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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 16, 2016

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 16, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have all owned an old used car that faithfully got us to work every morning until the day we were told it needed thousands of dollars' worth of repairs.

Nobody spends that money. We do the bare minimum to get to work, we forge ahead, and we invest in something that will last. Unfortunately, the government is taking the opposite approach with fossil fuels.

Environmental groups estimate that Canada subsidized fossil fuels to the tune of \$3.3 billion in 2015. Yesterday in Marrakesh, the UN called for an end to subsidizing these outdated industries. The government promised to stop, but not until 2024.

The government is saying all the right things to the rest of the world, but it is on a catastrophic collision course with climate change. Unless the government plans for a fossil-fuel-free future, Canada will drag down Quebec and every other nation fighting global warming.

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[*English*]

CANADIAN MIXED CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Yarmouth this past Sunday, the Canadian Mixed Curling Championship kicked off, welcoming to southwestern Nova Scotia amazing curling teams representing each province and territory in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Games will take place all week at Mariners Centre in Yarmouth. I am looking forward to being there for the final game this Saturday, November 19.

[*English*]

I wish all visitors to the area an excellent week. I am sure they will enjoy the hospitality and charm of Yarmouth and Acadian Shores, with its world-class seafood, beautiful coastline, and friendly people.

Thanks to Rick Allwright and the rest of the 2016 Canadian host committee and the team of over 140 volunteers. Their hard work has resulted in another successful major event in Yarmouth. We are proud of our community's great reputation for hosting such events.

Finally, to the competitors at the Mariners Centre this week, have fun, and good curling.

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• (1410)

CANADIAN FOODGRAINS BANK

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the good work of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, an organization that has been working to combat global hunger for more than 30 years. Not only does the Foodgrains Bank provide nourishment for those in need, it also works with communities to improve agricultural practices, which allows for long-term and sustainable food security.

This good work would not be possible without a network of volunteers across this country. I think of folks like Ron and Nancy Kraemer, who have been volunteering with the Thamesview United Church growing projects for many years and who selflessly give their time and talents. I think of volunteers with growing projects in Monkton, Milverton, Palmerston, Drayton, and many more communities across Perth—Wellington, Ontario, and Canada who grow crops so that others might eat.

I want to thank the members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank for all they do to achieve the goal of a world without hunger.

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AZOREAN CULTURAL WEEK

Ms. Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Portuguese community, which comprises 30% of my riding of Davenport, loves a good party. This past weekend was no exception.

Statements by Members

On Sunday, I was proud to take part in the opening ceremony of the Azorean cultural week that will see week-long activities celebrating the culture and life of the nine Azores islands, known for their natural beauty, volcanos, and whaling; religious festivals, such as the *Festa do Senhor Santa Cristo*, and their writers, like Raul Brandão and José Dias de Melo, among many others.

I also took part in two *Festa de São Martinho*, at Casa da Madeira and Casa das Beiras, and was not able to make it to a third one at Arsenal do Minho. The *Festa de São Martinho* is ultimately a celebration of the harvest as symbolized by the introduction of new wine and chestnuts, reminding us to appreciate and be grateful for all we are blessed to have in our lives.

I want to thank the organizers of these festivals. Their work not only enriches the social and cultural fabric of this great country but reminds us that we are a stronger nation because of it.

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[Translation]

CULTURE IN LONGUEUIL

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Longueuil native Serge Fiori re-released the seminal album *L'Heptade*, an immensely important album to Quebec identity, and proof that Quebec culture has had deep roots in Longueuil for a very long time.

We can remember late artists like Sylvain Lelièvre or Gerry Boulet, or think of our current favourites, who still live in our community, like novelist Kim Thúy, as well as Lise Dion and Boucar Diouf. It would take hours to name everyone, but I would be remiss not to mention the great author Yves Beauchemin, who tomorrow will be presented with the award for patriot of the year, 2016.

Culture in Longueuil also includes Armand Vaillancourt's sculpture in Parc Michel-Chartrand. It includes the television programs produced by hundreds of employees at our production companies, like Sphère Média Plus, and our specialty channels, like Zeste and Évasion. It includes the Théâtre de la Ville, which, incidentally, is still hoping to receive federal funding.

The House needs to adapt to the new reality of the modern 2.0 era, where people consume culture differently, which means we need to help future generations put down cultural roots so that they may continue to develop our cultural landscape in the years to come.

The very survival of the distinct culture in Longueuil and elsewhere depend upon it.

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GENEROSITY AS THE HOLIDAYS APPROACH

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we enter the last stretch of this parliamentary session, I would like to take a moment to encourage Canadians from coast to coast to give generously as the holidays approach.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the exemplary community work of organizations and food banks in my riding, Rivière-des-Milles-Îles. I am thinking about the Boisbriand outreach services, Le Relais, which is hosting its 27th annual brunch fundraiser on December 4. I have always attended this event. Such

organizations and food banks are key players in Canada's social safety net. In my riding alone, they distribute over 1,000 Christmas baskets.

I invite all my colleagues in the House to actively participate by giving generously in their communities. I also invite my constituents to give generously to the various food drives as the holidays approach.

These are small gestures that can have a big impact on the life of a child, a parent, a senior, or a person living alone.

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[English]

ACADEMIC ALL-CANADIAN AWARD WINNER

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, during a ceremony at Rideau Hall, the Governor General recognized eight Academic All-Canadians for their achievements both on and off the field.

One of the athletes recognized was University of British Columbia swimmer and kinesiology student Rebecca Terejko, of Brantford. Rebecca captained the University of British Columbia to another Canada West gold medal last season, winning a total of seven medals at the event herself, before leading the UBC Thunderbirds to a silver medal at the CIS championship.

In the classroom, Rebecca has maintained a grade point average of 4.17. Even more impressive is that Rebecca is the recipient of the Student-Athlete Community Service Award for Canada West for her work providing free swimming lessons to underprivileged children from the east side of Vancouver.

I speak for all of Brantford—Brant when I say congratulations to Rebecca. We are proud of her.

* * *

● (1415)

GLOBE MEATS

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, too often the people and communities of Jane and Finch are typecast as too far off the beaten path, but for those of us who live, work, or play in this wonderful community, that misinformed stereotype could not be more wrong.

In fact, as we mark entrepreneur week, I cite Globe Meats, a local business that has become a true destination. That is because Globe is not the average butcher shop. In fact, Globe is what happens when a cultural institution builds a state-of-the-art facility. It is, according to its president, Dante DiBiase, a family-run business with community roots that run 40 years deep.

