international efforts to address them. I hope all hon. members will support this important piece of legislation.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take issue with a statement in one of the very last sentences the member pronounced, when she said that the opposition does not find these practices to be barbaric. That is not the case. What we do take issue with is their being described as "cultural".

My questions for the member are these: Does she agree that forced and early marriage and violence against women are wrong, regardless of culture? If so, what does it add to have the word "culture" in the title of the bill? Should it be removed? If it should not be removed, which cultures does the Conservative Party seek to condemn?

*Government Orders*

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Mr. Speaker, while I believe that the member for Charlottetown understands that these practices are indeed barbaric and understands that the short title of the bill refers to the practices being barbaric, not the cultures, as should be fairly obvious, I do want to point out—and I am not making this up—that his leader, the leader of the Liberal Party, who is also a member of the House, has said that “barbaric” is too harsh a term to use in referring to such practices, and “too harsh” is a direct quote.

I am not sure if his leader still has that same stance or if he has possibly changed his mind, but I think most members would agree that these practices are barbaric.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by my colleague on the other side. I had the pleasure of sitting with her on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

First of all, I think the word “barbaric” is very strong and it hints at xenophobia and stereotypes.

Why does my colleague think the government is targeting racial minorities by perpetuating offensive stereotypes instead of implementing constructive measures to prevent gender-based violence everywhere in Canada?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Stella Ambler:** Mr. Speaker, it was an honour to serve on the status of women committee with the member opposite. We did have many conversations about violence against women, gender-based violence, and the actions the government could take to deal with these.

I want to first say in response to the question, as I clearly stated in my speech, that our government will not tolerate the types of cultural traditions in Canada that deprive individuals of their human rights.

Most of the time the victims are women. I want to quote one victim in particular, whom I had the honour to meet. Her name is Aruna Papp. She was a victim of the barbaric practice of forced marriage. She had this to say about the bill:

Forced into an abusive marriage at 17 and unable to leave it for 18 years, I can attest to the fact that a forced marriage is effectively a life of slavery. I congratulate the Canadian government for taking a bold step on behalf of women who have nowhere to turn for help.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to rise to defend the rights and freedoms of women in Canada. As a woman, as a mother and as a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, I believe that no woman should be subjected to gender-based violence. This is not a cultural problem—it is a societal one.

That is why I find the title of Bill S-7, the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, offensive. We have gotten used to the Conservatives' catchy titles, since they love to turn their bills into newspaper headlines, but this one is an alarming racist stereotype. Without even reading the text of the bill, we already know that the government is targeting specific communities that act in a brutal or cruel way, which is what “barbaric” means.

All forms of violence against women are brutal and cruel. We do not need to target a specific community to address violence. Once again, the Conservative government is seeking to please a voter base without worrying about the consequences of what it is proposing.

As I said, I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Witnesses shared their opinions on the provisions of this bill before this committee on several occasions. I would like to draw from what they said to explain why this bill is not the appropriate response to the serious problem of gender-based violence.

With regard to polygamy, part 1 amends the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to specify that a permanent resident or foreign national is inadmissible on grounds of practising polygamy in Canada. The bill provides for the deportation from Canada of anyone who practices polygamy.

My first question is this: will the communities in western Canada who practice polygamy be affected by this bill or is the Conservative government just trying to target immigrant populations? Does the word “barbaric” apply to everyone in this case or does it apply only to immigrant communities?

I am also concerned about the argument that the Conservative government is using to defend this bill. The government is saying that this bill will protect immigrant women. Polygamy becomes grounds for a departure order and for banning polygamist men and women from entering the country.

How can we protect these women if we are deporting them? Where are the provisions to protect them? The government is going to send them back to their own country and wash its hands of them, saying that the problem of polygamy is resolved in Canada. However, it is my understanding that even the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights submitted a report indicating that complementary measures must be implemented to address the polygamy problem. What is the point of those recommendations?

• (1530)

This Conservative government does not even consider the recommendations of its own senators.

Part 3 of the bill amends the Criminal Code regarding forced marriage in order to clarify that it is an offence for an officiant to knowingly solemnize a marriage in contravention of federal law. It also provides that it is an offence to celebrate, aid or participate in a marriage rite or ceremony knowing that one of the persons being married is doing so against their will or is under the age of 16 years.

*Government Orders*

It is clear that everyone in the House wants the same thing: we are fighting forced marriage, which is an attack on the rights and freedoms of women. No woman should be subjected to gender-based violence, which includes forced and underage marriage. However, criminalizing forced marriage by creating a separate offence in the Criminal Code is not a wise solution. In saying that, I am echoing what the Metro Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic said when it appeared before the Standing Committee on Status of Women last month. This organization works on violence against women and fights forced marriage. I want to emphasize that because these are the people we should be listening to as we make decisions about legislation. We cannot draft bills as important as Bill S-7 without listening to the advice of people on the ground.

Women who are forced to marry do not necessarily want to speak out because they are afraid of leaving their family or exposing them to prosecution. Once again, if we criminalize forced marriage, these women will no longer seek out assistance or legal services.

Also, addressing the problem of forced marriage by amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act is a delicate matter. A number of witnesses told us that women who have a precarious immigration status and are victims of violence, particularly by forced marriage, are less protected than Canadian women or permanent residents. Because of the way the system is designed, they can be deported just for being victims of violence.

In addition to this lack of protection there is also a lack of information. Sponsored women who are victims of violence do not report their sponsor for fear of being deported, because they do not know what consequences this will have on their status. Instead of blaming them, as this bill does, we should be creating a process that ensures that women have basic information on immigration rules. The more women know about their rights, the more comfortable they will be speaking out against the violence they suffer.

Every time we talk about violence against women, the organizations and individuals we hear from mention the need to have a national strategy to prevent violence against women. Practically everyone says the same thing: education through prevention must be the focal point of our efforts to fight violence against women. In order to do that, associations and organizations must receive adequate funding and support for their initiatives. They have ambitious, promising programs that could help put an end, in the long term, to all forms of violence, including polygamy and forced marriage, as we are discussing here today.

In closing, I would like to say that people want to be protected and they want to integrate. Unfortunately, this bill targets them and makes them out to be criminals.

• (1535)

The use of the word “barbaric” in the title of the bill categorizes violence against women. It reinforces marginalization and stereotypes. To marginalize is to isolate the people we should be protecting and helping break free of this vicious circle.

I know that the Conservative government has a tendency to turn a deaf ear when we on this side of the House try to make changes to its bills. However, I invite the minister to hold serious consultations on

a wide scale with community groups and experts in order to effectively deal with the problem of sexual violence.

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I very much liked my esteemed colleague's speech.

Over the past few weeks, months even, it seems that the government's rhetoric and what is acceptable in public discourse concerning the marginalization of communities, has no place in a country like Canada. We have the Prime Minister talking about a community as anti-women, and this bill that uses the term “barbaric”—a term first used by the Greeks to mean “strangers”.

Has my colleague heard from cultural communities in her riding and elsewhere that feel threatened and attacked by this government?

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his relevant question.

I can speak from my own experience. I come from what is known as an invisible visible minority community. However, I am visible. I am lucky to be here in the House to talk about these problems and try to stop the Conservative government from leading us down a slippery slope.

I heard from people who are very concerned about the fact that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration was speaking about Canadian values. I was asked: “Ms. Sellah, will we be dealing with the same issue at the federal level—”

• (1540)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member cannot refer to herself by name.

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

I was asked, as the member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, whether I thought that there was a parallel between the charter of values that the PQ introduced in Quebec in 2013 and the comments made by the immigration minister regarding Canadian values.

I could not answer that question because I never thought we would ever find ourselves in such a situation in Canada. The government is criminalizing people rather than trying to help them integrate, talk to them and find out their motives and reasoning so that it can raise awareness and work on prevention. I was truly unable to answer that question because, unfortunately, I cannot read the immigration minister's mind.

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is with regard to the NDP's position on Bill S-7. I understand the New Democrats will vote against the bill. We have expressed concern in regard to the short title, and we will propose an amendment to it. However, there are some actions within the legislation that would seem to have some value, for example, dealing with polygamy, forced marriages, early marriages or domestic violence. It is questionable just how much value there will actually be, but it is progress.

Does the member find there is any value at all in the legislation?

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah:** Mr. Speaker, I am wondering what values my colleague is talking about. I already answered that, for us, Canadian values are freedom, democracy and mutual respect.

The language used in this bill is shocking for some communities who feel targeted. When we talk about values, we need to ask why the government is targeting certain communities. Unfortunately, I get the impression that these communities feel as though they are being singled out whether it is at the provincial, federal or international level. What is more, the government is trying to criminalize people for engaging in certain practices rather than trying to prevent those practices by reaching out to those people, and trying to help them and teach them Canadian values.

[English]

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to stand in debate in this place, particularly on the matter currently before us, Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

[Translation]

I have had the privilege of being the Minister for Multiculturalism for over seven years. During my mandate, I was also the minister of citizenship and immigration for almost five years, during which we introduced important reforms to strengthen Canada's great tradition of openness to the world, pluralism and unity in our diversity.

I often recall that our country, according to McGill University historian Desmond Morton, was founded by those on the losing side of history. This is a very sensitive thing to say, but he talks about the aboriginal peoples; the inhabitants of New France, who lost out in the conquests; the United Empire Loyalists who were on the losing side of the American Revolution and became established in English Canada; and the black loyalists who were freed U.S. slaves. There were also several other generations, such as the Jewish refugees in the early 20th century; refugees from communist regimes, such as the Hungarians in 1956, the Czechs in 1968 and the Vietnamese in 1979; and my ancestors, the Irish who fled the great famine and the Scots, or the Highland Clearances Scots.

● (1545)

[English]

All of these people were, in a sense, the underdogs of history, including our founding prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. Because of that, we have, in our DNA, deeply rooted in our culture, habits and political reflexes across party lines, developed this sense that we have a special vocation among the nations of the world to be a land of freedom that respects cultural differences and that encourages people to celebrate what is best about their cultural antecedents. Today we call multiculturalism, what some refer to as pluralism, which perhaps as a term reflects more respect for people's most deeply grounded beliefs.

We also believe, of course, that freedom of conscience and religion are fundamental freedoms. It is not a coincidence that these are the first freedoms mentioned in the Charter of Rights, because it is through such freedoms that we define who we are and our deepest

commitments as human beings. These are values that are primordial for us as Canadians, but they are not the only values that are.

We also believe as a country that freedom of religion and conscience, respect for cultural diversity, our democratic values, all of these things are rooted in our shared belief in the inviolable dignity of the human person. To quote the late Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, former prime minister, these values are rooted in what we understand to be "the sacred personality of man", and certain values flow from that sense of human dignity.

For example, we believe that in the equality of men and women, as a self-evident principle of our society, some practices, which may be rooted in culture or tradition and seek to treat women as property rather than people, are simply wrong, must be discouraged and, where appropriate, rendered illegal. We believe that to compel women, for example, or potentially even men, boys and girls, to enter into marriages against their will is a fundamental violation of their personal integrity and dignity as human persons. We believe that compelling people to adopt the aberrant practice of polygamy should be discouraged and ultimately prohibited in our law.

I do not believe that the assertion of such absolute principles in our law contradicts the spirit of pluralism that is one of our great defining characteristics. To the contrary, the two support each other. That is to say that I do not believe that our multiculturalism equates to cultural relativism. I believe it is an invitation again to celebrate what is best about our particular cultural antecedents, but it is not a licence to import to Canada practices that are profoundly undemocratic, which are predicated on a denial of the equality of men and women, for example, or freedom of religion and conscience, or the integrity of the human person.

That is why we have proposed Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. I know the short title is provocative and it has elicited debate here. Frankly, that was the point. Mission accomplished.

● (1550)

[Translation]

We wanted to drive home the fact that these practices are unacceptable in our society.

That is why, when I was minister of citizenship and immigration a few years ago, I published the new study guide for citizenship applicants called *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*.

Let us be clear: the Citizenship Act has long stipulated three obligations for permanent residents who want to become Canadian citizens. First, they must reside in Canada for a period of four years; second, they must demonstrate knowledge of one of Canada's two official languages; and third, they must demonstrate a knowledge of Canada, for example, its history, institutions and symbols.

Since the 1970s, an exam has been used to assess citizenship applicants' knowledge of Canada.

*Government Orders*

When I became the minister of citizenship and immigration in 2008, I discovered that the exam to assess this knowledge, as well as its accompanying learning and study guide provided a very superficial overview of Canada. They included virtually no Canadian history and almost no information on our cultural expectations.

That is why I wrote the following in the new guide *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*.

[English]

Canada's tolerance and diversity do not include certain "barbaric cultural practices", such as so-called honour crimes, female genital mutilation, forced marriages, violence against women, and other practices, which we condemn in Canada and which are severely punished under our law.

That was an important message to send. We used the word "barbaric" very intentionally. We realized that it would draw attention, and that was the point. It was a teaching opportunity, an opportunity to raise our concern that we do not want such practices being justified in Canada under the licence of multiculturalism.

The bill before us takes that intention one step further by plugging certain loopholes, which frankly never should have existed, in the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act, and the Criminal Code.

[Translation]

For example, as minister of citizenship and immigration, I learned that families from a polygamous marriage had entered Canada without having declared the polygamous relationship.

[English]

They did not declare their polygamist relations, but they came to Canada clearly in violation of the spirit of our law. These amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act would close those loopholes.

Similarly, this would clarify, under the amendments to the Civil Marriage Act, the requirement for free and enlightened consent and the requirement for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another to avoid, again, polygamy. It would further create new offences for actively knowing or participating in a forced marriage, which is something the United Kingdom and other countries have done, and other consequential amendments.

I believe that this is a reasonable, and frankly modest, sensible series of measures, which Canadians expect to actually strengthen our tradition of pluralism by demonstrating that there are reasonable limits to it.

• (1555)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, 36 years ago, I was in Saudi Arabia. I did not have much of a background in its cultural practices, and when I first heard of the sexual mutilation of women, I was very troubled, as anyone would be. Of course, relative to that, in Canada we have strong laws to protect women from violence, and quite appropriately so.

While I was there, I worked with a number of people closely and got to know their families. In their culture, it was acceptable to have

a second wife. In fact, in their culture, they could have four wives, although most had two.

I cannot imagine any one from any party who would accept the practice of forced marriage. It is offensive to us to have anyone forced into it. However, we have a situation, which the minister spoke to himself a moment ago, whereby people have wanted to come to Canada, and the only way they could was to evade the fact that they had a second wife. When I was in Saudi Arabia, that second wife was referred to as a sister wife. I think that in some polygamous cultures in the U.S. it is the same thing. Now we have the problem of a fair number of people, I would suspect, living in our country with these wives. Does that mean that we will force them to go back and leave this country? People who come here are not looking for tolerance. They are looking for acceptance. Is there room for some of that?

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is my view and that of the government that there is no room in Canada for polygamy, because in its essence, polygamy reflects a regard for women as property rather than people. Polygamist societies and cultures are not predicated on the free will and dignity of women. We believe that there has to be zero tolerance with respect to these relationships.

Typically the pattern by which this would happen is that an individual would come to Canada with a spouse, divorce that spouse in Canada, both of them having obtained permanent residency, and then sponsor a subsequent spouse from abroad, and perhaps do that a third time. Perhaps the person would declare that someone was a sister or something, fraudulently, on their documents. Implicit in that is an act of fraud.

With our typical Canadian humility and politeness, we say that we are sorry, but if people have lied to get into Canada and have lied about a relationship of that nature, there are sanctions for those misrepresentations. Anyone who lies in such a way should lose the privilege of residency in Canada. That is what the law already states. I believe that it is the correct position to take.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Minister of National Defence and Minister for Multiculturalism for weighing in on this. He certainly has a record of accomplishment in the areas of outreach to multinational and multicultural communities in Canada and respect for religious diversity. I do not want to read too much into it, but I sense that he was perhaps embarrassed by the short title of this bill. If not, he should be. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act suggests a much more sweeping set of changes than making illegal most of the practices that are already illegal. Polygamy in Canada is illegal. Lying to receive citizenship is illegal. It is fraud. Most of the measures in this bill are covered by a multiplicity of other acts that Canada already has.