When customers finish shopping, they make their way to the grill for a piece of wood oven pizza, porchetta, paninis, and conversation in an atmosphere that shows just how vibrant and important our community is in Humber River—Black Creek.

STUDENTS IN SCARBOROUGH—ROUGE PARK

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, education is the cornerstone of our community. This past month, I met many students in my riding. I was pleased to join the newly renamed St. Mother Teresa Catholic Academy as it celebrated the canonization of Mother Teresa along with the school's 30th anniversary. MT is located in the heart of Malvern and reflects the rich diversity of our community. The 30th anniversary celebrations brought former staff, students, and community to the school.

I then took part in UNICEF Canada's "Bring Your MP to School Day" at Alexander Stirling Public School, Thomas L. Wells Public School, Alvin Curling Public School, and St. Bede Catholic School. I was moved by their knowledge, enthusiasm, and love of country. They asked questions ranging from the environment to the budget to career advice on becoming an MP or even the next prime minister. In these students, we see our collective future.

[Translation]

The young people of Scarborough—Rouge Park inspire me to work harder each and every day.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, I was proud of the work of the former Conservative government in the area of human trafficking. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the remarkable efforts of my colleague, Joy Smith, for the contributions she made in this area while in Parliament and for her continuing efforts through the Joy Smith Foundation.

In addition, in the House today I would like to congratulate one of my constituents, Mr. Peter Warrack, on his appointment to the board of the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking and for his outstanding commitment to ending human slavery in Canada. I commend Peter Warrack and the centre for their efforts to end human trafficking and to terminate this abhorrent form of modern-day slavery and sexual exploitation.

I urge all members of the House to join me in thanking them for their invaluable work and to commit to doing our utmost to protect our sons and daughters from this horrific fate. We owe it to our children to put an end to human trafficking in Canada.

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KINGSTON SANTA PARADE

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it's that time of year again. This Saturday, in my riding of Kingston and the Islands, the 13th annual greater Kingston Santa parade will be taking place.

The community will join together for the parade and the annual tree lighting ceremony in market square to kick off the holiday season, but the holidays are not always an easy time for everyone. We must remember those less fortunate and ensure that everyone in our communities can enjoy the holidays.

Statements by Members

As part of the annual Santa parade, Kingstonians have the opportunity to come together and donate non-perishable food items to the food bank along the parade route. I encourage everyone attending the parade, and indeed, all Canadians, to open their hearts and give what they can this holiday season.

Let us embrace the true meaning of what this season is about.

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EQUAL VOICE

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to congratulate Anecia Gill for being chosen to represent Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon for Daughters of the Vote.

This initiative, organized by Equal Voice, will bring 338 young women, representing each of our ridings, to Ottawa to mark the 100th anniversary of women being granted the right to vote.

Anecia is a role model in the community. She attends the University of Fraser Valley for sociology, and works with the Centre for Indo-Canadian Studies.

I am excited for Anecia to take her seat in the House of Commons, and to hear her vision for Canada. I congratulate Anecia.

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● (1420)

SERGEI MAGNITSKY

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we reflect on the life and sacrifices of Sergei Magnitsky.

Sergei was a Russian lawyer, an auditor, a husband, and father of two. He was a man who believed in the rule of law. Most important, Sergei was not afraid to stand up for what he believed in.

Sergei uncovered the largest tax fraud in Russian history and was subsequently arrested, detained, tortured, and eventually murdered by officials of the Russian government, seven years ago today.

The United States and the European Union have adopted legislation to impose sanctions, visa bans, and asset freezes on the people responsible for Sergei's death, as well as other Russian human rights abusers.

In May, I was proud to stand with Liberal and NDP members to announce the tabling of my bill, Bill C-267, Canada's version of the Magnitsky law. This legislation would provide new tools to sanction corrupt foreign officials.

Despite support from his caucus, the Minister of Foreign Affairs does not believe these sanctions are necessary. As we remember Sergei Magnitsky today, I urge the minister to reconsider his opposition and support Bill C-267.

*Routine Proceedings***TIM ROBERTSON**

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our community recently lost an amazing father, son, husband, friend, hockey coach, volunteer, and advocate.

Tim Robertson packed more into his 58 years than most of us will in a lifetime. He lived with ALS for almost 13 years, but this horrible disease never defined Tim.

We shared a love of “The Boss” and Bobby Orr, the Toronto Rock, Argos, Blue Jays, and the Oakville Blades. He helped in countless political campaigns, carrying signs on the back of his wheelchair. He led Tim’s Titans at the Halton ALS walk, and was a tireless advocate in the ALS community.

Tim, his wife Beth, and I did the ALS ice bucket challenge twice. He never complained or said a bad word about anyone, and he lived with grace and dignity, the kind of person we can all aspire to be.

Our heartfelt condolences to Beth and the Robertson family. We will miss Tim.

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SURVIVORS TOTEM POLE

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Survivors Totem Pole is a magnificent symbol of deep convictions, strength, courage and beauty. It stands tall and proud to take its place at Pigeon Park, honouring indigenous women and girls who did not fall victim to the worst mass murder in Canadian history.

It marks the strength and resilience of those who have survived colonialism, extreme traumas, all forms of discrimination, poverty, violence, and untold hardships. It represents the strength of the human spirit and the power of all the nations, united with one heart, to say that those who still face oppression are not alone in their struggle.

I am so honoured to have witnessed the long journey of the Survivors Totem Pole from its inception.

I congratulate everyone who has contributed to this reality, with special recognition to Bernie Williams, a powerful Indigenous woman warrior and the only female apprentice of the late Bill Reid, who led the design and carving of the pole. Her teachings and guidance also shone a light on the nine carvers who braved this journey.

Together they have planted the seed of hope for all.

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FOUAD NAYEL

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 2012, Fouad Nayel was murdered, but because the case took four years to come to trial, the judge ordered a stay of proceedings yesterday, allowing the accused to walk free. No trial, no justice, no closure for the family of the victim.

I am calling on the provincial and federal justice ministers to order a formal review of this catastrophic injustice, to answer questions like, why did it take four years? Too many legal delay tricks? Administrative incompetence?

The accused does have rights, but so should victims, like the Nayel family whose son is gone and whose lives are forever torn to shreds by this odious crime and an even more odious injustice.

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[*Translation*]**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE**

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate the 20th International Day for Tolerance. This day was designated by the United Nations to highlight the importance of strengthening tolerance by fostering mutual understanding among cultures and peoples.

This imperative lies at the core of the United Nations Charter, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

● (1425)

[*English*]

In this era of rising and violent extremism, of religious and racially motivated attacks, and of widening conflicts characterized by a fundamental disregard for human life, celebrating such a day is more important than ever.

I would like to invite all parliamentarians to join with me in celebrating the International Day for Tolerance and in embracing the differences that make Canada stronger in its diversity.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS[*English*]**NEW MEMBER**

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Acting Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Glen Motz, member for the electoral district of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Glen Motz, member for the electoral district of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, introduced by the Hon. Rona Ambrose and Mr. Blaine Calkins.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, within hours of the polls closing in the U.S., the Prime Minister was offering to sacrifice the Canadian jobs that depend on our most important trade deal as a welcoming gift to the new U.S. President.

NAFTA has created jobs, helped our economy grow, and provided market certainty to Canadian exporters for years.

The Prime Minister's actions have caused uncertainty when we can least afford it. Two specific industries, beef and lumber, are in the crosshairs.

Why is the Prime Minister in a rush to open up NAFTA when there are so many jobs on the line?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that the economies affected by NAFTA would definitely see the benefits associated with NAFTA. For example, in the United States, nine million U.S. jobs are related to the Canadian economy.

NAFTA is very important to our economic prosperity. It is very important to the middle class, and that is why we will engage with the new administration. That is why we will work with Congress.

With respect to the softwood lumber file and the beef file, we think these files are very important. It is a priority for us and we are focused on solutions.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities confessed to reporters about his bank, "Obviously there are a lot of questions about the design of the bank, the governance of the bank, and the broad details around it, which we will be figuring out...."

For taxpayers this sounds expensive. Billionaire investors will not be loaning the Liberals money out of the goodness of their hearts. They will expect a healthy return on their investment no matter what.

My question is simple. When a project goes over budget, and many times they do, will taxpayers be on the hook, yes or no?

• (1430)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to talk about our historic involvement in creating more infrastructure in this country than has ever been created before, \$181 billion over the next 12 years.

Yes, we will have green infrastructure, social infrastructure, public transit infrastructure, rail-trade corridor infrastructure, and yes, we will have a bank. That bank will leverage more investment from the private sector and that will create more infrastructure, which Canadians want. It will create jobs. It is good for the economy. What has the opposition got against infrastructure?

Oral Questions

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not have anything against it, we just want it to get built.

We are waiting, but now we have a great opportunity before us. Keystone XL can help get our Canadian oil to the Gulf coast, get a better price for our oil, and create badly needed jobs.

However, instead of proudly standing up for Canadian energy workers, the Prime Minister who, during the election, claimed that he supported Keystone, has gone silent.

Why did the Prime Minister mislead energy workers?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government did support the Keystone XL energy project, and the government will continue to support the project.

All of the approvals north of the border are in place. They will not run out. Now we await the company that will reapply to the United States. We await that decision as we are fully supportive of the project.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, NAFTA is Canada's most important trade agreement, as it generates thousands of jobs for Canadian families. These families are already suffering because the Prime Minister has not created even one new full-time job. Now, their jobs are at risk because the Prime Minister is naive when it comes to free trade.

If he is prepared to renegotiate NAFTA, what does he hope to obtain in exchange for jobs in the forestry and pork industries?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that NAFTA is important for Canada, but it is also important for the United States. There are nine million jobs in the U.S. that are directly related to the Canadian economy.

That is why we are engaged with the new administration. We will work with Congress and make sure that we advance Canada's national interests when it comes to trade, investment, when it comes to jobs and files around forestry and softwood and beef as well.

It has been the priority of our government to advance economic interests, and we will continue to do so.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is well documented that schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency within the Palestinian authority have incited terrorism against Israel. The Conservative government rightly cut UNRWA's funding, because we had no assurances about where the money was going.

While the Prime Minister claims to support Israel, his actions prove otherwise. How can he ensure these dollars will not put Israeli citizens at further risk, or is this just another down payment of Canadian tax dollars to win him a UN Security Council seat?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Palestinian refugees are among the poorest and most vulnerable, and it is my mandate to help them. This is why, after conducting meaningful oversight and negotiating an agreement that includes robust control measures, I announced today that Canada is providing \$25 million in funding to UNRWA for their security and development, but also for the stability of the region.

I prefer to see these children in UN schools, in classrooms, than in the street.

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FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has dropped 10 spots in the world press freedom index. There are cases across the country of journalists under government surveillance. We know that a VICE journalist is being threatened with jail time by the RCMP to force him to reveal his source. All the Liberal government has to say is that it believes in freedom of the press.

Well, enough with the talking points. Does the Liberal government agree to a full national public inquiry, yes or no?

• (1435)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when these issues first emerged, we indicated very clearly that we were disturbed by the reports with respect to the Sûreté and the Montreal police force. We inquired as to whether any activity similar to that was happening at the federal level. Both the commissioner of the RCMP and the director of CSIS have assured us that the answer is no.

All of the safeguards that are in place at the federal level are being reassessed to make sure they are strong enough, and we are welcoming any input from journalists, lawyers, or others if they have suggestions to make about how the law needs to be improved.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, those journalists were on the Hill today calling for a full public inquiry.

[Translation]

The government has no right to spy on journalists, period. The Liberals are all talk and no action. They refused to conduct a public inquiry. They refused to repeal Bill C-51 and they refused to fix Bill C-22.

What concrete measures are the Liberals going to take to protect freedom of the press in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is trying to make an argument where there is none. The fact of the matter is, we are examining all of the federal safeguards in place, including the ministerial directives, to make sure that they are appropriate in all the circumstances to respect freedom of the press. At the same time, we have invited journalists and others, and the legal community to make submissions if they have proposals to suggest how the law needs to be improved.

Freedom of the press is a fundamental Canadian value, it is in the charter, and this government will defend it assiduously.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in words only but never in action, and that is the problem.

[Translation]

With the election of Donald Trump, forestry workers, along with many others, are extremely worried.

The Liberals have still not managed to reach a new softwood lumber agreement with the U.S., and now, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister has indicated that he is open to renegotiating NAFTA, no less.

Where is that coming from?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that the agreement expired under the previous government. This is why we are working with the current U.S. administration and engaging with it to find a solution on softwood. We also look forward to working with the new president-elect and his administration in Congress in advancing this issue.