*Government Orders*

I am not objecting to the substance of the bill. Making it clear that polygamy is illegal in Canada, and making sure that young people cannot be in any way lured to another country for a polygamist or forced marriage is all to the good. However, I hope that the hon. minister will forgive me for saying that I find it deeply offensive that so much legislation comes to us for the purpose of bumper stickers. This is one such title, and I would urge him to speak to his cabinet colleagues and make this bill reflect in its title what it is in substance, a bill to ensure that polygamy remains illegal in Canada.

• (1600)

**Hon. Jason Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it is not just polygamy but those who participate in forced marriages or help to arrange them, or female genital mutilation, all of which we consider to be barbaric practices. Yes, it is a strong term. It is a judgmental term, but we do sometimes need to make judgments. We sometimes need to use legislation as a teaching opportunity.

I will be absolutely blunt. When I first came to government and started as minister of multiculturalism eight years ago, for political reasons I would have probably recoiled at the name of this bill. However, my enormous exposure to and close work with the huge diversity of our cultural and faith communities taught me something over the course of time. It taught me that the vast majority of new Canadians believe passionately that there are certain hallmarks of integration into this country that we must all respect, that there is a duty to integrate, and that there are certain practices that are rooted in custom or tradition that have no place in Canada.

It is those new Canadians who gave me the inspiration, the confidence, to speak frankly and to not be encumbered, quite frankly, by political correctness on these matters. It was those new Canadians who asked me why we tolerate these things in Canada, which they fled such countries to escape. They said, "Please do not tolerate female genital mutilation, forced marriages, or polygamy. Please stop this. We see it happening in our own communities". It was women who were victims of forced marriages, including here in Canada, who most strongly motivated the bill.

I want to give credit to the Minister of Health who during her time as minister for Status of Women heard the same message from women, such as Aruna Papp and so many other women, who said to us, "Please take strong measures. Please use strong language. Please condemn these practices. Please close the loopholes". This bill is dedicated to all of those women who were voiceless.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand with pleasure to speak to the bill. I would like to say at the outset that we are opposing the bill. My hon. colleagues across the way may likely fan the flames of fear and intolerance by using such rhetoric as to say we are in favour of forced marriages or polygamy, but I believe that Canadians will see through this distasteful practice and hear our objections for the reasoned and human positions that they take.

I will be addressing my remarks to the more human side of this issue. Using the word "cultural" in these days unfairly creates an image of "other", "them", and "those who are not us". When we go as far as adding the word "barbaric" to "cultural", on top of that, we go back directly to a time of colonialism, to a time when those others were referred to as savages, as barbarians.

We have an obligation as government to be responsible in the type of legislation we bring forward to the floor, and not only to the type of legislation, but to how we communicate that legislation, how we communicate the reason and the need for the proposed legislation. Calling any culture barbaric, directly or indirectly, is unforgivable.

There may be, and there are, some individuals who either alone or in self-identifying groups may engage in violent and despicable acts, barbaric acts, but painting an entire culture with these acts, the acts of a few, has its own inherent dangers. We see this played out on a daily basis on the news where those people of culturally diverse communities are painted with the same brush as the acts of a few. It smacks of arrogance, and it is the same arrogance that fuelled those attitudes of an era that should be long gone.

Do we want to create a safe haven in this country for women and girls who might otherwise be threatened by forced and/or polygamous marriages and, yes, even some of the other distasteful and despicable acts, such as female genital mutilation? Yes, we want to be able to protect women and girls from these sorts of acts. Should we do so by threatening everybody under the sun with imprisonment, including the victims? No.

Canada has laws that prohibit these types of marriages and these types of acts, yet these laws are very seldom enforced. We need to ask ourselves why this is. In the same way that we needed to bring changes to our own laws in regard to domestic and sexual violence in order to make it safer for victims to come forward, we need to do the same thing for the victims of forced marriages, polygamy, and other barbaric acts. We need to create that protection for victims and potential victims of any and every culture, including our own, who may find themselves in these unacceptable situations.

• (1605)

Over the past little while, we have seen the climate of fear and division being created and exploited by the very people and institutions that should be at the forefront of bringing our nation together.

Bill S-7 with its short title, zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act, serves no purpose other than to inflame the fears, shortsightedness, and closed mindedness of a few individuals and brings into question the very nature of what it means to be Canadian.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is in essence the same one I asked another member of his caucus, which is in regard to the bill itself.

We all know that there are serious issues with the short title of the bill, and in good part we agree with many of the comments the members have put on the record with respect to that.

The question I have is more specifically in regard to the content of the legislation. Even though it might make a marginal difference, at best, it is a step forward, albeit a very small step, that deals with the issue of polygamy, forced marriages, early marriage, and to a certain degree, domestic violence. It is not a significant step forward, but it would appear that there is some value to that aspect of the legislation.

Does the member see any value whatsoever in any parts of the legislation? I share the concerns he has in regard to the short title.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** Mr. Speaker, my issue is, and the Minister of National Defence alluded to it as well, that we have laws in place already to deal with polygamy. Also my friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands said we have laws already. Polygamy is already illegal in Canada. Forced marriage is illegal in Canada.

Many of the things the bill purports to want to address are already being addressed, so it seems to me that we should look at why we are not enforcing these more readily and then find out where the holes are in terms of addressing these issues directly.

Again, to paint a whole culture with the brush of “these are the only people who are doing this” is unfair and dangerous.

• (1610)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak today to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. It is great to see so many MPs speaking to this bill.

One of the reasons I got involved in politics from the very beginning was to work on issues like this, to empower women to fight for equality, liberty, and more than anything, an end to violence. Since being elected in 2006, this government and this government alone, under the Prime Minister's leadership, based on our values of pluralism, tolerance, and respect, has acted as one of the loudest, most determined governments in the world in pushing for safe communities and environments for women. We have taken the strongest measures in Canadian history to protect vulnerable women.

We raised the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16 years to protect young people, including girls, from sexual exploitation by adult predators, and we strengthened peace bond provisions concerning those who were previously convicted of sexual offences against children. It might sound like a small thing, but we have also improved the availability of testimonial aids for vulnerable adult victims and witnesses, including women, who have experienced violence and have to go through the justice system. As someone who volunteered in women's shelters in my life before politics, I can say that these measures make a huge difference for victims and women who are at risk of violence.

Human trafficking is a heinous crime that adversely affects women and girls, especially aboriginal women and girls as young as 12 years old. Our government amended the Criminal Code to create specific offences that prohibit the trafficking of persons for any exploitative purpose—including forced sexual exploitation or forced labour—receipt of a financial material benefit from the trafficking of persons, and the withholding or destroying of traveller identity documents to facilitate the trafficking of persons.

These measures, of course, are all designed to protect vulnerable women from these predators, prosecute the traffickers, and prevent these serious crimes and human rights violations. It is also why this government supported the creation of a mandatory minimum penalty of five years in prison for the trafficking of a person under the age of 18.

For all of the Liberals' talk about their support for aboriginal women, it was this government, under our Prime Minister, that after 100 years, introduced matrimonial property rights on reserve to

provide aboriginal women with basic rights and remedies on the fair division of the family home when there is a breakdown in relationship. As well, it was this government that guaranteed people living on reserves the same protections as all Canadians enjoy under the Canadian Human Rights Act, so that aboriginal women also have the same legal protections and supports that are afforded all Canadian women.

These are some of the important actions that our government has taken to improve the legal equality of aboriginal women, but our government is also working to improve the lives of other groups of vulnerable and disenfranchised women in our country. That is why we have introduced Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. It sends a very clear message that harmful or violent cultural practices are unacceptable in Canada. These practices, whether they are gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, early, forced, or polygamous marriage, or of course, so-called honour-based violence, are incompatible with Canadian values and will not be tolerated in our country.

Bill S-7 builds on our government's record of taking very strong action to ensure the equality, safety, and security of all women and girls in communities across Canada by strengthening our laws to prevent and respond to harmful cultural traditions that deprive individuals, particularly women, of their human rights. I am especially proud that this government will not fall victim to political correctness and cultural relativism by ignoring these problems or ignoring the problem of violence motivated by so-called honour. These heinous acts are an extreme and brutal violation of the values that we hold dear, and it is shameful that there are those who encourage them.

It bears repeating, when discussing this issue, that all forms of violence are fully prohibited by the Criminal Code, whatever the motive.

• (1615)

Bill S-7 would amend the Criminal Code to limit the defence of provocation, ensuring that culture could never be an excuse for murder or violence when the victim committed a lawful act that made another person feel so enraged or so dishonoured or insulted or humiliated or ashamed that the person would inflict violence.

The defence of provocation can currently be raised by persons with what are, in my view, warped values who are found to have committed a crime even as serious as murder where they claim that they did so in the heat of passion and in response to what was a wrongful act or insult by the victims themselves that caused them to lose their self-control. If successful in the defence, even though they are found to have committed murder, they are instead convicted of perhaps manslaughter, which has no mandatory minimum sentence unless a firearm is used. By contrast, a conviction for murder carries a mandatory minimum sentence of life imprisonment, with a minimum of 10 years' incarceration before being eligible for parole.

*Government Orders*

The defence of provocation has been raised in several so-called honour killing cases in Canada. It has been raised on the basis that the victim's behaviour, such as choosing one's own marriage partner or dating partner, or even making other personal decisions, such as what kind of clothing to wear, without the support or permission of the father, usually, or sometimes the mother or extended family, amounted to a wrongful act or insult.

This so-called wrongful act or insult, when considered in the context of the cultural community to which the family belonged, apparently would provoke the accused to inflict violence, and maybe even kill, over a sense of damaged honour or reputation. The defence has been invoked in spousal homicides of women in response to legal conduct of the victim, including cases in which the victim was simply trying to end the relationship or said something that the killer found insulting, as well as in cases of real or perceived infidelity.

All Canadians know about some of these very high-profile cases, but what they do not know about is the insidious nature of this kind of oppression that they may not have read about in the paper or the *Ottawa Citizen*. It would make Canadians sick to know that an attempt could be made to excuse a murder because the killer was insulted, embarrassed, ashamed, or humiliated, or suffered some other emotional upset based on the concept of honour. It is unacceptable, of course, to excuse murder that is committed because a person was unable to control the actions or decisions of another person.

In Canada, I think all of us agree that men and women are equal under the law, and the ability to make one's own choices in life is a cornerstone of our democracy. No one deserves to be oppressed or to experience violence because their legal choices are unwelcome to a spouse, a parent or brothers, or by anyone else in their community. Accordingly, Bill S-7 proposes to restrict the application of the defence of provocation so that it would no longer be available to those who intentionally kill another person in response to conduct that was legal.

The harmful practices that this bill seeks to end—gender-based violence; early, forced, or polygamous marriage; and so-called honour-based violence—typically affect women and girls. They are heinous abuses of human rights and have no place in Canadian society.

Our government has been clear on this issue from the beginning. Canada's openness and generosity do not extend to such barbaric cultural practices, and we are sending a very strong message, both to people in Canada and to people who wish to come to Canada, that we will not tolerate cultural traditions that deprive individuals, specifically women and girls, of their human rights. The preservation and promotion of human rights, our deep respect for fundamental freedoms, and a wholehearted commitment to the universal dignity of all persons stand at the heart of who we are as Canadians.

I hope that all members of this House will join me in supporting Bill S-7, which signals to Canadian society and, most importantly, signals to women and girls all across Canada and to the rest of the world that ensuring the equality, safety, and security of all women and girls in communities across Canada is paramount.

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague's speech.

I admit that although I agree with many points, my greatest reservation about Bill S-7 often concerns the surrounding discussion, the way it is presented and even its title, which refers to barbaric cultural practices. All the presentations implied that the Criminal Code does not currently apply to a good number of these situations.

My colleague spoke at length about, among other things, the limit of the defence of provocation for the express purpose of prohibiting honour crimes. The courts have already established that the culturally defined concept of honour does not represent a valid defence of provocation under the Criminal Code.

We have all the means already available in the Criminal Code to fight these practices, and what Bill S-7 will add. However, there is also everything that Bill S-7 does not address. For example, at their arrival in Canada, how do we inform women and young girls, who are often the first victims, of their rights guaranteed under the Criminal Code?

Could we take an approach to this bill that is a little less sensationalist and that focuses a little more on promoting the real rights that women should be aware of so they can exercise them?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member knows full well that when immigrants arrive in Canada, they do learn about their rights. Issues around harmful traditional cultural practices, including female genital mutilation and honour crimes, are very clearly articulated in our citizenship guide. It is very well spelled out and articulated that in Canada those kinds of harmful cultural practices are not to be tolerated and that men and women are equal under the law.

I have been to citizenship ceremonies, as I am sure have many of my fellow MPs, and they have heard exactly that from the citizenship judges. Immigrants do learn what their rights are.

However, most importantly, this is the government that invested in programs to reach out to young girls in the South Asian community, where we know honour-based violence occurs, to help them feel comfortable coming forward if they are feeling any level of oppression. We are now also funding shelters with resources in multiple languages so that those girls who may have any sort of a challenge in understanding English will have resources available to them. We are also providing training across the country to women's shelters that did not traditionally deal with other ethnic and cultural practices so that they can learn about the challenges that some of these young girls are facing.

At the end of the day, not only do we have to support these young women but also send a very clear, unambiguous message that barbaric cultural and harmful practices will never be tolerated here. We are going to shut the door on the opportunity to use this as a defence.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a comment regarding the short title. The idea that one has to incorporate the word “culture” is questionable. We in the Liberal Party have suggested that it be amended out of the short title. Some form of domestic gender abuse has existed in all societies, and there is no need to tie in the word “culture”. I opposed this wording as well with others who spoke on the issue, but to no avail. I would be interested in the member's opinion on that point.

My question is in regard to the first part of the member's comments, when she somewhat glorified the government's approach in dealing with the abuse of women and girls. The question is related to the 1,200-plus aboriginal women and girls who have been brutally murdered or gone missing. Everyone, whether municipalities, chiefs, provincial premiers, or both opposition parties, is calling for a public inquiry—everyone except the current Prime Minister. Everyone is calling for it, and the need is there. If the government and this particular minister are saying that the government is active on this file, why would they not call for a public inquiry?

Then she can perhaps add her comments on the word “culture” in the remaining time.

• (1625)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I am glad that our government is not going to treat this issue with political correctness, because the young girls I have met, particularly in the South Asian community, are very clear about the harmful cultural practices that occur in their own culture.

These are not religious practices but cultural practices. They are harmful traditional practices that happen in the country of origin and they are now happening in Canada. We need to work with these young women and groups within their cultures who are seeking solutions to very tough challenges.

There is no doubt that this is happening and that these are cultural practices that originate not in religion but in culture. They are harmful. Those who are within the culture, women's groups that I have worked with, identify that very clearly.

Therefore, we should call it what it is. We have to face it head-on and work with these women, who call it exactly the same thing we do: barbaric and harmful. These are practices that they are working very hard to eliminate within their own communities. We cannot be ambivalent or ambiguous about this situation. We have to be clear and call it what it is. These are barbaric cultural practices that harm and sometimes kill women and girls, and our government will not equivocate on that.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. 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 Churchill, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Housing.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Consular, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here today to speak to this important bill.

I am a little disappointed. I expected we would be able to find unanimous and enthusiastic support for the bill. I hear the official opposition complaining about the language, which it wants to toy with today. I am concerned that it is perhaps not as concerned about the issues as it is about the wording in the title. The opposition needs to refocus on that.

The Liberals today have at least been consistent, but it is a very strange position to take. The member opposite seems to continually suggest that there is absolutely no cultural component anywhere that creates specific practices. I do not understand why the members would take that position. We all know we have universal challenges. He talks about spousal abuse and those kinds of things. That is a universal challenge, but we certainly are talking about some very specific things.

I am glad to speak to Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. In the Speech from the Throne in October, 2013, our Prime Minister promised that he would ensure that early and forced marriage and other harmful cultural practices, including things like polygamous marriages and so-called honour-based violence, would not occur on Canadian soil. Bill S-7 would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Civil Marriage Act and the Criminal Code in a variety of ways, and it would address these practices.