This is a very important relationship that we take very seriously. The United States is an important ally, friend, and partner, and we will continue to engage with it in our national interest.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all know Trump's priority. What we are trying to figure out is what are the Liberals willing to put on the table. We have not heard a word about that. It does not bode well for softwood lumber and it does not bode well for Canadian workers, because—this just in—Trump is not concerned with protecting Canadian interests. How can the Prime Minister put an entire trade deal on the table before he says anything to Canadians about what he is looking for?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we are looking for is jobs, jobs, jobs, good quality Canadian jobs, jobs that will help our forestry sector, jobs that will help—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order. It is my job to remind members we are not to interrupt. We need to hear the answer to the question.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development has the floor.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the members opposite have a problem with respect to good quality Canadian jobs, because that is the priority for our government. We have been very clear from day one that we will engage with the United States because it is a very important trading partner of ours. We are going to focus on jobs, good quality Canadian jobs, and growing the economy. We are willing to deal with the U.S. on tough issues around softwood and beef. We are the party and the government that found a solution for COOL as well.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is what we are looking for too: jobs, jobs, jobs. They have not created any full-time jobs; not one since they have been in government.

• (1440)

[Translation]

This morning, we learned that the U.S. president-elect's transition team advised him to take a more protectionist approach to entirely renegotiating the softwood lumber agreement. This is terrible news for Canada's forestry industry. So much for results.

[English]

A moment ago, the minister talked about nine million jobs in the U.S.A., not in Canada. How do we protect ours?

[Translation]

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We have been working hard on this file since taking office. We are negotiating with the Americans, and we are keeping several lines of communication open. We are holding consultations across the country to move these files forward. We will reach an agreement, but it has to be a good agreement.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiating global trade agreements is very sensitive.

I cannot believe the Prime Minister of Canada revealed his intentions before discussions even got started. He basically showed his hand the minute he sat down at the poker table.

How does he expect to come out on top of negotiations or accomplish anything for our country if he rolls over for the Americans right off the bat?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government's record on international trade is impeccable. We found a solution to the country-of-origin labelling problem, we opened the Chinese and Mexican markets for our beef, and we saved CETA at the eleventh hour. We did all that, and that is the kind of thing we will keep doing.

As for NAFTA, agreements, especially 20-year-old ones, can certainly stand for some improvement. We will negotiate in good faith with our American partners.

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not just about softwood. Canadian agriculture, specifically beef and pork exports, is being targeted as well. We fought for 10 years, and we won the country-of-origin labelling battle. Now this Liberal government's offer to renegotiate NAFTA has given the U.S. the green light to reopen this contentious and costly issue.

When he made his offer to reopen NAFTA did the Prime Minister realize that our beef and pork producers were the bull's eye at the centre of the new President's NAFTA target?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States is Canada's closest friend and partner, and it is a very important economic relationship.

I would like to inform my hon. colleague that it was not his government that resolved the COOL issue. It was not his government that opened the beef market to Mexico. It was not his government that opened a lot of markets. Our government is going to make sure that the agricultural sector continues to thrive in our country.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they clearly did not know what the President was going to focus on. If they are so brilliant, why did they offer to negotiate even before being asked? This is the kind of ongoing failure of leadership that we have seen from the Prime Minister. Maybe it is better he keeps travelling. He seems to do less damage when he is out of the country than when he is in it.

It took 10 years to prove that the U.S. country-of-origin labelling rules violated international trade law. Why would the Liberal Prime Minister offer to renegotiate a trade deal when he had no clue what the Americans wanted to discuss?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States is our biggest trading partner and NAFTA has been a huge success over the past 20 years. It is clear that with time, treaties occasionally need to be tweaked. We are prepared to do that in good faith. It is a normal part of the process. Other treaties are within the minister's mandate letter for tweaking, including the free trade agreements with Israel and Chile. This is a normal part of the process. NAFTA has been tweaked already over the past 20 years. We will continue to negotiate in good faith.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the devil is in the details and because the infrastructure minister fears the devil, he avoids the details altogether.

Oral Questions

Of his new infrastructure bank, he said:

Obviously there are a lot of questions about the design of the bank, the governance....

He had better figure it out. Some \$35 billion in tax dollars are at risk. If the minister responsible does not have a clue how it will work, billionaire foreign bankers will eat him and our tax dollars for lunch.

Who is protecting taxpayers?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, this government is doing something the previous government never even dreamed or thought of doing. We are doing something that is going to be extremely important for this country, and we are going to get the details right. What this will do is to leverage private sector funding to build infrastructure in this country, which is something the previous government did not do. It will create jobs. It will be good for the economy.

The private sector wants to get involved. What is so difficult to understand about that?

• (1445)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is the Liberal logic: we create an infrastructure bank, we take away \$15 billion that was earmarked for municipalities, and we add the condition that only projects over \$100 million will be approved, knowing full well that only 1% of the projects are over \$100 million and therefore out of reach for small and medium-sized municipalities. This is just like the Liberal Party's cocktail fundraisers, which are intended for the wealthiest 0.01%.

Is anyone over on that side of the House going to stand up for Canada's regions?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yes, I am going to stand up and remind my colleague that in our economic statement this fall, we set aside \$2 billion for rural communities. On top of that, we are making significant investments in infrastructure.

This infrastructure bank will enable us to increase our infrastructure investments in number and in scope. Canadians want modern infrastructure. This creates jobs and helps keep our economy competitive.

[English]

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in their platform, the Liberals argued that the government would use its strong credit rating and leading lending authority to meet municipalities' infrastructure needs. Mayors assumed that a government bank would lend at a lower rate to help facilitate the building of infrastructure. Yet now we find out that private investors are expecting a return in the range of 7% to 9%, which can only come through tolls and user fees.

When did the Liberals say they would line their Bay Street and Wall Street friends' pockets with tolls and user fees?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk about something the hon. member said,

and that is our credit rating. It is the best in the G7. That is a fact. That is good news.

I also want to say again that we have committed to an unprecedented investment in infrastructure of \$182 billion over the next 12 years. This is something that our municipalities across the country have been asking for for a very long time.

We are the government that is acting on that. This is a solid plan for green, public transit, and social infrastructure. Canadians are very pleased with our decision to invest in infrastructure.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals would have us believe that private-sector money is going to fall from the sky without any strings attached.