For instance, Bill S-7 would create new and specific offences in the Criminal Code related to participation in a forced or early marriage ceremony. That includes things like removing a minor from Canada for the purpose of such a ceremony abroad, and establishing a targeted peace bond that could be used in a preventative way before the marriage and its associated harm occur.

Today, I would like to build a bit on what the minister spoke about, which is the proposed amendment to the Criminal Code that would limit the scope of the provocation defence.

During debates in committee proceedings in the Senates, there appeared to be a number of misconceptions about the merits of the existing law. There are good reasons for the proposed law reform, and I hope we can clarify some of those matters this afternoon.

The defence of provocation, sometimes known as the “heat of passion” defence, currently applies only to a charge of murder. It comes into play only if the murder has actually been proven. It is called a partial defence, which means that where it is successful, this defence claim does not give rise to complete acquittal, but rather changes the verdict to manslaughter instead of murder.

The defence of provocation is successful where the murder was committed in response to some sort of wrongful act or insult from the victim that was so strong that it “deprive(s) an ordinary person of the power of self-control”, and where the accused acted suddenly “before there was time for his/her passion to cool”.

*Government Orders*

Although the defence of provocation is only partial, as I said, it provides two very significant benefits to the accused if they are successful in applying for it. First, a conviction for manslaughter as opposed to murder leaves the judge with very wide sentencing discretion. A conviction for second degree murder carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison and strict parole ineligibility. However, a manslaughter conviction carries no mandatory minimum sentence unless a firearm was used, in which case, it would be a minimum of four years. In all other circumstances, manslaughter carries no minimum sentence.

At the sentencing stage following a successful provocation plea, the provoking conduct or provocation of the victim is taken into account again as a mitigating factor that can reduce the sentence. As members can see, the sentencing benefit provided by the provocation defence is, indeed, substantial.

A second benefit of the defence, if it is successful, is that it allows a murderer to avoid the stigma associated with the label of murderer. It is this aspect that we, as legislators, need to keep in mind in reviewing this provision. The law treats some killings as less blameworthy than others and effectively says that murder is not always murder.

Under the current law, which has been in the Criminal Code since 1892, to constitute a provocation, the victim's conduct only needs to be a wrongful act or insult. If the victim had a legal right to do what they did, this is not to be considered provocation, but that exclusion is very narrow. It applies to things that are legally and expressly authorized, such as police officers executing a search warrant.

Provocation is presently considered where the victim's conduct was actually lawful. The defence is frequently raised where the alleged provocation was conduct such as verbal insult or offensive gestures. The proposed amendment would limit provocation so that it could only be raised where the alleged provocative conduct by the victim would amount to an offence punishable by five years in prison or more.

• (1630)

The defence would therefore be available in cases where a person killed in the heat of passion, provoked by criminal offences such as assault, things like verbal threats, criminal harassment, theft or fraud of property over \$5,000, extortion, and a few others. Many provocation claims are in fact based on alleged provocation now of this type of criminal activity.

The kinds of conduct that would no longer be treated as provocation under this act would be things like verbal insults or other types of offensive but lawful behaviour. However unpleasant or hurtful an insult may be, if it is lawful conduct, it should not excuse or mitigate murder or be allowed to do that.

In the debates in the other place, some suggested this proposed reform went too far and limited the defence too much. However, it is reasonable to expect that Canadians can and should be expected to control their reaction to insult and offensive gestures with reactions other than killing the person.

There are two primary objectives of the proposed reform. The first is to prevent the defence from being raised in future honour killing cases, possibly successfully. We have seen examples of young girls

and women who have been killed because they refuse to follow their parents' wishes. This can involve an issue such as dating, or marriage partners, or how to dress. These young people have the freedom in our country to make their own choices. That actually is a fundamental freedom for everyone who is in Canada.

This is not just theoretical. This defence has been raised so far in at least three murder prosecutions where the murder could be characterized as honour based. Thankfully the defence failed in all three of those cases, which some have used as proof that the law is working perfectly and does not need amending. We would argue that this is an overly optimistic view. For one thing, all three cases were appealed on complex questions of law and evidence that included how the defence should or should not incorporate evidence of the accused's culture.

These issues are not definitively resolved by the courts. Despite some discussion of gender equality in a couple of the cases, none of the rulings establishes a matter of law that the defence is excluded in honour killing cases. It remains available to be argued by any person accused and convicted of murder.

If a teenage girl does not wish to marry the person chosen for her by her parents and in refusing their wishes they feel she insults their cultural heritage, community and beliefs, if one or both parents were to react by killing the child, this defence could actually be used. We do not believe it is appropriate that this could potentially be successful.

Our second objective of the proposed reform is to modernize the defence with respect to violence against women overall. It can no longer be used to excuse spousal murders resulting from the offender's violent reaction to the victim's lawful conduct.

There is a long history of the provocation defence being raised and sometimes accepted to excuse spousal murders in Canada. Most disturbingly, this often happens in the context of marriage breakdown. These cases have not gone unnoticed. As one academic has noted in her review of the honour-killing provocation cases:

While it may be true that gender equality is, at a rhetorical level, a fundamental Canadian value and that violence against women is neither accepted nor encouraged in Canadian society, the operation of the defence of provocation in the criminal courts is certainly not exemplary of either of those values.

Canadian judges and juries have accepted the defence where men murdered their current or former spouses, or their former spouses' new partners, in response to other forms of lawful conduct such as verbal insults, questioning paternity, refusal to talk privately following termination of a relationship, and real or perceived infidelity.

*Government Orders*

These cases are very similar to honour killing cases in that women are killed because husbands or other family members reacted violently when they failed to control their behaviour. Women and girls are still seen as the property, in some places and in some minds, of their husband or their families. Their aspirations and desires are subjected to the will of others for their own good.

While feelings of dishonour and shame are experienced at the family or community level in the case of honour killings, they are at the personal or private level in the case of spousal killings.

No one should be able to use the defence that they violently harmed another person because of they were provoked. Our bill addresses this issue in a way that removes that excuse. I would urge all members to work with us and to support this important bill.

• (1635)

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, by the member's own admission, there were three cases and there were no problems in the prosecution of those cases. In fact, as far as I know justice was served in all three.

Why the change in law? Is there not a certain amount of redundancy here?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I explained in my speech that these three cases were argued on very complex issues of law, that this continued to be allowed as a defence and we felt it needed to be removed. We have found a reasonable balance between serious offences that may be considered as part of the provocation, but we certainly do not think things like insulting someone, making a comment, or disobeying is enough to allow someone to use that as an excuse for murdering family members or those close to them.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in his remarks, the member defended the words that are in the short title, and that is one of our sticking points. He particularly defended the inclusion of the word "cultural".

I will ask the question as directly as I can. Which cultures are being targeted? Does he care to name one and if not, what purpose does the word "cultural" serve in the title?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, if the member had been listening earlier, he would have heard one of the ministers talk about the fact that there were certain customs and traditions that were cultural, that were in practice and that were not compatible with Canadian values. We have talked about a few of those things today.

I am sure we would all agree in this place that early and forced marriage, honour killings and genital mutilation are not the kinds of things that Parliament will support in any form. We believe those practices are incompatible. They come out of certain customs and traditions and they are not acceptable in Canada. People need to understand that. Young women, in particular when they come here, need to have the support and the services they need to understand that as well.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for making it clear about the principle being used in the courts today in regard to provocation. I am really grateful he also tackled relativism with regard to the term "cultural". The exact term is being used as a defence, so we are confronting that, as the member mentioned.

I want to ask a question in regard to something that has not been mentioned, at least in the recent speeches. We spent quite a bit of time years ago debating the age of protection and moving it from age 14 to 16. I think many Canadians would be surprised that there is no minimum age for marriage in Canada. Would the member like to comment on that aspect of the bill?

• (1640)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, a couple aspects of marriage are dealt with, such as early and forced marriage and the age of sexual consent in that situation. The whole notion that young women come here or have been taken from Canada to other countries and have been forced into marriage are the kinds of things we can be united on in the House. We can come together and talk about a limit on when people should be getting married. We need to talk about the conditions under which young people might be leaving our country to get married or the conditions in our country under which young people might expect to get married.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues on this side of the House to speak in opposition to Bill S-7.

I have to, as I always do when we get bills with the letter "S" in front of them, note my opposition to having bills derive from the other place. We are elected in this House to represent Canadians; they are not. In a mature democracy all bills should come from the House of Commons, the appropriate place for bills to originate. We see a government that used to talk about political reform and the reform of our parliamentary democracy use this parlour trick over and over again. As a democrat, I object to it and most of my constituents do. I note that in this case, Bill S-7 comes from the Senate and I want to state my opposition to that continued abuse of our parliamentary democracy.

I want to touch on another process issue, and I will give a number instead of a letter this time: 91. It is the 91st time we have had the government invoke closure. We all remember when this government's members were in opposition they decried, opposed strongly and fervently, certainly Preston Manning did, the whole notion of closure and limits on debate.

Today the House leader got up to do his duty for his government and abuse the power it has and shut down debate. It is interesting, because we have present members, we just heard from one, who used to be Reformers. They talked about the importance of debate and the fact that the Chrétien government was always shutting down debate. Now it is water off their backs.

Today, the Conservatives brought in Bill S-7, a bill coming from the Senate into Parliament, which is strike number one against the whole notion of any form of reform of the parliamentary system we have here. Second, they brought in time allocation for the 91st time with this government. It is unprecedented, historic. Those numbers and those letters say everything about the government. The Conservatives have lost their way. I am not sure if they will be able to come back, but it says a lot about principles.

*Government Orders*

The title of the bill is interesting, because we are also debating a very important bill right now, Bill C-51. The term the Conservatives are using is “an act to combat terrorism”. The actual nomenclature for that bill is “an act to enact the security of Canada information sharing act”, which is actually about giving more powers to CSIS and about sharing information, but the Conservatives want to make it sound like it is having an impact on terrorism.

With the bill before us, it is actually the inversion of that. The Conservatives are making a political statement with the title that somehow they are taking on barbarism, as if that is presently an issue in daily life in Canada. It is actually about evocation, and the person who stated it best was the Minister of National Defence when he said that they used that title because they want to educate people. It is kind of interesting. I have never heard before from the government that it would use the titles of bills to educate. I know it uses them often to provoke, and certainly at times in the past to wedge, but the fact that it is using the word “barbaric” to educate is rather fascinating. I did not really understand the minister's lesson other than that the Conservatives wanted to let people know that there are barbaric things going on in our world and they will clean them up. When we actually look at the bill and look at the testimony, it does not measure up at all.

This kind of evocative title does a disservice to the Conservatives' own issue, which might be an important issue. It is an important issue to look at any abuse of anyone, and certainly the rights, the misuse and abuse of the sanctity of marriage. If there is a real issue, it should be dealt with, but when we go to extremes in our language or our rhetoric, it undermines the issue on which we should be focused.

Yes, there are cases in this country of polygamy. There are cases of female genital mutilation and cases of children whose rights are being abused. We were talking about child protection today at the foreign affairs committee and what things we could do to help protect children abroad.

• (1645)

When we get into the business of using language to evoke or, as in the mind of the Minister of National Defence, educate, as if he is going to educate the rest of Canada on this issue, which is interesting, it actually undermines what we are setting out to do. This is where I would like to get into the meat of the bill and what it purports to do.

We just heard the parliamentary secretary answer an excellent, simple question from my friend from Pontiac, which was could he give us examples, certainly the three recent cases, as to where this bill would actually make a difference. To give credit to the parliamentary secretary, he said the case was dealt with within the parameters of the law we have now. The question is, what is this really about?

I think everyone in the House has concerns about abuse of the immigration system, trying to force people into marriages or the practice of polygamy, and it should be dealt with, but I want to enumerate for people why New Democrats are opposed to this bill when looking at the criminal law now.

I know that you, Mr. Speaker, as a practising lawyer and having taught law, will appreciate this. Right now, criminal law already provides resources, irrelevant in most cases, involving forced marriage prior to and after the marriage, as well as in cases of travelling with minors, which we have seen, with the intent to force them to marry, including uttering threats. That is covered off in subsection 264.1(1) with regard to assault causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon, and aggravated assault, sections 265 to 268.

Another aspect of this bill, which the government claims we need is around sexual assault causing bodily harm or sexual assault with a weapon and aggravated assault, forms of intimidation. That is covered under sections 271 to 273 of the Criminal Code. Kidnapping, as it is relevant and cogent to the issue, is covered off in section 279. Forcible confinement, which was referred to by the government as being required, is covered off in subsection 279 (2). Abduction of a young person is covered in sections 280 to 283. Procuring feigned marriage, which is simply forcing someone into a marriage that is not the case, is covered off in section 292 of the Criminal Code.

Removal of a child from Canada with the intent to commit an act outside of Canada, which would be one of the listed offences if committed in Canada, is covered off in section 273.3. What about extortion? That is covered off in section 346. There are a couple more, but I will not go through them all because it would take me longer than the time I have. The one I want to highlight in the Criminal Code is spousal abuse, abuse of a child, and abuse of a position of trust or authority. The aggravating factors are covered off in section 718.2.

The question is: why is this in front of us and what is required? There is a case to be made that more needs to be done in terms of resources to help the people who might be victimized, and that is where we have to focus. That is not being provided. The government is cutting budgets in these areas.

I will leave the House with the following. It is interesting that the Conservatives are dealing with this case, but at the beginning of this month, I attended a protest outside the immigration office made up of people, who were legitimate actors, trying to get their marriages recognized. They are having to wait two years because of a lack of processing by the government. I would like the government to take a look at that.

What about the legitimate people who are waiting here, who are inland marriage sponsors, and having to forgo their families, having to pay for their own health care, et cetera? While the Conservatives are looking at this issue, I hope they are seized with those who are legitimate actors, who have legitimate marriages, who are legitimately recognized, and who the Conservatives are ignoring. Hopefully, they will turn their attention to that issue, because these people are forgoing the opportunity to provide Canadians with their talents and plans to have families, et cetera.

• (1650)

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the official opposition for his presentation. Part of his presentation, the first three or four minutes, did not deal with the actual issue but dealt with process, so I have a process question based on his speech.

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This is the second day. There were speakers on the previous day on this item. There has been a time allocation. There is another day coming on this. This is second reading, meaning once this moves through the House it will go to committee and then will come back to the House for third reading. Before it goes to committee, there will be 20 official opposition time slots. We will hear 20 speeches from the New Democratic Party on this.

I have been in the House all day, from the first part of this. I have heard nothing new from the NDP on it. From any speech it is always the same issue, which is fair. However, is it not time that people would expect, even people from Ottawa, that Parliament would move things forward? We have had lots of discussion. We know what the issues are. We will take it to committee and bring it back to hear what we heard at committee. That is the process. It is an appropriate process. Time allocation is more than appropriate for this size bill.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, I did not mean to get the member's dander up. I was simply pointing out the fact that the government has absolutely abandoned the principles of democratic reform when it has bills coming from the Senate and time allocation, 91 times limiting debate.

I have to add another little caveat. To his saying that we are repeating our points of debate too often, each person gets to decide how they articulate their points. I brought in new points. I was talking about the fact that the government has failed those who are legitimately married who are waiting for the government to process things. However, it is interesting, coming from a party that every day has the same talking points reiterated over and over. However, that is for him to figure out.

When it comes to democracy, the best thing is debate and there should not be time limits on it, certainly not 91 times. That is just not the way it should be in the House.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat a question I have asked other members who have spoken. We have indicated we have very strong concerns with Bill S-7. In fact, we want to see an amendment that would take the word "culture" out from the short title. I understand the NDP is very much concerned about that issue also.

We also note that the bill, in terms of substance, does have some very positive aspects and attempts to deal with polygamy, forced marriages, early marriages, and to a certain degree, domestic violence. This is not in any huge, dramatic or profound way, it is somewhat of a small step. I underline the word "small". However, there does seem to be some value in the actual content of the legislation. Does the member see any value in the content of the legislation if we put aside the short title?

• (1655)

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting. I should note that on Bill C-51, unlike the Liberal Party, we are stating exactly where we stand. We are against Bill C-51. It is for reasons around oversight, et cetera, but also because we are taking a stand. We are not saying that later on when we are government we will fix it all. That is a little arrogant. We have heard that from the Liberal Party before. At some time it has to take a stand in this place. I know it is difficult for the Liberal Party, but it has to take a stand.