During the election campaign, the Liberals said, "Interest rates are at historic lows, our current infrastructure is aging rapidly....Now is the time to invest."

The last time the government borrowed money, last month, the interest rate was very low, 1.3%. The private investors who are going to invest in this bank are looking for a 7% to 9% return on their investment. In other words, Canadians are being asked to pay five times as much in order to line the pockets of Liberal cronies on Wall Street and Bay Street. Why?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my colleague is getting those numbers. I will say that we are investing \$182 billion in infrastructure over the next 12 years.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, our infrastructure deficit is between \$600 billion and \$1,000 billion. We need to invest in infrastructure. The government is going to do a lot, but we also want to leverage this bank in order to create other investments in infrastructure. It is the right thing to do.

* * *

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than a year I have been asking the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs both personally and in the House to release the KPMG financial audit on behalf of the Blood Tribe in Alberta. I keep getting the same non-answer. She makes claims about transparency but refuses to be transparent.

What does someone actually have to do to get an answer from the minister? What hoops do my constituents have to jump through before the minister will take action?

Can the minister do the right thing and provide Kainai Nation with the financial audit results today?

• (1450)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope that any member of the Kainai Nation who wants that information would approach my department and we will get it for them.

*Oral Questions***PENSIONS**

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the message that I have been getting from a minister of the crown is that it is okay to tell first nations' leadership that it is fine to break the law. The minister makes it sound so easy to get this information, that all anyone has to do is to ask. Either the minister is completely oblivious to the stonewalling in her own department or she opposes empowering community members finding out this information.

Why does the minister claim to be all about transparency and yet refuses to let community members get access to the information they need to hold their own leadership accountable?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the first nation's chief and council are accountable to their members and to my department. If any member wants information, they can approach my department and we will help them get it.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to equate providing basic information to band members as demonizing the leadership. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ministers are expected to post expenses. We have public accounts. The information is readily and easily available. But Charmaine Stick is now being forced to take her leadership to court in order to see the books.

Why is the minister forcing Charmaine to incur court expenses to see the information that should be easily provided to all—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of all first nations have the right to see the books of their first nation. These are provided in a variety of ways, on a password-protected website, at town hall meetings, or tabled in a band office.

I cannot deal with something that is before the courts but I do understand that there was a public meeting where the member did see that information.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people do not have to go to a public meeting to see what the minister or her department spends. It is easily accessible. It is easily available to all.

The minister, like me, has been getting hundreds of emails just in the last two days from Canadians who think this is wrong. This is about basic transparency. This is about basic good governance and it should be available to all.

When will the minister start ensuring and empowering first nations communities and enforce the First Nations Financial Transparency Act?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that the First Nations Financial Transparency Act did not work because it was imposed top-down and it accidentally penalized first nations businesses to predatory practices by competitors.

It is extraordinarily important that members have access to the statements, as do we, but it is not appropriate for these to be transparent to the whole world. This is a relationship between first nations and their membership.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after two days of our raising the issue in the House, it is obvious that the Liberals forgot to consider the needs of women and people living with disabilities in their legislation to expand the Canada pension plan. Stakeholders and union leaders agree that Bill C-26 is flawed because of the omission of the drop-out provision for these groups. It is a simple fix. We are proposing changes and asking for the current government's support.

Instead of rushing this expansion into law, will the government take the time to fix it by accepting our proposed amendments and make this right for all Canadians?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members of the House, including our new colleague from Medicine Hat, are honoured and pleased to take part in this important debate, which signals a historic change in the way that the CPP will assist not only Canadians of this generation, but also Canadians of future generations. We can be proud because this will lead to a more inclusive society, with greater growth both now and in the future.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not "all members", because the Liberals have excluded women and persons with disabilities by their own purpose and intent.

The Liberals and Conservatives' trade and economic policies have driven the Canadian auto industry from second to tenth in the world, costing tens of thousands of jobs. For more than a year, the Liberals have copied the Harper Conservatives at the expense of workers in Canada, with zero results. The Liberals now have a bailout from the auto workers and Unifor who, unlike the government, successfully negotiated a billion dollars' worth of new investment in Canada.

The workers have done their job. When will the minister do his? If he is looking for jobs, they are right here. He just has to come and get them.

Oral Questions

● (1455)

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am so glad that the member opposite now understands our government's priority when it comes to good quality Canadian jobs. This is a priority for us. That is why in the budget we extended the automotive innovation fund to attract investments into Canada, particularly in the auto sector, to create jobs. We have been engaged with the auto sector, we have been engaged with the unions, and we have seen positive results because of that. Most recently, GM Canada expanded its engineering and software development in Canada and plans to open a new software centre, creating 1,000 new engineering and high-tech positions. That is creating jobs.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, next year Canada will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. During the year, we will be celebrating our history, our achievements, and our common values, which include gender equality.

Can the Minister of Status of Women inform the House how our government will promote equality in 2017?

[Translation]

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from New Brunswick Southwest for her question. Gender equality is a priority for our government.

[English]

To mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation, I launched a call for proposals to bring together 150 women leaders, advocates, and feminist organizations to engage them in local projects to advance gender equality.

We understand the importance of advocacy, making real progress toward equality, and leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Africa is considered to be one of the most dangerous and unstable regions in the world. A report published this week shows that terrorist groups have obtained a wide range of heavy weapons from government stockpiles throughout Africa. All the defence minister has told Canadians is that conflicts are very complex.

Will the minister finally be honest with Canadians and tell us where our troops are going, will they be in combat, and how long will they be there?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right. In terms of the complexity of the threats and weapons systems out there, when we are looking at the threats we need to take our time to make sure that we have all of the necessary information, and allow the military to do its analysis as well, and also that we do a whole-of-government analysis. When we feel confident with the information, we will dutifully inform the

House and Canadians of where we are going, and why we will be doing it as well.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are getting tired of waiting for those answers.

In Afghanistan, the Canadian Armed Forces heroically fought al-Qaeda, alongside our NATO allies. Today, our troops are battling ISIS in a U.S.-led coalition in Iraq. Africa is full of al-Qaeda and ISIS terrorists, but the Liberals want our troops under UN command. Former General Rick Hillier described the UN as being unable to conduct "a one-man rush to the outhouse".