We have taken a stand on Bill S-7. We are opposed to it at second reading. I have just laid out why. Polygamy is illegal, if he is worried about that. I know it is tough for him because Liberals are saying they do not like Bill C-51. However, they are going to put forward amendments, knowing that they are going to be defeated and then they will vote for it. If someone can actually understand that I give them credit.

Here we go with the Liberal Party again trying to find a niche where it can actually open up its own rationale. It is just not working. That is why I am proud to be a member of my party. We take a principled stand and we stick with it because that is where our values are.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

Our government has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to making Canadian communities safer for everyone, including by taking action to prevent and address violence against women and girls.

As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration explained before the Senate committee, all violent acts committed against women and girls are indeed barbaric. It is this Conservative government that has taken, and will continue to take, action to address various forms of violence against women and girls.

There is increasing evidence that Canadians are being subjected to forced marriages. Our government has provided international assistance to individuals, including Canadian children, who were taken abroad for forced marriage.

While forced marriage can affect men and boys, it is predominantly a form of gender-based violence targeting women and girls. It is clear that more needs to be done to tackle these unacceptable practices, which may violate basic human rights, cause harm to the victims, and create barriers to full participation of women in our free and democratic society. These forms of gender-based violence are being addressed by Bill S-7.

The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act contains important legislative measures, which would protect potential and actual victims of forced marriage. These measures would also provide protection against other harmful practices, which predominantly and adversely affect women and girls, such as polygamy and so-called honour-based violence.

In short, Bill S-7 proposes to set the absolute minimum age of marriage at 16 in the Civil Marriage Act and entrench in that same act the requirements that a marriage involve free and enlightened consent and that all previous marriages be dissolved prior to entering into a new marriage.

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Bill S-7 would introduce changes to the Criminal Code to also criminalize active participation in an underage or forced marriage ceremony and removing a child from Canada for these same harmful purposes.

This bill would also expand the peace bond regime in the Criminal Code to provide for a new peace bond, which could be ordered by the court to prevent an early or forced marriage from taking place in Canada or prevent a child from being taken out of the country to be forced into a marriage.

Another important change to the Criminal Code proposed in this bill is to limit the defence of provocation so that it could not be raised in cases involving so-called honour killings and in many spousal homicides where the alleged provocation can often consist of verbal or other types of insults. Our government will not allow for a life to be harmed or taken with the excuse that one was provoked.

Finally, this bill puts forward important changes to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which would specify that permanent residents or foreign nationals are inadmissible to Canada if they are or will be practising polygamy in the country, adding to the current provisions that prohibit the practice of polygamy in Canada.

I would like to focus my remaining remarks on the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code that would help prevent forced marriages from occurring in Canada or with Canadians taken abroad.

In some of the media coverage and debates related to Bill S-7, there appears to be a number of misconceptions about the provisions of the bill related to forced marriage, which I would like to address.

The first misconception is that the bill would ban individuals in a forced marriage from immigrating to Canada. Let me be very clear. The only immigration-related reform proposed in this bill relates to the introduction of a new inadmissibility in relation to the practice of polygamy. As regards forced marriage, this bill proposes to codify the requirement for free and enlightened consent to marriage in the Civil Marriage Act and to introduce additional measures in the Criminal Code to prevent forced marriages from occurring and to sanction those who would harm others by forcing them into marriage.

• (1700)

The second misconception that I would like to address relates to the scope of the proposed criminal offence of participating in a forced marriage ceremony. The proposed offence would not criminalize mere passive attendance by a community member or relative at a forced marriage ceremony. Canadian criminal law does not impose liability on persons who are merely witnessing wrongdoing and failing to stop it. An individual who is merely at the scene without any active conduct that is specifically directed toward helping the marriage ceremony occur would not be subject to prosecution.

The law would require active participation in the ceremony, such as acting as a signatory witness, driving an unwilling bride to the ceremony, or restraining that individual so that she does not flee. Moreover, this active participation has to be coupled with actual knowledge that one of the parties to the marriage is marrying against

his or her will. Mere suspicion or speculation that the marriage is forced would be insufficient to trigger criminal liability.

The third myth that I wish to dispel relates to concern that the victims of forced marriages would be forced to criminalize their family members. Our government has heard the concerns expressed by some victims that, although they do not want to be forced into marriage, they also do not wish to see their loved ones criminally prosecuted. For this reason, the bill is structured specifically to provide victims with a means of preventing a forced marriage from occurring in the first place through a process that would not involve a criminal prosecution.

That process would be a new and targeted peace bond. Peace bonds are preventive court orders contained in the Criminal Code. When individuals are subject to a peace bond, they have not committed a crime and so will not have a criminal record unless they choose to violate the court order. As a result, the bill would make it possible for a victim to get the protection she or he requires to prevent the forced marriage ceremony from happening without having to criminalize family members. The peace bond process would also not require the child to take an application to court, as the application is usually made by a police officer on behalf of the person who is afraid.

Finally, I would like to address one last misunderstanding related to the forced marriage provisions of this bill. Some people have claimed that this new offence is unnecessary, as the current criminal law is sufficient to address the use of force to make people marry against their will. While it is indeed true that much of the conduct employed to force someone into a marriage is already covered by one or more of the existing criminal offences, such as assault or unlawful confinement, this bill would fill a gap in the law specifically with the goal of preventing forced marriages from happening.

For example, currently child protection officials are often unable to intervene to protect a child from being removed from the country to protect him or her from a forced marriage abroad because the marriage itself is not a crime under the law. This new offence would make it clear that celebrating or assisting at an unwanted marriage within which sexual offences are expected to occur is in itself a crime, as it is a violation of the individual's basic human rights to choose whether and whom they will marry. Consequently, attempts to force someone into a marriage against his or her will or to remove a child from Canada for a forced marriage would be sufficient to warrant the imposition of a peace bond. This change could save lives, save young children, and avoid traumatizing them. One victim is too many. Nothing can justify the status quo, and closing our eyes on this is unacceptable.

It is this government's priority, under our great Prime Minister, to put an end to the victimization of Canadians, notably women and children from vulnerable segments of society. The legislative measures proposed in this bill are sincere and important steps to address and prevent specific forms of gender-based violence that require prompt action. It is simply unacceptable for any woman or girl in Canadian society to be subjected to the violence and abuse typically encountered in a forced marriage.

I urge all members to support this bill in the House of Commons.

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• (1705)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is related to the term “culture” in the short title. My colleague and I have questioned the need for it. The government seems to respond by saying that it is the right thing to do because it does not want to be politically correct. It wants to be bold.

I wonder if the member would be bold. If she believes that it is about culture, can she provide a list of those countries where she would suggest that this cultural definition applies? Can she list off some countries for us today?

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Speaker, Canada has been very bold in addressing the issue of early and forced marriage. It was our former foreign minister along with our Prime Minister at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2013 who put early and forced marriage on the agenda at those meetings.

I have been in countries where I saw girls as young as 12 with babies on their hips. I asked them if the baby was their brother. They said, “No, this is my baby”.

I have spoken to doctors in other countries, who told me that these young girls come to their hospitals in such a state of far advanced delivery. They have lost so much blood. They are in such terrible medical condition that it is beyond the ability of the doctors to save their lives.

Our government is bold in its attempts to put maternal, newborn, and child health on the agenda for the millennium development goals. It is spending Canadian taxpayers' dollars to save moms and babies around the world.

Why would we not seek protection for girls and women right here in Canada?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as I already said, Bill S-7 is yet another example of the Conservatives' tendency to present sensationalized measures that do not actually meet the intended objectives or that have negative consequences for women and children.

Why does the Conservative government insist on criminalizing parents and spouses, when women and girls have clearly indicated many times that this is not the right way of addressing these problems and it is not what they want?

• (1710)

[*English*]

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I was very privileged last July to attend the Girl Summit in London, England, that was put on by Prime Minister David Cameron. I was privileged to be there with our foreign minister and to listen to the many presentations by women from multiple countries around the world who want the issues of early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation brought to the table and spoken about on the agendas of world fora. They are against these practices in their own countries. They want the world to address them.

I was proud to be there, and I was proud to be a participant in those discussions and talk about what Canada is doing, first of all to protect girls and women in our own country, and second, to put these

issues on the agendas of world fora so that they can be discussed. They are probably not issues that are comfortable conversation for many people, but it is important that we have these discussions because they are the things that are going to save the lives of moms, girls, and babies around the world.

That is what we want to see. That is what Canadian taxpayers' dollars are doing around the world. Why would we not want to save the lives of girls right here in our own country?

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today about unintended consequences. As we look at the bill, we think about the intended consequences, but I want to talk about the unintended consequences.

Intention is important. If we look at the intention of the bill, we look at the short title of the bill, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. That is offensive. I am not going to get into how offensive it is. There is the fact that it is xenophobic, that it is politicizing the issue of gender-based violence, and that it is reinforcing prejudices and stereotypes we have about certain cultural groups.

However, if we look at the intention of the bill, I would think the intention is to prohibit certain acts, such as forced marriage and polygamy. Maybe some of those are laudable goals, but then we have to open the legislation and read it and figure out if the intention would be met. It may be or may not be, but what are some of the unintended consequences, because that is equally important. We do not want to do things that we did not intend to do. There are many unintentional consequences in the bill that would actually victimize or re-victimize women, in particular, and children.

Some of the unintentional consequences are that we could criminalize the victims of polygamy. We could criminalize them, and that could lead to the deportation of children. Is that our intention? Is it our intention to criminalize victims? The bill could lead to the separation of families. It would further victimize women. I do not think those are intended consequences, but that is what the consequences of the bill would be.

Imagine being in the position of being forced into marriage. This is a woman who does not have control over her life, a woman who is a victim of family pressure, who is the victim of family control and community pressure and control. If we intend to end that practice, if we intend to help that woman, what would we do? We would think about sensible, reasonable policy responses. What is the policy response to end a practice like that? We would want to make it as easy as possible for women to come forward. We would get rid of all those barriers to prevent them from keeping it secret and to prevent these practices from going underground. We would want to make it as easy as possible for women to come forward and as easy as possible for friends or family members of that woman to come forward and go to the authorities.

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If we are looking at a reasonable and sensible policy response, we would also want to reach out to certain communities to raise awareness of forced marriages, to reach out to service providers and government officials who might actually be called upon to assist in the prevention of forced marriages. That is a reasonable policy response. Let us make it easy for those government officials or those community leaders to come forward. A reasonable policy response would be to make it obvious that there are supports in place for these women if they do come forward and that we will help them. We do not want to make things worse, but we would with the bill, because it has so many unintended consequences.

The bill makes no provision to allow women who are conditional permanent residents to remain in Canada if their polygamist partner is deported, so why would they come forward? Why would they come forward, knowing they that they will be deported? UNICEF has talked about the fact that the bill would impose criminal sanctions against minors who attend or celebrate or help organize a forced marriage. It is incredible to think that they would be impacted with that kind of criminal record.

Because some of these penalties include criminalization, some women and children are not going to want to come forward. Why would they come forward when they would be at risk of seeing their parents end up with a criminal record, or their spouse, or other family members, people from their community? How do they come forward knowing that someone is going to be charged? They should be able to come forward to get out of a situation if that is what they need to do. However, this bill does not have any of those supports we are talking about. All it would do is drive these practices underground.

• (1715)

Imagine a women in a forced marriage. She is under the control of her family or her husband, and she is without a voice. She wants to leave, but if she does, she may be deported. I cannot imagine having to make that choice. Would I live with the violence and continue to live in that situation?

The parliamentary secretary spoke earlier about having travelled around the world and seeing terrible conditions in other countries, terrible situations for women. Is that what we are doing here, risking these women being sent back to those conditions? That is the risk they are going to take if they come forward. They could see their parents end up with a criminal record. What woman is going to come forward?

If we are looking at sensible, reasonable policy responses to this problem, I think it makes sense to look at what other countries are doing. Denmark, as members have probably heard, actually tried something along these lines. We should learn from their record and learn about what is happening.

In 2008, Denmark actually made it a criminal offence to force anyone to marry, but six years later, no one has been charged under this law. That is relevant.

Even more relevant, we have heard from the head of the National Organization for Women's Shelters. She thinks that not only has the law not had any impact on protecting young women from being

forced into marriage but that it may have backfired and is actually driving the problem underground.

A reasonable policy response is to make it clear to women that we will be there to help them and we will support them, not that there will be criminal charges, not that there will be deportation.

We can look at other countries as well. I know that some of my colleagues have talked about the situation in the United Kingdom. If we are making legal changes, if we are looking to enact legal changes, we have to have those supports in place as well.

We have had testimony. We have had experts come forward to say that any legal challenge has to go hand in hand with more funding for women's organizations, which are really on the front lines providing services to isolated and stigmatized victims to help them navigate the criminal justice system and the civil justice system and to help them access safe housing and welfare support. All of those things are needed if we are going to enact legal changes.

Unfortunately, this bill is another example of a pattern of the Conservatives. They want desperately to have their tough-on-crime buttons they can wear: "We are tough on crime and we stand up for victims". They love this narrative. They love the narrative so much that they do not actually care if they make it tougher for victims.

What is the pattern I am talking about? In 2012, we had new measures introduced to crack down on marriage fraud, including the requirement for a sponsored spouse to live with the sponsor for two years or face deportation and possible criminal charges. I remember that debate. I remember the fact that the NDP talked about this leaving women vulnerable to abuse. Why would women come forward when the law says that they have to stay with that person for two years or lose permanent residency? Why would they come forward?

We have seen private member's bills that talk about fact sponsorship or proxy sponsorship for marriages, but that is not about forced marriages. The people using that form of transmission are really refugees, by and large. By cutting off that access, we are limiting family reunification. That is an unintended consequence. We need to think long and hard about what these kinds of bills will do and the fact that they re-victimize victims.

I will finish up with the fact that I heard our Minister of National Defence, the former minister of citizenship, and multiculturalism, saying that sometimes we need to act with legislation.

• (1720)

Maybe during the question and answer period I will have the opportunity to list some of the legislation, because we have the legislation in place we need. The Criminal Code is fulsome. It does not have the unintended consequences we are talking about here. It gets to the root of the problem.

There is no way I can support this bill in good conscience.

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**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have asked several members a question regarding the value of the legislation. The last person I asked was the member for Ottawa Centre, and he seemed to take exception and questioned the Liberal Party's principles. I would ask the member to reflect on her colleague's answer.

The New Democratic Party, on numerous occasions, has actually voted in favour of legislation going to committee, ultimately to be amended. The New Democratic Party often moves amendments at committee, even though they all get defeated, but ultimately it goes to third reading, and it still votes in favour of the legislation.

The only party that has actually been consistent with regard to its approach to legislation, at least on the opposition side, is the Liberal Party. The questionable behaviour might be coming from the New Democratic Party.

Could the member explain why it is that the member for Ottawa Centre believes that the NDP has never voted for something its members did not support going to committee or second reading, or could she answer the question I have posed to other colleagues? Does she see any value whatsoever in the content of the legislation, not the name?

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between voting for a park and trying to get amendments at committee and human rights. There is a difference between Sable Island and the fundamental rights and revictimization of women.

I am not going to stand here in this House and support a bill that is about revictimizing women. We need to stand up for these women. We need to provide support for these women. We do not need to vote for this at second reading and hope that we get an amendment later.

The bill is fundamentally flawed, and there is no way we can compare it to the other pieces of legislation we have supported to get them to committee.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by my colleague from Halifax.

She mentioned the specific case of Denmark, and I thank her for that. Criminal provisions that are too broad generally have the opposite effect to what was intended and, as a result, it is no longer possible to enforce a decision or a law.

Under the Conservatives, we have become accustomed to this sort of thing, whether it was with Bill C-10, which criminalizes the possession of more than six marijuana plants, or with Bill C-36, which criminalizes the purchase of sexual services. The consequence is that the tougher the criminal sentences we impose through these laws, the less viable it becomes to implement them, and therefore the police are much less likely to enforce them.

Can my colleague elaborate on the fact that further criminalizing something we condemn, in this case forced marriage, will only serve to ensure that women will not try to escape that situation because the consequences would be too severe?