Why is the defence minister abandoning Canada's traditional allies in the war on terror? Is it only to get a seat at the UN Security Council for the Prime Minister?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the hon. member that the allies whom I consult with for the counter-ISIL meetings are the same allies I work with on United Nations peace operations, because all the conflicts actually are interlinked. I am making sure that we all work together and not just look at one region of the world. They are interlinked, and we need to be able to coordinate these efforts. That is a level of conversation that we are having, and I am happy to be able to explain in further detail in a short time. I will be happy to explain in person to the hon. member the analysis that is going to be ongoing.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency was established in 1949 to support Palestinian refugees, but for years, UNRWA has been manipulated by Gaza's corrupt Hamas government in flagrant contradiction of the UN stated policy of neutrality. Human rights organizations in Canada and abroad cite unacceptable redirection of aid funds and materiel, storage of weapons, and incitement to violence against Israel in UNRWA-operated schools.

Why is the government committing new funds to this flawed UN agency?

● (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Palestinian refugees are among the poorest and most vulnerable, and it is my mandate to help them. This is why, after conducting a thorough investigation of the allegations and negotiating an agreement that includes robust control measures, I announced this morning that Canada is providing \$25 million in funding to UNRWA.

For their safety and development and for the stability of the region, I would prefer to see these children in classrooms than on the street.

[English]

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals continue their UN Security Council ambition by compromising security itself. The Minister of International Development just announced funding to UNRWA to the tune of \$25 million. UNRWA is a UN organization with known ties to Hamas. Hamas is a designated terrorist organization. Is the potential to have hard-working Canadian tax dollars fund jihadist terrorists really worth the UN Security Council seat for the government?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to reassure my colleague that we have done all the necessary verification in co-operation with our allies and UNRWA, and even the Israeli government, before making this decision. The funding announcement includes a robust oversight mechanism and a stronger accountability framework. This funding is crucial for the security of the region.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport's announcement last week left us hopeful for real action on abandoned vessels and wrecks, but it is now clear that the Liberal plan does not go nearly far enough. There is nothing to prevent abandoned vessels from becoming a hazard in the first place. Will the plan really leave taxpayers and local governments on the hook for action? Is the government really excluding any preventive measures? Why are the Liberals wasting this opportunity to clean up our coasts?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would highly encourage my colleague across the way to read what we said in the oceans protection plan, because there is some very clear indication there, with respect to derelict and abandoned vessels, of a large number of initiatives that we are going to make in order to make owners accountable; also working with the provinces and territories as part of the mechanisms to clean up and, also in the long term, begin the process of cleaning up these hundreds of wrecks that are on our three coasts.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is currently nothing stopping another wreck from docking in Beauharnois, for example.

I am grateful that the Minister of Transport gave the go-ahead for the dismantling of the *Kathryn Spirit* last week, but the \$7.9-million contract to build a barrier around the wreck is going to Groupe St-Pierre, the same company that had to stop dismantling work on the *Kathryn Spirit* five years ago because it did not have the required expertise or certificate of authorization.

The *Kathryn Spirit* has already cost taxpayers \$4 million.

Can the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard assure my constituents that Groupe St-Pierre now has the expertise to carry out this work?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason we chose Groupe St-Pierre is that we want to get rid of the *Kathryn Spirit* as quickly as possible. It has been there

Oral Questions

for five years, and it is time to take action. The previous government did not deal with this issue, but we will. We will pay \$7.9 million to build an embankment to isolate the ship from the St. Lawrence River. In the spring, we will put out a tender for the ship's dismantling.

* * *

[English]

TRANSPORT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, president-elect Trump has made the development of \$50 trillion worth of natural resources a top priority, but here in Canada the Liberals are going in the opposite direction.

Woodfibre LNG has received the environment minister's approval, but is still waiting for the transport minister to sign its export permits to begin construction.

As the U.S. becomes a major energy exporter, Canadian producers need access to Asian markets. Will the minister save the Woodfibre LNG jobs and approve their export permits immediately?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change approved the Woodfibre project proceeding under Canada's environmental assessment legislation.

We are working, actively, with the Province of British Columbia to see that project moving forward. As the member may know, there was a decision announced by the company to move forward with an investment decision only two weeks ago.

We continue to collaborate with British Columbia and with the proponent to move the project forward.

* * *

● (1505)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was elected by people who understand that Liberal policies, especially the carbon tax, destroy economic opportunities and drive up costs for families in my riding.

Carbon taxes diminish our competitiveness, hurt our economy, and negatively impact Canadians who are already struggling to make ends meet.

Will the Liberals finally listen to hard-working Canadians and scrap the carbon tax?

Oral Questions

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives of the previous government had a Democrat in the White House for almost a decade, and they accomplished nothing to address climate change. Now with a Republican in the White House, they want Canada to continue to do nothing. That is not the approach we plan to take.

Canadians voted for a government that would transition to a low-carbon economy to stimulate growth, provide access to new markets, and create good, middle-class jobs. That is exactly what we are going to do.

* * *

[Translation]

PORT OF QUÉBEC

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in July 2015, our Conservative government pledged to commit \$60 million to the Port of Québec's Beauport 2020 project. This project is very important for the economic vitality of Quebec City. That is precisely why the mayor of my city supports it.

However, since coming to power, the Liberal government has said nothing about Beauport 2020, or the Anse au Foulon harbour walkway project and the Ross Gaudreault Cruise Terminal.

Is the Prime Minister trying to punish the residents of Quebec City for voting Conservative? When will he confirm his support for these major projects?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Port of Québec is dear to my heart. I was born in Quebec City and its port is important. We are working on this file and when we have something to report, we will do so.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many years, the people of the Inuvialuit communities, especially Paulatuk, and environmental and conservation organizations have been advocating to protect the sensitive ecosystem in Darnley Bay, in my riding of Northwest Territories.

I wonder if the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard might update the House on what concrete steps the government is considering to ensure this beautiful and pristine marine environment is protected for current and future generations?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Northwest Territories not only for that very incisive question, but also for his excellent work on this important issue.

I am pleased to inform the House, and my friends are obviously excited as well, that after consultations with stakeholders and our Inuvialuit partners, we have designated a new marine protected area in Darnley Bay, located in the Beaufort Sea.

Today, we are taking important steps to provide much-needed protection for sensitive marine habitat. The new marine protected area will take us closer to our 5% goal by next year.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition reminded this House of the 10-year, \$100 million investment our party put in place to prevent, detect, and combat family violence and child abuse, including funding for aboriginal women who are the most vulnerable of victims.