• (1725)

[*English*]

**Ms. Megan Leslie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The Denmark example is a very good one, because in six years, we have not seen a charge.

We have a Criminal Code here in Canada. We have sections under the Criminal Code under which we have seen charges for uttering threats, assault causing bodily harm, and sexual assault. We have seen charges laid under those provisions. These provisions exist already. They work already.

If we actually want to stop these kinds of acts, like forced marriage, which 100% the NDP would like to stop, then let us look at what works. What works is making sure that women can come forward, making sure that they are safe, and making sure that they are not criminalized, revictimized, or deported because they came forward. I mean, a person would have to have no heart to think that this is actually going to solve the problem of forced marriages in Canada.

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in August 2013 the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario released a report on forced marriages. It reported that 219 cases of forced marriage happened between 2010 and 2012 in the province of Ontario alone. All of these individuals experienced a form of violence. Most were young and from a variety of cultures and religions. Furthermore, the majority of victims were unaware of their rights in a situation of forced marriage. These victims were often forced into marriage by a family member, in most cases by their own parents.

I am the father of a 14-year-old daughter, whom you know, and these statistics explain why I speak today in favour of the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. This bill is consistent with a variety of actions by our Conservative government to help the victims of these horrible situations.

This bill would amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Criminal Code, and the Civil Marriage Act to provide additional protections for Canadians against certain practices involving violence against women and girls. I will be supporting this bill and I would urge my colleagues to do so. This government is taking steps to strengthen our laws to help ensure that no young girl or woman in Canada becomes a victim of early or forced marriage.

In addition to a having a career in international law, I am a dedicated advocate for human rights and have spoken in this House, in my riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, and abroad to urge action against oppression. I have also had the privilege of serving communities across Canada through my former role as chair of Food for the Hungry International Federation. I also joined with others to create the Canadian Constitution Foundation, which to this day advocates for the constitutional rights of Canadians. In my role as MP, I have defended the rights of Canadians incarcerated overseas. This past October, I stood with the member for Mount Royal publicly to call on the Iranian government to spare the lives of three Iranian prisoners on death row. I have also travelled to Pakistan and Iraq with One Free World International on human rights missions.

Whether as lawyers, MPs, or fellow human beings, we who have a voice and a platform have a responsibility to speak on behalf of those who cannot do so themselves. We must stand up for the victims of barbaric practices such as the ones targeted by this bill. My constituents stand for human rights, and I stand together with them.

Today I address a key misconception that has arisen during debate on the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. Critics of this bill say Canada does not need a new law imposing a minimum age for marriage. However, the bill would raise the lowest age at which anyone can marry in Canada to age 16, with no exceptions. Currently, federal law sets age 16 as the lowest age for marriage, but only in the province of Quebec. As difficult as this may be to believe, elsewhere in Canada there is no federal legislation, and the old pre-Confederation common law applies. This means that girls can marry at age 12 and boys at age 14. Raising the lowest age that anyone can marry to age 16 for all those who live in Canada would create a long-overdue new national standard that would increase protections for children, as no marriages could occur below that age.

During the debate, some asked why the Government of Canada is proposing to lower the minimum age of marriage to 16. They believe that provincial law already sets a minimum age higher than 16, such as 18 or 19.

This is a serious misunderstanding of the law, understandably caused by confusion, because constitutional jurisdiction over marriage is shared in Canada. Both the federal and the provincial legislatures have jurisdiction over complementary but different aspects of marriage.

Under the Constitution, only the federal Parliament can set the lowest age for anyone to marry across the country. The provincial legislatures can determine the age at which a child becomes an adult, and adults can consent to marriage for themselves with no additional requirements. The age of adulthood, or majority, is currently set at either age 18 or 19, depending on the province. For young people between the lowest age for marriage and the age of majority, provincial law requires the consent of the child's parents to any marriage. In the case of younger children who are closer to the lowest age for marriage, the provincial law may also require the approval of a court or restrict such marriages to situations in which the young couple is expecting a child.

• (1730)

As we can see, provincial and federal laws work together, with federal law setting the lowest age for anyone to marry and provincial laws adding requirements for marriages above that age until the child becomes an adult and can consent for himself or herself.

Because the constitutional powers are complementary, it is not possible for provincial laws to set the lowest age for anyone to marry. The bill would raise the current lowest age for anyone to marry up to age 16 for all those living in Canada. Provinces and territories would continue setting additional requirements for mature young people who wish to marry between that federal minimum age of 16 and the age of majority as established by the province or territory of residence.

Under private international law rules, the lowest age for anyone living in Canada to marry would apply wherever in the world that

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marriage is conducted and registered. In other words, the bill would also extend protections to Canadian children under the age of 16 who are taken out of the country to marry or who are married through telephone or proxy marriages overseas while they remain physically present in Canada.

The provisions of the bill would protect children and should be fully supported by the House.

We must not forget the powerful, positive, egalitarian aspects that accompany our citizens' general respect for various cultures. Canada is focused on accepting and accommodating people from all different backgrounds, religions, races, and ethnicities. Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to the belief that all citizens are equal. It ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, take pride in their ancestry, and have a sense of belonging. I continue to believe that acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures.

The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages cross-cultural understanding. However, this acceptance and understanding does not extend to harmful cultural practices that victimize people. Our Conservative government is taking a strong stance against the harmful practices of early and forced marriage. We are leading international efforts to address these practices as a violation of fundamental human rights.

I hope all my colleagues will support this important piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech. He focused mainly on underage marriages and the forced marriage of people who are too young.

He pointed out that the only place where provincial legislation sets out an age of consent for marriage is Quebec. None of the other provinces have anything like that because they use the common law system.

Given that common law is part of the British tradition, can my colleague explain why the short title of this bill is the Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act to end barbaric practices?

Is he telling us that the British common law tradition is a barbaric practice? It sure looks that way to us. What is the intent behind the use of the words "barbaric practices" for a legislative measure in the British common law tradition?

• (1735)

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the question the member for Saint-Jean asked is very sincere and interesting. His question puts the debate in a historical and cultural context.

Still, things have changed a lot. In our modern culture, it really is barbaric to force a young woman to marry someone. Most of the people here agree on that, and that is why my colleagues and I hope that the New Democrats will support this bill.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, within the content of the legislation there are a number of issues that deal with polygamy, forced marriages, early marriages, and domestic violence, to a certain degree. As I have indicated before, it is a very modest step forward. We see it as that, and the Liberal Party will be supporting the bill going to committee.

However, there has been a great deal of concern expressed in regard to the title. One member of the Conservative caucus seemed to imply that it is meant to be provocative because it wants to be educational. Does the hon. member believe that government should be using provocative titles that might take away from the content of the legislation, that it is okay to use the short title because it could be used as an educational tool? What are his thoughts in that regard?

**Mr. John Weston:** Mr. Speaker, the real issue here is what we are doing to advance the rights of individuals whose rights are being ignored and violated. There are young people who are being forced to marry. They are people as young my daughter and the children of people in this chamber. That is truly a barbaric practice.

It is important for us to convey what we are doing through the titles of our legislation. It is certainly critical for us to make sure that we are standing up and giving a voice to voiceless people. That is what we as parliamentarians ought to do, and that is what this bill proposes to do. That is why I am glad the Liberal caucus will be supporting it.

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure and pride to rise today in my place to speak in support of Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

I have been a member of Parliament now for almost four years for the great riding of York Centre. I was born and raised in the riding of York Centre, and now I am raising my family there. It is probably one of the most ethnocultural ridings in Canada.

We have the largest number of Russian-speaking people of any riding in the country. We have one of the largest populations of Filipino people, one of the largest populations of Vietnamese people, one of the largest populations of Hispanic people and one of the largest populations of Jewish people. Plus, we have ethnic representation from virtually every other imaginable ethnicity of which we can dream. That is a wonderful thing, and that is what makes Canada such a great country. York Centre is merely a microcosm of our great country of Canada.

We are a nation of immigrants. We are all from somewhere else, and we come here because Canada represents this great country of hope and opportunity, yes for ourselves but, more important, for our kids. People come here because they want to escape racism and persecution. They want a better life for themselves and, more particularly, for their kids so they can achieve all the hopes, dreams and aspirations possible for a human being.

I rise today and speak about the various ethnicities and ethnocultural representation we have in our great country of Canada. We are this country of diasporas. When I am in my riding of York Centre, I am privileged to go to a different event almost every night that is ethnocultural based. Sometimes I go to two, three or four events in a night.

All these ethnic groups are different. They all celebrate something different, representing their own culture. However, what they are doing is the most Canadian thing we can ever imagine. They are celebrating where they come from, but what they are most proud of and what unites them all, notwithstanding where they originally come from, is that they are proud Canadians. They are proud of our Canadian values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They take great pride in that. Whenever I mention the word "Canada", bar none, we get a standing ovation because everybody wants to celebrate being Canadian. They know the value of what it is to live in our great country of Canada, and they know what they left behind. Yes, they can celebrate their culture and their differences, but they know at the end of the day they are most proud of being Canadian.

That is why it is so important we pass Bill S-7. As a country, it is inconsistent with our values, and we will not tolerate allowing people into it who will practise barbaric acts. People say that the title of the bill is provocative. Yes, it is intentionally so because we want to label these acts as barbaric.

That is unlike the leader of the Liberal Party who, a few years ago, had a problem with the word "barbaric". When Citizenship and Immigration Canada put out a guide for new Canadians, it used the word "barbaric" in the guide, and it referred to certain acts like female genital mutilation and forced marriages for young women. These acts were declared barbaric, and the Liberal leader went to his Twitter page stated his objection to the use of the word "barbaric". He said that it did not take into account cultural sensitivities. He said that there were different cultures out there that were inconsistent with the values that we had in Canada, but that we nevertheless must respect those values, and such barbarism must be respected. He took umbrage with that word. However, when the Liberal leader was confronted by many Canadians who objected to his objection of the word "barbaric", he said, "Perhaps I got tangled in semantic weeds".

● (1740)

He said, and this is the best, that the government should use the words that make "an attempt at responsible neutrality". We are not in the neutrality business. We are in the business of promoting the values of Canadians, what Canadians take pride in. As I said earlier, we take pride in our Canadian values and stand up for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law because we are proud of our country and we will not accept people who come to our country and want to practise barbaric acts.

The opposition says that the bill would put it underground. It is underground right now. A woman cannot go to a hospital and ask to have her genitals mutilated. We as a country are taking a stand. We as a government are saying this is wrong. Yes, the legislation serves an educational purpose and a pedagogical purpose because we need to send a strong message to those people who would dare think that in our great country of Canada these barbaric practices are acceptable, because they absolutely are not.

I would hope the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party would not engage in their moral relativism and think that there is nothing right and there is nothing wrong, that everybody needs to debate and everything is a gray area. No, there are certain rights, imperatives and things that are right and wrong, and barbaric practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour killings are wrong. We take a stand against that as do Canadians. We know where Canada stands.

The Canadian people sent us here to do a job. We take that job very seriously. We are honoured to have that responsibility. We have a responsibility to the Canadian people to ensure our country is protected.

We are sending our armed forces to northern Iraq to fight against ISIS. What is ISIS doing? We have seen it burn human beings alive. We know it takes little girls from their towns and use them as sex slaves and sells them into slavery. It cuts off the heads of women, children and men. We have sent our armed forces there, along with a coalition, to fight against this objectionable behaviour, to fight against these thugs and barbarians. We do not want this in Canada.

The Canadian people have spoken. The Canadian people have made it clear that we will never—we have not in the past, we will not now, and we will not in the future—accept these barbaric acts. We will never do it, and we stand firm in that. Our government is representing the views and beliefs of the Canadian people by introducing this legislation.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is indeed a great deal of ignorance and misunderstanding in my colleague's remarks, including what he said about the Canadian army's actions in Iraq. Unfortunately, he failed to mention the situation and the chaos created in Iraq by American intervention. Nor did he mention the fact that intervention in Libya, for instance, destabilized that country even further, and as a result, the situation in Libya is now completely out of control. Iraq is also a country out of control.

Before explaining that a simple intervention can restore peace and order in a country, he should look at the history and the background that led to the situation. This speaks to his lack of understanding of the problems of the Middle East. I, on the other hand, being an immigrant myself, know a little more about what he is talking about.

I would like him to explain how further criminalizing the aspects that we want to limit will achieve this objective in practical terms. In fact, as we have seen, the opposite always happens.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, it is the epitome of ignorance to stand and cast aspersions on and call another member of Parliament names. I take great umbrage with that. I thought he was a better person than that, but evidently he is not.

In answer to his question, clearly the member could not even follow the line of debate. He does not know we are talking about Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. He went off on some tangent about something in the Middle East.

### *Government Orders*

What I think would be acceptable to the NDP, which seems to engage in this form of relativism, is if we named Bill S-7, the tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act. I am sure that would make those members happy.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not going to talk about the bill since we said we are going to vote for it.

Nonetheless, I would like to talk about its title. When I was studying literature at university and it came time to write essays and choose titles, I learned that a title should always reflect the text that followed.

This is not some tabloid we have here. This is a bill and it is serious. Imagine reading this 10 years from now. A bill must not be emotionally charged. It has to be neutral and impose certain rules on certain things.

I find this title to be far too emotional and provocative. I will vote for this bill, but in committee I would choose a more neutral title that does not pass judgment on the bill itself.

• (1750)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, that is quite typical of the Liberal Party. We have seen that for many decades in the House. The Liberals do not support Bill C-51, but they will vote in favour of it. This goes back to the times of Mackenzie King, the times of conscription if necessary, but not necessarily conscription.

We have the Liberals once again getting up and saying that they are going to support the bill but they have a bit of a problem with the title.

This is not a university paper. This is not a college essay. We are in the Parliament of Canada, representing the Canadian people who sent us here, the Canadian people who stand for Canadian values. Those are the people we represent.

The people have told us that they will not stand for barbaric practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, sexual assault, and we have put this into the legislation. I ask the opposition parties, the NDP and the Liberals, to get on board, support us and represent the wishes and will of the Canadian people.

**Mr. Chungsen Leung (Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to this bill. I am pleased to have an opportunity today to speak in support of Bill S-7, the zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act.

In the Speech from the Throne in October 2013, our government promised that it would ensure that early and forced marriage and other harmful cultural practices, such as polygamous marriages and so-called honour-based violence, do not occur on Canadian soil.

*Government Orders*

I might add that it is within my living memory that in our east Asian cultural tradition there were polygamous marriages. I can still remember my grandparents having a polygamous marriage, because that was the society of that time. However, over time, over the last two generations, that has changed. We can change it.

Bill S-7 delivers on that promise. The zero tolerance for barbaric cultural practices act demonstrates that Canada's openness and generosity does not extend to early and forced marriage, polygamy, or other types of barbaric cultural practices.

Canada will not tolerate any type of violence against women or girls, including spousal abuse, violence in the name of so-called honour, or other mostly gender-based violence. Those found guilty of these crimes are severely punished under Canada's criminal laws.

This bill would establish a national minimum age of 16 for marriage to protect our most vulnerable in society, our children, from early marriages. The minimum age of 16 for marriage currently only exists in federal legislation pertaining to Quebec. As a result, the common law applies to the rest of Canada, which is usually interpreted as a minimum age of 14 for boys and 12 for girls, but could be as low as 7. This bill would now set 16 as the minimum age for marriage across Canada.

The Civil Marriage Act would also be amended to codify two existing legal requirements for a valid marriage. Currently, these requirements are legislated only in Quebec: the legal requirement for free and enlightened consent to marriage, and the requirement for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another. Consent is truly the most critical aspect of a lawful marriage.

This amendment would make it clear that no Canadians should ever be forced to marry against their will and complements certain amendments to the Criminal Code, which I will discuss.

The requirement for ending an existing marriage prior to entering another is consistent with section 2 of the Civil Marriage Act and the longstanding Criminal Code prohibition against bigamous and polygamous marriages.

Also in relation to polygamy, this bill proposes amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act to specify that a permanent resident or foreign national is inadmissible on the grounds of practising polygamy in Canada. Under the current immigration law, non-citizens can only be removed in cases where there is a criminal conviction for practising polygamy or where there is a finding of misrepresentation.

To eradicate this practice on Canadian soil, this bill would prohibit both temporary and permanent residents from practising polygamy in Canada and provide for the removal of non-citizens who practise polygamy in Canada without the need for a Criminal Code conviction or a finding of misrepresentation.

Coming back to the issues of early and forced marriage, this bill proposes several amendments to the Criminal Code to better prevent Canadians from being victimized in these ways. The proposed amendments in this bill fill a gap in the existing legislative scheme by creating offences that focus on the active participation in the forced or underage marriage ceremony itself.

The bill proposes two new offences that would extend criminal liability to anyone who knowingly celebrates, aids, or participates in a marriage ceremony where one or both of the spouses is either under the age of 16 or is marrying against his or her will. This would cover both those who conduct the marriage ceremony and those, such as family members, who have full knowledge that a marriage is forced or involves a child under 16 and actively participate in the marriage ceremony. However, to be prosecuted for this offence, a person would need to have engaged in some conduct specifically directed toward helping an early or forced marriage to occur.

The proposed offences address the social harm caused by the public sanctioning of these harmful practices. Studies have indicated that the vast majority of victims of a forced marriage are subjected to violence within that marriage. Similarly, girls who marry early are at far greater risk of experiencing complications in pregnancy and childbirth, including higher maternal mortality rates, experiencing violence in the home, and having their education disrupted.

Underage marriage violates girls' basic human rights and prevents them from fully participating in society.

• (1755)

These two new offences would be punishable by a maximum of five years' imprisonment. The bill also proposes to make it an offence to remove a child from Canada for the purpose of a forced or underage marriage outside of Canada. This government is aware of disturbing cases of Canadian children being taken abroad for forced or early marriage.

Child protection officials who believe that the child would be removed from Canada for a forced or underage marriage currently lack the requisite legal tools to intervene and prevent the child's removal from Canada. The bill would change that by adding the new offences related to an underage or forced marriage ceremony to the list of offences in the provisions that makes it a crime to remove a child from Canada.

I am confident that these proposed amendments would help prevent and deter the removal of children for such harmful practices and effectively punish those perpetrators who violate the law.

Moreover, the bill has prevention measures to protect vulnerable Canadians and residents from early or forced marriage.

The bill also proposes to introduce specific forced or underage marriage peace bonds to allow potential victims to seek protection against a pending forced or underage marriage. An order under the new peace bond provision could specifically prohibit people subject to the order from making arrangements or agreements for the forced or underage marriage of victims; require people subject to the order to surrender passports in their possession; prohibit them from leaving the country or taking a child out of the country; and require them to participate in a family violence counselling program.

Finally, in the area of violence motivated by so-called honour, it bears repeating that all forms of violence, whatever the motive, are fully prohibited by the criminal law. There is no need to create specific offences for honour-based violence.

The defence of provocation has been raised in several so-called honour killing cases in Canada on the basis that the victim's behaviour such as choosing one's own marriage partner or making other such personal decisions for oneself without a family or a husband's approval amounted to a wrongful act or insult that, when considered in the context of the cultural community to which they belonged, provoked the accused to kill due to a sense of damaged honour or reputation. To date, the defence has not been successful in so-called honour killings in Canada, however, the defence remains available to be raised in similar cases in the future.

Canada will not tolerate early and forced marriage and other harmful practices taking place in our country.

• (1800)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 6:00 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP)** moved that Bill C-641, An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, *meegwetch*. Tonight it is with great humility and honour that I rise to open the debate on Bill C-641, an act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Before we start tonight, I would like to recognize that we meet on unceded Algonquin territory, and I want to thank the Algonquin people for allowing us to be here tonight. The fact that tonight we meet in this city in this august chamber on this unceded territory is important to recognize in the context of the bill that we are about to debate.

The history of this territory and how it came to be is so Canadian in many ways. This territory was not conquered in war, nor was it bought from its rightful owners or rented. Unlike large parts of Canada, there was no treaty signed, either historic or modern. As in some parts of Canada, we saw settlers come in to make this territory home while pushing indigenous peoples of this region to the edges of society.

New communities formed beside old ones. Villages became towns, which eventually became this city that we now call Ottawa, our nation's capital. This is a beautiful city with vibrant communities that speak to the diversity of this country. But even with all that, we cannot forget that this city is built on unceded Algonquin territory, and I thank the Algonquin people for that again.

[Translation]

This is the paradox that we see in many shapes and forms all across Canada. It is a large part of our history and one that we cannot

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ignore because it is never too late to do the right thing and work toward reconciliation. It is never too late to return to the nation-to-nation relationship that our country was founded on. It is important to remember our history and where we have been, so we can know where we need to go. It is in that spirit that I introduced this bill and bring it to this august House for due consideration.

Before getting into the substance of this debate, I would like to thank a few people who have brought this topic into this House previously. I would like to start by thanking my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe, who introduced a committee report concurrence motion on May 14, 2008. She moved that the House adopt the third report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The report stated:

That the government endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007 and that Parliament and Government of Canada fully implement the standards contained therein.

By adopting that motion, Parliament expressed its support for UNDRIP. That was an important first step.

I would also thank two former members of Parliament who introduced similar bills in previous Parliaments: my former colleague from Victoria, Denise Savoie, and the former member for Churchill, Tina Keeper. The work done before us was very important and helped get us where we are today. I sincerely thank both of them.

[English]

June 11, 2008, was an important day in our nation's history, especially for those of us like myself, who survived the residential school system. On that day, the Prime Minister rose in the House to apologize on behalf of the Government of Canada and on behalf of all Canadians. He made a promise. He promised "a new relationship between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians".

That was a big promise to make. It is one that, I would argue, he has fallen short of, so far. However, as I just said, it is never too late to do the right thing, and I hope that my colleagues across the way view this bill as exactly what it is, which is an opportunity to bring Canada closer to that constitutional reconciliation that we need to ensure a better future for all of us who call this land home.

Let me start the discussion on this important bill with a statement that I hope all of my hon. colleagues can agree with. Indigenous rights are human rights. *Je répète, les droits autochtones sont les droits de la personne*. This should not be a shocking statement to make in 2015, but sometimes it feels as if it is shocking to utter such a truth.

Canada has a proud tradition of supporting human rights instruments of all sorts from the United Nations. On its website, the United Nations has a long list of universal human rights instruments ratified and passed by the UN over the years. They include instruments that protect the rights of women, children, older persons, and people with disabilities, to name just a few. All of these rights are human rights.

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Included in those universal rights instruments is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the protection of those rights. It is clear that in the vast majority of countries around the world, indigenous peoples' rights are human rights, yet despite the solid global consensus, the Conservatives have said that the UNDRIP is aspirational. In the past, they have tried to insinuate that it is not consistent with Canadian law.

I have never heard the Conservative government refer to any other human rights instrument that protects the rights of women, children, or people with disabilities as aspirational or attempt to undermine their legitimacy. If women's rights are human rights, if children's rights are human rights, and if the rights of the disabled are human rights, surely there should be no debate that indigenous people's rights are human rights.

Even the former aboriginal affairs minister, the hon. member for Vancouver Island North, was quoted in the media in 2013, saying that the government believes “that this document can be interpreted within the context of our own legal framework and the Canadian constitution”.

Why the mixed messages, may I ask? If the government truly believes that this document is aspirational, is it endorsing it with no intention to implement it? That is the question. To deliberately do that would be a terrible example of the government acting in bad faith, which is saying a lot, given Canada's history with respect to treaties and the rights of indigenous people.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

I am very proud to say that, for 23 years, I had the opportunity to participate in the process that led to this declaration. In fact, I was one of the few who participated in the process from beginning to end. I was also proud that some of the things that people in my home territory, Eeyou Istchee, experienced influenced the principles that are now in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Our history in northern Quebec is unique, but I think we have many good examples of reconciliation to share with the rest of Canada. I am proud of the support that many aboriginal governments, provincial officials, unions and other civil society groups across Canada have expressed for this bill. Still, I am especially proud that governments of first nations and municipalities in my riding have expressed support for Bill C-641 through resolutions passed by their local councils. I am proud of that because we have moved forward together by employing the principles of partnership and co-operation set out in the peace of the braves that we signed in 2002. Today our region is stronger because of that.

Those same principles are part of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Last month, the mayor of Val d'Or, Pierre Corbeil, stated the following:

We are on Algonquin land near Eeyou Istchee, Cree land, and we have coexisted quite harmoniously with those two first nations for [more than] 80 years... We support measures that can make our ways of doing things even more harmonious. We applaud this.

● (1810)

[*English*]

I believe that when we implement the United Nations declaration, we will see many of the same positive effects all across Canada and make our country stronger for all of us.

The other advantage that UNDRIP will help bring to Canada is greater certainty in regards to indigenous rights in Canada. It is important to remember that, under Canadian law, no rights are absolute but are relative, and this is equally true for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. All rights are balanced against the rights of others, which is something that UNDRIP specifically lays out, among other provisions, in article 46.

We also need to remember the decisions taken by the Supreme Court of Canada and how they factor into indigenous rights in this country. The crown has a duty to consult and accommodate aboriginal peoples. Further to that, in 2004, in the Supreme Court decision of the Haida Nation v. British Columbia, the court added that the crown's duty to consult would require “...full consent of [the] aboriginal nation' on very serious issues”.

In the Tsilhqot'in case this past summer, the court used the term “consent” in nine paragraphs of its ruling and “the right to control the land” in 11 paragraphs of the decision. The court added that the right to control means consent must be obtained from aboriginal title holders. This is entirely consistent with the articles found in UNDRIP, which talks specifically about free, prior and informed consent.

These duties laid out by the Supreme Court have not been seen as giving a veto to first nations, and Bill C-641 does not go any further on that matter than the Supreme Court of Canada already has.

[*Translation*]

I must repeat that important point: this bill does not go any further than the Supreme Court has already gone, and its decisions are consistent with articles found in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Some conservative pundits have erroneously stated in the past that if we implemented the UN declaration, specifically the articles that speak about free, prior and informed consent, it would give indigenous peoples a veto over all development, our economy would grind to a halt and it would wreak havoc on the land like a plague. Those comments are misinformed, misguided, wrong and amount to nothing more than fearmongering of the worst kind.

Since I am running out of time, I will close with a quotation I read when the United Nations General Assembly adopted this declaration. I have spent 30 years trying to end discrimination against indigenous peoples. I have worked hard to prove how wrong people's prejudices are. I am proud that after spending 23 years at the United Nations, we were able to deliver the declaration to the UN General Assembly and to see it accepted there. I still remember the words that Ban Ki-moon said in August of 2008:

[The Declaration] provides a momentous opportunity for states and indigenous peoples to strengthen their relationships, promote reconciliation, and ensure that the past is not repeated.

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I agree completely with that statement and that is why it is so important to remember our past, so that we do not repeat the mistakes we made then. This bill offers all Canadians a path forward, towards reconciliation and a better future for all of us, for our children and all the generations to come after us. If we do the right thing and pass this bill, we can finally put to rest another outdated argument of the past and start to rebuild that nation-to-nation relationship that our country was founded on.

• (1815)

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-641 is my extended hand, through you, to all Canadians. These our extended hands for reconciliation.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

Despite the existing treaties and agreements between the governments and aboriginal peoples, the Conservative government has always refused to meet its legal obligations and consult the aboriginal communities.

Does my colleague think that the bill he is introducing could improve this situation?

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question.

For far too long in the history of this country, the successive Liberal and Conservative governments have always opposed the rights of the aboriginal peoples. This must stop.

My bill proposes reconciliation in this country. Under the Department of Justice Act, we have a duty to ensure that the bills we pass and introduce in the House are consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, we still do not have the equivalent for the rights under section 35 of the Constitution. That is what my bill seeks to correct.

It is high time that we take this path of reconciliation between the aboriginal peoples and all Canadians.

[*English*]

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear friend from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou. During the course of his presentation tonight I could not help but think of our departed friend, Jack Layton, and the belief that Jack had in our country and its ability to become so much more, particularly with respect to the situation faced by so many first nations, Métis and Inuit people.

At the end of his speech the member spoke of an offer, of a possibility of true reconciliation for the country. When I observe, because of where I live in the northwest of British Columbia, first nations people fight for their rights and title, not only are they fighting for the rights and title of their particular people and nation, but they fight on behalf of all of us for a sense of decency and fairness in the way we view our history, we reconcile our present and move forward into the future.

I must thank my friend for his work on this over so many years and the place he is taking today in our House of Commons. I take

much personal satisfaction in being associated with him and the work that he does. If Canada were to take this offer, what could we do with it? What could we offer, not only first nations people but each other, in a much more prosperous and unified country?

**Mr. Romeo Saganash:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my dear friend and colleague for that important question. I have worked on these issues for more than 30 years now. When I speak to Canadians throughout our country, many of them tell me that these issues are so complex and complicated for the ordinary Canadian. However, the good news is, they do not have to be. If there is good faith on the part of governments to settle these issues, it is possible.

There is one good example of that. I do not know if you have ever taken the time to read the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, Mr. Speaker. It is a 500-page document. It is a very complex document, but it took one year to negotiate, because there was good faith and because we had no choice.

That is the path where I want to take the House. I am not saying this as an aboriginal person, but as a parliamentarian. We have to uphold the rule of law in the country, in particular as it relates to the rights of the first peoples in our country. That is where I want to go. I invite all my colleagues in the House to do the same.

• (1820)

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak to the proposed private member's bill put forward by the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, which seeks to ensure that all Canadian laws are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also known as UNDRIP.

As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, I have had the pleasure of interacting with aboriginal leaders across our country. This has given me a deep and real appreciation of aboriginal rights and interests and the current issues aboriginal Canadians are facing today.

It must be said at the outset that our government is dedicated to protecting aboriginal rights in Canada. Indeed, Canada already boasts a unique and robust legal framework through which aboriginal rights are protected. It is against this backdrop that I have no choice but to reject Bill C-641 and to urge all members in the House to do so as well.

More than just lip service, we have enshrined the rights of aboriginal peoples in our Constitution, one of the only countries in the world to do so. As my hon. colleagues will know, aboriginal and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act and reaffirmed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Moreover, our government has also issued a statement of support for the principles of the very document at the core of this bill, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which are consistent with our own commitment to continue working in partnership with aboriginal peoples to improve the well-being of aboriginal Canadians.

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However, we have also been clear from the outset that while we support the general principles behind the declaration, there are several portions of the document with which our government has grave concerns, and we have articulated those concerns clearly to Canadians and to the international community, particularly as they relate to the concept of free, prior, and informed consent found in Article 19 of the declaration, which reads as follows:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.

While we continue to support the principles of UNDRIP, the problem is that the member from the New Democratic Party is asking the House to take an aspirational, non-legally binding document and enshrine it in Canadian law. Beyond practical concerns, which I will get to momentarily, this proposal is simply impossible to support in view of Canada's existing legal and constitutional framework. Our government is working to achieve the ends of UNDRIP, honouring aboriginal rights, within the structure of Canada's unique constitutional framework. The fact of the matter is that we have made more strides in this than any government in Canadian history.

I remind the House that in July 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples released a report following his visit to Canada. In it, he said, "Canada's relationship with the indigenous peoples within its borders is governed by a well-developed legal framework...that in many respects are protective of indigenous peoples' rights".

I could spend the rest of my remarks highlighting our accomplishments as they relate to the protection of aboriginal rights and interests, and there are many—the number of treaties our government has passed, legislation with respect to human rights, and the protection of women on reserve—but for the benefit of the House, I would like to spend the remainder of my time today explaining why the passage of this bill should be opposed.

At its core, the legislation seeks to ensure that the contents of UNDRIP are enshrined in Canadian law. As mentioned earlier, our government has significant concerns with certain aspects of UNDRIP, particularly Article 19. As I am sure you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, our government has several fundamental issues with both the principle and the wording of this clause.

To begin with, aboriginal rights in Canada, entrenched in section 35 of the Constitution and further defined by the Supreme Court of Canada, identify a duty to consult for government and industry. The passage of this bill would effectively replace this duty to consult with a duty to seek free, prior, and informed consent. This means, despite what the member has said, that this would provide first nations with a veto over any sort of legislation or development that concerns them. This would have a significant impact on legislative initiatives as well as on Canada's economy.