She asked the health minister to confirm that this funding has not been cut, but no clear answer was provided. So again, is this funding still in place at the Public Health Agency of Canada?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this House that in fact this funding is still in place and is being used by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

I am also pleased to inform this House that, to expand on that, I am very happy to work with my colleague the Minister of Status of Women on the development of a gender-based violence strategy. We look forward to introducing the details of that in the very near future.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was appalled by what the minister and member for Compton—Stanstead said about the Sherbrooke airport project, which has once again been delayed. I hope this is not yet another example of old Liberal policies, where this file is a priority during the election campaign but as soon as they are elected, it falls to the bottom of the priority list. Successive governments have come and gone, and Sherbrooke is still waiting for this issue to be resolved so it can have the security screening services its airport needs.

More than a year following her election, will the minister make it a priority to stand up for this airport project at the cabinet table and finally resolve this issue once and for all, and as quickly as possible?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course many airports in Canada do not have security screening services. The Sherbrooke airport is one example.

As we have said very clearly, the Sherbrooke airport can equip itself with such a system, but it must do so at its own expense. This is available to all airports that wish to have such a system. That has been our position for a very long time.

• (1510)
[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during my conversations with Richmond Hill constituents, mental health repeatedly emerges as a pressing issue that our government must tackle. Many of the challenges mentioned included long wait times for appointments and the absence of local community-based services. Can the minister update the House on what she is doing to promote and advance mental health services in Canada?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no Canadian who does not have a friend or family member affected by mental illness.

[Translation]

Every member of the House knows someone with mental health problems. We all know that we must do more to make mental health services more accessible. I met with my counterparts last month.

[English]

As part of our discussions on the new health accord, I am working with the provinces and territories to make lasting transformation so that we can better serve the mental health needs of Canadians.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are dying every day from illicit fentanyl. We assume that the minister followed health committee testimony ahead of the opioid study that is later this week. We were told by the RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency that almost all of the illicit fentanyl on Canadian streets is coming from one single country. Unless we turn off that tap, these deadly drugs will continue to pour onto our streets and kill Canadians. Can the minister confirm that China is the main source of illegal fentanyl; and what has she done to stop it?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice, and I have had a series of consultations with our provincial counterparts. The provinces of Alberta and British Columbia are particularly concerned about this issue. It is a health issue. It is also very much a criminal justice issue and an import issue. We are working on a strategy at the moment to address all aspects of this very serious problem. Fentanyl is a scourge upon this country, and we all must work together to make sure we deal with it effectively.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am following up on a question asked yesterday of the Minister of National Defence by my colleague from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. It is about the Shawnigan Lake quarry, which has been shown to violate its permits. It was approved for contaminated-soil disposal, but downstream, where 12,000 residents of Vancouver Island depend on it for drinking water, there are carcinogens: toluene, chromium, and aluminum. The source, unfortunately, is that DND is using this facility for the disposal of contaminated soil from

Speaker's Ruling

CFB Esquimalt. Will the minister immediately end shipments of contaminated soil to this quarry?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, provincial and territorial governments are responsible for approval, licensing, and monitoring of waste-management operations in this country. The Province of British Columbia issued a permit relating to the establishment of a soil remediation facility in Shawnigan Lake. Environment and Climate Change Canada officials have conducted a review and are monitoring the situation. However, at this time, no potential Fisheries Act violations have been identified. Potential pollution issues and prevention issues related to the issuance of the permit should be directed to the environmental protection branch of B.C.'s Ministry of Environment.

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[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Yesterday, following question period, the member for Beloeil—Chambly rose to request that I investigate whether a member of the Press Gallery had been prevented from attending a committee meeting, as had been reported on social media. At the time, I undertook to review the situation and can now inform the House that a journalist did in fact initially experience some difficulty accessing yesterday's meeting of the Standing Committee on National Defence.

[English]

This was due to an error on the part of security personnel assigned to the room, who believed that the committee meeting in question was taking place in camera. Such meetings, of course, have restricted access.

[Translation]

As soon as security personnel were made aware that the meeting was in fact a public one, the journalist was permitted to attend the committee meeting and observe the proceedings.

[English]

The importance of proper access to parliamentary proceedings cannot be overstated as it is an integral component of our parliamentary democracy. I can reassure the House that all efforts will be made by the Parliamentary Protective Service to ensure that such an incident is not repeated in the future.

• (1515)

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Beloeil—Chambly for bringing this matter to my attention and to the attention of the House.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 33 petitions.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled Canada-Mongolia Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement, done at Ulaanbaatar on September 8, 2016. An explanatory memorandum is included with this treaty.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs in relation to its study of the supplementary estimates (B) for the fiscal year 2016-17.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 16th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the order of the second reading of private members' bills introduced in the Senate and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

[English]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) the report is deemed adopted.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development in relation to Bill C-238, an act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury. The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House with amendment.

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-321, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (prohibition of asbestos).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce a bill that would ban a deadly substance, asbestos. I have heard from many constituents who have lost loved ones to this terrible scourge, and the epidemic of asbestos related deaths must be stopped.

I am always open to working with the government to ensure the health and safety of Canadians. I hope all members of the House will support the bill.

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

* * *

● (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move that the second report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Friday, March 11, be concurred in.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to talk about the business of the finance committee and also about where the government is taking our country from a financial, economic point of view, or should I say mismanaging our economy as it stands today. It could be entitled "A trail of broken promises".

Let me deal with three of the more major broken promises on which the government campaigned, yet today still has broken the solemn promise to Canadians.

The first is on deficits. The government believes it can spend its way to prosperity. This has been tried by other governments. In my province of Ontario, where I was in business for 25 years, I watched consecutive Liberal governments and NDP governments try to spend their way to prosperity, and it ended in disaster. Today, it is a disaster in Ontario, with our province being the most indebted sub-sovereign government in all of North America.

The promise that was made by the government was small deficit spending. Instead, we find out in the fall economic update that the deficit will be \$31 billion for this fiscal year. Let me register that with Canadians one more time. The deficit will be \$31 billion, not the \$10 billion that was promised. Not one job has been created since the Liberals were elected as a result of spending this money. It is a false message that we can spend our way to prosperity. It is a disaster.

The second is lowering taxes for small business. We all campaigned on doing that, all of our parties. However, when we received the budget last spring, something was missing. It was that small business tax reduction.