In the strongest terms, our government rejects this notion. Unlike the NDP, our government believes that it was elected to serve the interests of all Canadians and that we should develop and pass legislation and initiatives that are in the public interest of and would benefit all Canadians.

● (1825)

Despite efforts from the opposition, our government will continue to act to fulfill the honour of the Crown and our constitutional obligations. However, it would be irresponsible to give any one group in Canada a veto over these decisions. Moreover, article 19 is not even clear in its implementation. While it would demand that our government seek consent from aboriginal Canadians through their own "representative institutions", it provides no direction on who that is in reference to.

We know from the circumstances surrounding Bill C-33, the first nations control of first nations education act, last year that the Assembly of First Nations, or any other aboriginal representative organization for that matter, cannot claim to speak on behalf of or in the interests of all first nations peoples. It is clear that many first nations chiefs believe they have the sole authority to make decisions, be consulted and provide consent on behalf of their band of first nations. The logical conclusion, therefore, is that what is being proposed here is to provide a de facto veto over government legislation to each one of the 633 first nations chiefs in the country, not to mention the fact that Inuit and Métis leaders would presumably be required to provide their consent as well.

It is difficult enough to find agreement on what exactly it means to fulfill the duty to consult, and I have difficulty imagining what it would take to reach agreement on which parties would have the right to provide their consent. I submit that it would be nearly impossible. Not only is it unclear who needs to provide the consent, it is unclear what they would need to provide consent on. According to the language in the bill, aboriginal Canadians would have a veto over any piece of legislation brought forward by a Canadian government. To be clear, through this initiative, the NDP wants to provide that veto to all first nations across the country on any law or bill that this government wants to implement.

We can look at examples of where there is broad agreement where change should be made even from first nations. I think of the Indian Act as a prime example. Everyone agrees that this is patriarchal legislation that is holding first nations back from achieving their full potential, but no one agrees on how or the process by which we should reform and repeal this act. As a result, nearly 140 years later we are still stuck with it.

Unfortunately, it is not just the New Democrats who support this idea of a veto. At their 2014 biannual convention, the Liberal Party adopted a resolution that urged a next Liberal government to implement UNDRIP. Furthermore, former Liberal leader Bob Rae was recently quoted as saying that it would require consent, not just consultation, for mining projects in the Ring of Fire to proceed.

*Private Members' Business*

In the lead-up to the next election, the contrast has never been clearer. Our government supports jobs, growth and long-term prosperity, while the opposition parties support policies that have the potential to cripple our economy. While we acknowledge and uphold aboriginal rights, our government understands, unlike the Liberals and the NDP, that these rights must be balanced against the rights of other Canadians.

As long as the Conservative Party is in power, our government will continue to govern in the interests of all Canadians, and we will reject giving a veto to any group as is proposed by Bill C-641. It is for these reasons our government cannot support this bill.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-641 would require that in consultation and co-operation with indigenous peoples in Canada, the government take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws in Canada would be consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The declaration is an expression of the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, and sets out principles of partnership and mutual respect that should guide the relationships between states and indigenous peoples.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of indigenous leaders from Canada, such as Chief Wilton Littlechild, Grand Chief Edward John and so many others, without whom this groundbreaking document would never have been realized.

In fact, the principles laid out in the declaration are similar to Canada's existing legal duties to meaningfully consult and, where necessary, accommodate aboriginal communities before adopting or implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect their inherent and/or treaty rights. In fact, it codifies what indigenous peoples across the country know is necessary, expressed as "Nothing about us without us".

• (1830)

[Translation]

We need to realize that there is still a lot of work to be done in order to meet the urgent needs of aboriginal peoples in Canada and ensure that aboriginal and treaty rights take on their full meaning and become part of an enforceable framework.

[English]

Unfortunately, since coming to power, the Conservative government has pursued a paternalistic and non-consultative approach with indigenous peoples in Canada, going so far as classifying them as adversaries in terms of resource development.

The education gap is widening in terms of both funding and outcomes, housing shortages are becoming more acute, water and waste water systems are in crisis, and tragic gaps in first nations health outcomes are continuing unabated.

The clear frustration of aboriginal peoples is understandable, given the litany of broken promises, the complete lack of progress on issues of vital importance to them, and the refusal of the government to fulfill its legal obligation to consult on matters that may impact their inherent and/or treaty rights.

[Translation]

There is no doubt that the federal government is responsible for healing relations with the first nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada, and those relations must be based on the principles set out in the the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP.

[English]

The Liberal Party of Canada has long expressed support for these principles, and as the parliamentary secretary noted, passed support of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at our Liberal policy convention in 2014. We continue also to urge the government to move forward with its implementation. We think implementation requires federal leadership across all government departments and across all jurisdictions. All levels of government must understand the principles in this declaration that Canada signed on to.

The Liberal caucus will therefore be supporting the bill. The declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, well-being, and rights of the world's indigenous peoples. It addresses both individual and collective rights, cultural rights, identity, and the right to education, health, employment, language, and others.

The declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007, with an overwhelming majority, when 143 states voted in favour and only four voted against, with 11 abstaining. Unfortunately, Canada was one of the four countries that initially rejected the declaration.

[Translation]

As is the case with many other international issues, the Conservatives' obstructionist approach in this case is further tarnishing Canada's reputation on the world stage.

[English]

Subsequent to that UN vote, all four states that initially rejected the declaration have endorsed it. Australia endorsed the declaration in 2009, the U.S. indicated its endorsement in 2010, and New Zealand joined with its endorsement in that same year.

In 2010, Canada also seemingly joined the international consensus by issuing a statement of support for its principles. Unfortunately, the Conservative government has done nothing since that statement to implement the principles in the declaration. As we heard from the parliamentary secretary, it does not even believe most of what it signed and has consistently used the excuse that it is merely aspirational in nature.

Certainly, in an order paper question that I tabled in this House, the response from the government was very clear. When asked what it was doing to implement the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, the answer was pretty well nothing. Nothing, because it is aspirational. Nothing across government departments. Nothing in terms of dealing with the provinces, territories and municipalities, as all levels of government must understand and honour this international declaration.

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While it is true that UN declarations are generally not legally binding, they do represent the evolution of international legal norms and reflect the commitment of states to make progress toward specific shared goals while abiding by certain principles.

Further, as noted by the Native Law Centre at the University of Saskatchewan:

The Declaration did not create new rights for Indigenous peoples—but expanded upon existing human rights law and clarifies how those general human rights protections apply to Indigenous peoples.

Even if the government sees this document as merely aspirational, it is time to move forward with tangible actions to support achieving those aspirations. I am particularly disappointed to hear from the parliamentary secretary that the government will not be supporting this private member's bill.

Just last year the current government rejected the UN Indigenous Peoples World Conference outcome document because of its call to implement the declaration. The 2014 UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples brought together over 1,000 indigenous and non-indigenous delegates to discuss the realization of indigenous rights. The outcome document calls on member states to take:

...appropriate measures at the national level, including legislative, policy and administrative measures, to achieve the ends of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The outcome document also affirms provisions in the UN declaration that decisions potentially affecting the rights of indigenous peoples should be undertaken only with their free, prior and informed consent. This seems to be the issue the government takes issue with. It is so disappointing that it did not understand that the declaration really insists on people moving forward on that. If it is aspirational, it means it still has to move forward and make some action that demonstrates an understanding of what has been signed.

The Conservative government refused to even send a minister to the UN World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and then rejected the outcome document. This government seems to take particular issue with the principle that decisions potentially affecting the rights of indigenous peoples should only be undertaken with their free, prior and informed consent.

As the parliamentary secretary said, article 19 states that countries “shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned...to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them”.

Article 32(2) states that countries “shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned...to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development...”.

The practical implications of the concept of free, prior and informed consent are not dissimilar to the legal duties already imposed on governments by treaties and now enshrined in our Constitution.

My message to Canadians is that true reconciliation can only be achieved if we understand the history, the culture and the rights of first nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada. It is a process that we

called “Idle? Know more!” It is something that colleagues here need to be part of, in terms of how we can go forward with as my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou has said, in order to achieve true reconciliation.

I encourage all of us here in this House to take special time with the users guide and parliamentary handbook that has been developed on DRIP, and I hope we will move forward together in spite of the present government.

• (1835)

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise in the House this evening to speak in support of one of the most important pieces of legislation that has ever come to the House. This is the second time the NDP has brought this bill forward, and I am incredibly proud to support the work of my friend and colleague, the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

If the Government of Canada were to implement the principles set forth in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we would see a sea change in the relationship between Canada and the first peoples of this land. We would be living in a new era of respect and dignity for indigenous and non-indigenous peoples alike, as defined by the nation to nation relationship that first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples deserve.

It is shameful and telling that Canada was one of the last state parties to become a signatory to the UNDRIP. It took three years of constant pressure to get Canada to sign. Those who were there have described the tactics that our government used to try and neuter some of the articles in the declaration. In particular, the government attempted to erase article 11, section 2, under which indigenous peoples have the right to free, prior and informed consent in matters which effect their land, well-being and culture. I will return to this point a bit later in my speech because it is so illustrative of exactly why the Conservative government's relationship with indigenous peoples in Canada is so damaged.

The UN declaration is a document of power. In the hands of indigenous peoples, it is a tool and an instrument. Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are using it to combat the legacy of colonial violence they have inherited.

Across the country, court rulings have reflected the binding nature of Canada's signature on the declaration. They are amassing jurisprudence based upon the rights it provides, and the government has a duty with respect to the document. Beyond jurisprudence, we see indigenous peoples using the UNDRIP to teach their children and broaden their usage of a rights-based framework under which they are dependent upon the goodwill and good faith of Canada, but are the rights holders who are empowered to claim what is owed to them.

I would like to take this time to share the words of some key leaders across Canada who have supported Bill C-641.

This is what Grand Chief Derek Nepinak writes on behalf of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs:

“By way of a standing mandate to support UNDRIP, I offer this letter in support of your initiative to have this bill pass and become enshrined in Canadian legislative processes as an important hedge against the derogation or abrogation of Indigenous rights”.

Also from my home province, our NDP minister of aboriginal and northern affairs, Eric Robinson, has written a letter in support of my colleague's bill, which reads in part:

“This will be a major accomplishment in providing clarity and direction for the Federal government and the private sector in recognizing Indigenous rights in this country. As has already been stated by others, Bill C-641 reaffirms Indigenous rights that were taken away by forced assimilation policies like residential schools and the Indian Act. The UN Declaration recognized that Indigenous peoples have the “collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples.” It is time to recognize these rights in Canadian Law”.

Minister Robinson's words are well taken and reflect the fact that provincial governments need not take an adversarial stance against indigenous rights.

Far too often, the Conservative government refers to aboriginal rights as something Canadians cannot afford. The Conservative minister of aboriginal affairs at the time that the UNDRIP was ratified was quoted as saying that the declaration of rights was “unworkable in a Western democracy under a constitutional government...because (native rights) don't trump all other rights in the country”.

It is shameful. It is as if the inherent rights of some people would come at the cost of the rights of others, as if human rights are not something that can and must be enjoyed by every human being on this planet. Not only is this logic utterly offensive and inherently racist, but it is absolutely incorrect. We can afford Indigenous rights. What we cannot afford is not to enshrine these rights in our country.

● (1840)

Just this afternoon, I met with a delegation of chiefs from the Blueberry River and Doig River First Nations. They travelled from northeast British Columbia to speak to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and members of our opposition. When we met with them, they described a situation we hear more and more often. Their traditional lands are being usurped and destroyed as a result of industrial activity, and for decades, this has happened without their consent.

Neither the federal nor the provincial government has taken their consent into consideration as they rubberstamp successive projects on their lands. They have taken their hunting grounds, pumped chemicals into their waters, and poisoned the animals. Their resource-rich lands, they told me, are now beyond repair. As well, the federal government has stalled in negotiating and resolving their land claims. They have been at the table for over a decade, and the government has shown such disrespect as to completely step away from the negotiations for periods at a time.

These two nations have been left with no choice but to file against their provincial government in court. This ham-fisted way of dealing with first nations will stall economic development and business and

### *Private Members' Business*

will not help this development be sustainable and mutually beneficial.

These two nations do not want resource development completely off their lands, but they do want their government to recognize their inherent right to free, prior, and informed consent, as set out by the UNDRIP.

The fact is, we see the current government's opposition to indigenous rights, both in terms of the UN declaration and in terms of the bill before us today, all too often. Just this week, we saw the government's desire to push forward with Bill S-6, a bill that would attack the kind of legislative framework put in place by first nations in the Yukon and by Yukoners themselves to protect their environment.

The government has attempted to ram through Bill S-6. Industry does not want it rammed through. Industry has made it clear that it wants to respect indigenous rights, because it knows that it is the safest way to do business in Canada.

If the Conservative government were genuinely concerned about sound fiscal management, it would see the UNDRIP as an opportunity to foster better business relations with first nations. The Conservatives would understand that they cannot get away with overriding aboriginal title anymore. The Tsilhqot'in decision this summer proved that very thing.

Today I am proud to say that an NDP government would immediately begin working towards a nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples. We would adopt the UNDRIP and we would enshrine its principles by ensuring that, at the cabinet level, every piece of legislation is reviewed through an indigenous lens and is in line with treaty rights, aboriginal rights, inherent rights, and of course, the UN declaration.

I would like to end by quoting the late hon. Jack Layton, the former leader of the NDP and leader of the official opposition.

In a letter to the UN back in 2006, when they were on the brink of ratifying the declaration, Jack wrote:

I write today to express my Party's support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The New Democratic Party is the social democratic party in Canada's parliament and it is our belief in social justice and equality that leads us to support this declaration.

There are many sound economic, social, and legal reasons to support this bill, but as Jack Layton said, at the heart of the issue is the principle of equality and social justice for all. These are the principles of human rights, and we stand for them.

● (1845)

**Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill C-641, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act. It is a bill that calls on the government to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

*Private Members' Business*

I am the member of Parliament for Yukon, and nearly 25% of my constituents are first nations people. Members can be assured that I understand how important it is that our government upholds aboriginal rights.

In my speech today, I will be outlining several of the key ways that our government is already setting the standard when it comes to honouring these rights.

To begin with, we take great assurance from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which guarantees the rights and freedoms of all individuals, including aboriginals. Moreover, section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, specifically recognizes and affirms existing aboriginal and treaty rights of first nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada.

As encouraging as this may be, our Conservative government has not been content to leave aboriginal rights and protections here. It has done much more.

I remind my hon. colleagues that it was this government that finally rectified a long-standing injustice related to the Canadian Human Rights Act, a law dating back to 1977. Our government repealed section 67 of the act, a section that effectively exempted the Indian Act from its scrutiny. In doing so, it has given first nations people affected by the Indian Act full access to Canadian human rights law. Indeed, at no time in Canadian history have aboriginal rights been as strong as they are now, and that is largely thanks to this Conservative government.

This is not the only example of how our government's efforts have been maintained to protect and promote the rights of aboriginal people. For instance, in collaboration with first nations people and communities, we developed legislation to address an unacceptable and discriminatory practice. Of course I am referring to the legislative gap regarding matrimonial real property rights on reserves. The Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act guarantees that individuals on reserves, especially women, have rights and protections comparable to other Canadians when it comes to matrimonial real property.

This is real, tangible work that not only protects aboriginal rights but also protects aboriginal people. This legislation remedied a gap in our country's legislative framework that led to many women on reserves being denied ownership of, and even access to, their homes when their conjugal relationships broke down. To assist first nations communities, we have established the arm's-length Centre of Excellence for Matrimonial Real Property.

At the request of first nations, our government also passed the First Nations Elections Act. The legislation provides, for the first time, a strong, open, and transparent first nations electoral system that is comparable to Canada's federal election system. Aside from upholding voters' rights to free and fair elections, the act supports the political stability necessary for first nations governments to make solid business investments, carry out long-term planning, and build relationships.

The First Nations Financial Transparency Act has further strengthened first nations residents' rights and freedoms. This legislation, which also came about at the request of first nations, is increasing transparency and accountability among first nations

leaders, empowering community members, and making their governments more effective. Unsurprisingly, this bill, one that provides basic financial transparency on reserve, was opposed by both the NDP and the Liberal Party.

We have also initiated innovative processes to advance treaty negotiations and reconciliation. It is now possible to negotiate incremental treaty agreements, and there is a clear procedure for resolving disputes that stem from conflicts in treaty claims.

Of course, respectful negotiation is not anything new for our government. We have consistently negotiated with first nations to fulfill the fundamental rights of these communities over their traditional lands and waters and over resources on those lands and waters. Since 2007, more than 100 specific claims have been resolved through negotiated agreements. I know that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is particularly proud of this accomplishment. That is because much of the progress that we have made in resolving these claims was done to eliminate a backlog left behind by the previous Liberal governments.

● (1850)

As well, this government appointed a ministerial special representative to work with aboriginal groups, provinces, territories and key stakeholders to renew and reform the comprehensive land claims policy.

Our government has also taken steps to expedite the negotiation of treaties by making important changes to Canada's own source revenue policy, resuming treaty fisheries negotiations in British Columbia and employing an additional approach to achieving certainty that was developed in partnership with negotiation partners.

Since 2006, six comprehensive land claims agreements and one stand-alone self-government agreement have been signed between the Government of Canada and first nation and other aboriginal governments and groups.

Clearly, more than simply aspiring to realize the goals of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are clearly advancing this agenda. We are making progress on multiple fronts, from human rights and matrimonial property rights, to free and fair elections, to increased financial accountability for first nation officials, to treaty and land claim negotiations.

Despite all of the work that has already been accomplished to advance aboriginal rights, I would be remiss if I did not join my colleague from Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, in discussing the potential danger of adopting the bill.

As he mentioned in his speech, the danger stems largely from article 19 of the UNDRIP. The threshold that the bill sets for aboriginal consultation to seek the free, prior and informed consent of aboriginal people is too high. Even the Supreme Court of Canada agrees. It has been clear that while there certainly exists a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate, there is no duty for the government to secure consent before advancing legislation.

More shocking is that article 19 would give first nations an effective veto over any legislation that our government or any government at all would bring forward.

Our government has been working since we were elected to uphold aboriginal rights, but unlike the opposition parties, we believe in responsible government and understand that these rights have to be balanced against the rights and interests of all Canadians.

For these reasons, I urge all members of the House to support our government in defeating the bill.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this opportunity that I have been given to talk about the bill that seeks to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples allows me to share my initial thoughts on the utilitarian relations that gradually took the place of the ideals that form the historical foundation of our country. We have heard this before and my colleagues made reference to it: when it comes to a nation-to-nation relationship, there has been many a slip twixt the cup and the lip in 2015. I will talk more about that later in my speech.

By way of information, I will read article 38 of the declaration, which states:

States, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples, shall take the appropriate measures, including legislative measures, to achieve the ends of this Declaration.

I would now like to talk about the ongoing attempts to undermine officials elected under the Indian Act and how that affects economic stability.

This morning it was brought to my attention that, of all the ridings in Quebec, Manicouagan has the second largest aboriginal population. There are obviously quite a few of us.

Just recently I attended a meeting that was to be historic and it was the same old story. That is deplorable, and it is the reason why I am mentioning it here. All too often, partnerships or joint ventures are put forward with utilitarian ideals. Members of aboriginal peoples, members of first nations and too often those elected under the Indian Act are perceived as tokens or as elements required for certification, somewhat like an ISO standard. In 2015, entrepreneurs, proponents of resource extraction initiatives, are fully cognizant of the fact that the presence, or at least the visible and—to use a term that is popular these days—ostentatious presence of aboriginal peoples and representatives is indispensable if they want to move forward.

Thus, we have this sector of the industry. All too often, in terms of legislation and the government, the representatives elected under the Indian Act are put forward as tokens or window dressing simply to

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promote the inclusive nature of a given decision or initiative. That is where the problem lies because when the will is lacking, when it is missing, this is all just smoke and mirrors.

That is why, when we talk about working inclusively, when we talk about real partnerships, we need to ensure that first nations are included. I am not just talking about officials elected under the Indian Act. We also need to ensure that special attention is given to the redistribution of benefits, whether they are financial or social. A redistribution of benefits must result.

This morning in committee I had another discussion with one of the witnesses. We agreed on this point. If we truly want to make our communities better economically, culturally and socially, we need to focus on redistributing and passing along the benefits that should, in theory, result from these agreements that are publicized with much fanfare. The government does this a lot, but we also see it at the provincial level. We see it in Quebec. All too often, these framework agreements are put forward and touted as a new alliance, a new partnership. If we look closely we can see that that is meaningless.

I will continue in a few weeks.

• (1900)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** 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.

The hon. member for Manicouagan will have six minutes remaining next time.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time granted me tonight to further discuss a crisis for first nations, the crisis of fire safety.

According to a study done by the Government of Canada, first nations living on reserve are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than people living anywhere else in Canada. I repeat, they are 10 times more likely. This is not isolated to one region or to only a few communities. This is a crisis that is occurring in communities across the country on a regular basis.

I have spoken to dozens of people in the last couple of months, not to mention the families I have visited in my riding, who have personal experiences with death due to house fires. Members of communities from across the country have gotten in touch with me to share their stories of grief and devastation, what they feel and what their community goes through, when a tragic house fire occurs.

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In my home province of Manitoba, investigations have demonstrated that residents of Manitoba first nations are far more likely to die in house fires than people living off reserve because of the systemic underfunding of infrastructure. Fire fatalities are high because in many communities, the first nations are struggling with outdated and overcrowded housing as well as a lack of necessary resources to respond to fires when they happen. In fact, although fires on reserve make up less than 5% of all fires in my home province, they tragically account for up to half of the fatalities.

The minister has this information, which is why, along with hundreds of first nations communities, my colleagues and I are left wondering why it is that nothing has changed. Despite the clear evidence that the current way of doing things is not working, the minister refuses to acknowledge the need to take action and the government's role in ensuring that fire safety in first nations is a priority.

A 2012 study found that five reserves, with a combined population of 13,000, had the resources to budget roughly \$18 per person for fire services. However, five non-reserve communities of the same size had the resources to allocate \$51 per person. It is \$18 on reserve per person and \$51 off reserve per person. The current federal government and past federal governments have remained silent about this crisis. The minister continues to download the blame to communities that are facing a real need in terms of resources, all while knowing full well that like education, infrastructure for fire safety is funded at less than half of what residents in non-first-nations communities receive.

The high numbers of fire fatalities on reserve clearly demonstrate that something is wrong. The system is broken. A 2010 federal report identified a number of recommendations to improve fire safety on reserve, including evaluating funding for resources and fire safety education. My question is this: What has happened to those recommendations? What actions have been taken by the government to ensure that all communities have the same access to the fire services they so desperately need?

•(1905)

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question raised by the member for Churchill.

The original question, of course, dealt with a terrible tragedy on a reserve in northern Saskatchewan, and I would like to start by offering our thoughts and condolences to the families and the community of Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation. Loss of life is a great tragedy, especially when it involves children, and no one can be left untouched by such a terrible event. Provincial fire investigation officials are currently investigating the cause of that fire.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada continues to monitor the situation through communication with local fire officials and the first nation.

Let me assure the House that the health and safety of first nations communities is a top priority for our government. We provide annual funding to first nations across Canada to meet the needs of their communities, and this includes funding for fire protection.

In the case Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, since 2006, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has provided an average of \$17,900 per year for the operation and maintenance of the community's fire hall and fire truck. The department has provided an additional \$14,700 annually to the first nation for fire protection.

Moreover, we spent \$45,000 in 2006 to purchase a fire truck for this first nation. It is important to remember that although Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada earmarks funds for certain purposes, first nations are ultimately the ones who choose how the money is spent.

We understand that everyone has an important role to play in fire prevention and to ensure that all homes and families are prepared in the event of a fire. That is why we are committed to working together with willing partners, whether they are individual first nations, tribal councils, local fire safety authorities, or national and regional organizations, to ensure that first nations have the tools they need to keep their families and communities safe.

Raising awareness about the importance of fire safety and prevention throughout the year is an important part of our government's efforts to prevent fires and fire-related injuries in first nations communities. We are working closely with the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada to raise awareness about the importance of fire prevention on reserve. This work includes providing funding for an annual firefighter skills development challenge as well as the fire prevention activities for school children.

Our government believes that all Canadians deserve to feel safe and secure in their homes, no matter where they live. That is why we are actively working with our partners to ensure first nations on reserve in Saskatchewan and across Canada meet this rigorous standard.

**Ms. Niki Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the willingness put forward by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. It is a sentiment we certainly did not hear from the minister in the House the day after the tragedy in Makwa Sahgaiehcan.

There really needs to be a recognition from the government that we are talking about systemic underfunding. Yes, while there is an investigation happening in Makwa, as there should, there are too many first nations across this country that have gone through that same tragedy.

We do not need to wait for another child or another elder or anyone to die in a house fire on reserve for any reason, but certainly the lack of fire equipment, the lack of resources to support firefighters, and equally important, the lack of resources to properly equip houses are the issues we need to be addressing.

I want to say that in recognizing that this is a systemic issue, we need systemic change, and that is where we hope to see the federal government take action.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my original response, we certainly have provided ongoing consistent funding to the first nation in question. Whether it is \$45,000 for a fire truck or ongoing fire prevention and fire protection funds, we take the health and safety of first nations communities, like this one, very seriously.

We place a premium on working with willing partners to raise awareness about the importance of fire safety and protection. Our government's #BeFireSafe campaign as well as funding that we provide to the Aboriginal Firefighters Association of Canada to raise awareness about fire safety are excellent examples of this commitment.

We continue to provide our support to the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation, to work with it to prevent similar tragic events from happening in the future, as we do with other first nations right across the country.

• (1910)

## HOUSING

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister on Thursday, January 29, had to do with Beech Hall, a co-op seniors complex in my riding of York South—Weston.

This complex uses federal funding to provide rent assistance to 41 low-income seniors. When the government ends this funding at the end of this year, those 41 seniors will no longer be able to afford their rents and will risk becoming homeless.

The government position seems to be that these operating agreements, which subsidize housing for some 200,000 low-income Canadians, can expire and the funds can be returned to the treasury. The funds are no longer available for rent subsidy. They are available for the Conservatives to help the rich through devices such as income-splitting for high-wage earners and tax-free savings accounts for the rich to hide more of their income from tax. This is so wrong.

Jack Layton, rest his soul, pressured the Liberals to put back some of the money they had so ruthlessly taken out of Canada's housing commitments. The Conservatives voted against it, but they now take glee in pointing to the money as somehow being their idea. It was not.

The bottom line is that as these agreements expire, the Conservatives are refusing to reinvest it in any way in housing. Many of these co-ops are in need of major retrofits. Forty-year-old buildings need new roofs, new heating systems, new windows, and new energy-saving technology. Co-ops will not be able to afford both the necessary repairs and rent subsidies, and the government knows this.

Beech Hall is one such complex. Besides the reality that the government will end their subsidy, the truth is that they do not own the property. It is leased. Lease payments will continue; the subsidy will not. The buildings need \$20 million in retrofits over the next 10 years. Beech Hall does have a small reserve, but it is nowhere near the amount needed to provide either the subsidy or the building repairs.

To glibly say, as the minister did when I asked the question, that the federal government provides the provinces with \$1.25 billion in

housing funding and that the provinces should decide which properties, such as Beech Hall, should receive a provincial subsidy is ignoring the reality of the situation. In 2010 Canada provided \$3.6 billion to affordable housing at the federal level. Funding is now down to about \$2 billion, and it will fall still further as the operating agreements expire. Just as the Liberals did in the 1990s, the Conservatives are eliminating affordable housing as a federal responsibility.

After the Liberal cuts, the waiting lists in my city of Toronto have continued to grow, to the point that there are more families waiting for housing than there are units in total. Wait lists are now measured not in months or years but decades. The city of Toronto's housing stock, inherited when the Liberals got out of the housing business, needs nearly \$2 billion in repairs. The city cannot afford the repairs, let alone try to build new stock for some of those 80,000 families on the wait list. The repair backlog is so great that some 4,000 units are in danger of being unfit for human habitation.

For the government to take even a nickel out of the housing subsidies so that it can give it to the well off to buy their vote is despicable and not in keeping with Canada's rich history of helping the less fortunate.

House prices in Toronto reached a new high of over \$1 million for a detached house, and rental prices have followed in lockstep. A recent conversation with a single mother of a disabled child showed just how desperate the situation is. Her rent is more than her income, plus her child support, plus a large part of her child's disability benefits. What is left for food is paltry. She and her child have been on a wait list for eight years.

Conservatives just do not get that their policies will make people homeless. It is time they stopped taking money out of housing to give tax breaks to the rich and started dealing with the problem the Liberals created.

The seniors at Beech Hall are waiting for the minister's answer. Will 41 seniors be left homeless by the government?

**Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the hon. member for York South—Weston. Ensuring that vulnerable Canadians have access to affordable housing is a matter of great importance to our government. This is why we have made unprecedented investments in housing over the past nine years. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have benefited from these investments, including low-income seniors in the hon. member's riding.

Through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, our government has invested more than \$16.5 billion in housing since 2006, and we are continuing this important work. Again this year, Canada's national housing agency will provide approximately \$2 billion in housing investments on behalf of the Government of Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

We have also ensured continuity of federal funding for housing programs through the investment in affordable housing, a collaborative effort with the provinces and territories to reduce the number of Canadians in housing need. This initiative was launched by our government in 2011 and has been renewed to 2019 with total federal funding of close to \$2 billion over eight years.

This funding is being delivered through bilateral agreements with each province and territory. We believe that provinces and territories are best positioned to design and deliver programs that address local housing needs, and these agreements give them the flexibility to do so. Importantly, they include a commitment of matching funding from the province or territory, thus ensuring that the investment in affordable housing helps as many Canadians as possible.

The hon. member will be pleased to know that one of the ways provinces and territories can use federal funding under the investment in affordable housing is to support projects that may face financial difficulties once their long-term housing agreements with CMHC have matured. As the minister has advised the House on previous occasions, the majority of non-profit and co-operative housing projects are expected to be financially viable and mortgage-free when their agreements mature and federal funding ends, as planned, on dates that have been known since the agreements were signed decades ago. For projects that may face financial difficulties when subsidies end, CMHC has been actively working to help them prepare for the end of their operating agreements.

I want to assure the hon. member that we are not ignoring the housing needs of seniors in his riding or anywhere else in Canada. In fact, they have been key beneficiaries of our housing investments. Through Canada's economic action plan, our government has invested over \$1 billion to renovate and retrofit nearly 15,000 social housing projects since 2009, working largely in partnership with provinces and territories. As well, members will recall that economic action plan 2009 provided funding of \$400 million for the construction of new housing for low-income seniors and \$75 million for new housing for people with disabilities. These investments resulted in the construction of more than 9,000 new housing units for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities across the country.

Since 2006, CMHC's affordable housing centre has helped to create more than 25,000 affordable housing units, including close to 11,000 units for seniors for projects that do not require ongoing federal assistance.

Working with the provinces and territories, we are making smart investments to ensure that Canadians have access to the housing they need.

● (1915)

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the minister still does not get it.

The fact of the matter is it started out being \$3.6 billion in 2010 and even by his numbers it is now \$2.25 billion. We have lost \$1.5 billion from the housing system in Canada from the federal level.

That loss will be absorbed by people like the seniors at Beech Hall who will no longer be able to afford their rents. There has been no indication from the current government at any time that Beech Hall will somehow be able to receive any assistance from the federal government.

The minister has now said that CMHC is giving them time to prepare. They have been prepared for a long time for the end of this agreement, and they have been pleading with the federal government and CMHC to try to provide a continued subsidy because that is the only way these 41 seniors will stop being homeless.

**Mr. Mark Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, once again, our government has made unprecedented investments in housing that are improving the quality of life for low-income seniors and others who may have trouble making ends meet. Rather than putting people at risk, we are working with the provinces and territories to deliver funding where it is needed most and where it will have the greatest impact on reducing the number of Canadians in housing need.

The investment in affordable housing has already supported close to 213,000 households across Canada and tens of thousands more will be helped through the renewal of this initiative to 2019. This is the type of respectful collaborative approach that our government favours, and should be supported by all members of this House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** 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 Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:19 p.m.)





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