Routine Proceedings

All of us know the importance of small business. All of us know the statistics, that 80% of good paying, full-time jobs are created by small business. What does this mean to individuals who are planning expansions, or perhaps who are employing 20 people and are on the verge of employing 10 more or five more people? It means companies have to stop and give it a second thought. It means that as the government moves forward with additional taxes on them, mainly the CPP hidden tax increase, a payroll tax, along with what is coming with the carbon tax, they are now looking at their situation a whole lot differently. In fact, they are thinking that maybe they should just stay small, or reduce the size of their operations, or depending on how long the owners will be in the business, perhaps it is not worth the effort anymore. Many businesses are making that decision.

Make no mistake, as a government, we were heading in the right direction. We were telling them about the tax reductions they would be allowed, the credits for new hires, the EI holiday for new hires, things that were incentives to small business. What we have seen are total disincentives since the present government came to power.

Perhaps the one we heard most about from businesses, large, medium and small, at finance committee during our pre-budget consultations and after the budget was when the government would commit to what it said it would do during the election campaign, which was bring us back to balance. In other words, if the Liberals are to deficit spend because they made that promise, they broke that by spending three times as much as they said.

However, when will the Liberals bring the economy back to balance, bring the books back to balance? We have seen, since the Liberals have been in power for over a year now, that there is absolutely no intention to bring things back to balance.

● (1525)

This is a record that is replaying itself. I remember a time in the early years of my own business when governments were spending like drunken sailors, and there was no plan. It had to come to a reckoning, and it came to a reckoning, with the government having to make major cutbacks in provincial health transfers. It was done in an arbitrary way. It was done without consultation. It had to be done, because deficits had grown beyond the country's ability to go any further in terms of debt repayment.

Another issue has resulted since this administration has come into power, and that is that investments are exiting this country right now. The investment community has looked at things it was intending to do to expand, and it is leaving. Let me give the House an example in my riding.

There is a company in my riding that does heavy forging. It forges large pieces that go into oil and gas and hydroelectric installations. I am talking about forgings the length of this room and four feet in diameter. The company is a huge energy user as a result. Let me talk about this company from a couple of fronts.

First of all, this company also has operations in the United States. When it looks at the cost of producing in Canada, it factors in, every month, enormous costs for electricity and gas. The company is located in the heart of southern Ontario. Ontario today has the highest electricity rates in all of North America. What does that mean

for this company? It means that the provincial government does not really care how much electricity is costing it. How much would it be to move its operations south of the border, which is going to happen to more and more companies?

Further to that, at the federal government level, a carbon tax is coming into place. The last time there was an analysis of a carbon tax was during the 2008 election. During that election, there was a Liberal proposal on the table to bring in a carbon tax. The owner of this forging company calculated, per employee, how much more cost would be borne by the business as a result of that carbon tax. At that time, the analysis was \$9,000 per employee per year. Do the math. It would be 400 good-paying jobs times \$9,000 per employee. I do not have the math for what the Liberal government is proposing now, but it is going to be more than \$9,000.

The decisions of this company ride on being competitive worldwide. Those 400 jobs could very well move south of the border. Then there are the changes in the landscape with the new administration in the United States. The new administration in the United States has said that it will reduce taxes to the lowest possible level to bring back to the United States industries that have fled and other industries that want to locate there. Many states have already been doing it with tax holidays for companies, property tax holidays, and credits for employees for a period of time. There have been many incentives. Many of them have been resisted by businesses.

As this go forward, the competitive nature of the way companies like this operate will pretty much be the death knell of many of them in Canada. I fear that. I come from a blue collar community that has a heritage of manufacturing, which we have seen go offshore for many years. The ones we have left, we want to keep, because they are good-paying jobs.

● (1530)

Yet the present government has not created one job over the course of the time it has been in power. "Spend, spend, spend" has been its mantra, never with a plan to pay it back.

I urge all members to pay attention to what is going on in—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go to questions and comments, there is a lot of noise coming from the floor. If members want to have conversations, please take them off the floor, because there are important discussions being had here.

Questions and comments.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservative Party chose this particular report. I think Canadians appreciate what is actually happening. An enormous amount of work has been done by the finance committee for this particular report. We can appreciate that what is important to Canadians is important to this government. We have demonstrated that in the 2016-17 budget, a budget that delivers, in many ways, tangible items.

Routine Proceedings

We can talk about the tax increase for Canada's wealthiest 1%, or, most important, the middle-class tax cut. We can talk about the Canada child benefit expansion. There is so much more. There is the increase in the guaranteed income supplement.

Would the member not agree that the finance committee has an important role to play in looking over the implementation budget, which should be going to the committee shortly?

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, to answer the question, there is absolutely a key role for the finance committee to play. It is to make sure that governments do not go into deficit without a plan to come out of deficit and without a plan to balance.

At the finance committee, we heard from the finance minister on a number of occasions. When asked this question, all we had was an evasive answer at first, and then no answer thereafter.

What we heard from witness and after witness, including banks and representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, was that they were elected to run a deficit, but when were they going to take it back to balance? The answer is that they have no answer.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for the opportunity to consider the committee's pre-budget consultation report.

We know that infrastructure was a big part of the Liberal plan, and a promise. It was certainly talked about in the pre-budget consultations. There was a lot of controversy, it seems in the report, from various groups, about whether going ahead with a certain model of infrastructure bank was actually a good idea. One of the suggestions, to be sure, was to further study the idea.

We heard just in question period today the extent to which the government's own Minister of Infrastructure and Communities is confused about how its Canadian infrastructure bank model is actually going to work. The Liberals did not do the study and have not issued any conclusions, yet they have announced the infrastructure bank, which is passing strange. In fact, they have already met with the investors they are supposed to be using the bank to leverage, even though, by their own admission, they have no idea how the process is going to work.

I would just like to hear what the hon. member has to say about rushing ahead with a project and really having no idea where it is going, where it is going to end up, what the goals are, and what it is going to cost Canadians.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Mr. Speaker, the member is actually drilling down to the fact that perhaps this will be another one of those promises, without any detail, that will come back and haunt the economy.

Let us be very clear. What investors at this level want to do is make as much profit and as much margin as they can on their investments, and they want to reduce risk. We do not know yet, but we are very close to perhaps knowing what investors think. If they can offload the risk to taxpayers by having this bank, yet gain all of the return and profits from these projects, this will be the perfect scenario.

We are watching very closely what the government does in terms of the structure. It has given us no details at all.

While we have a model that is working, what we call P3, the government is deciding to undo that on the speculation that investors will be the ones who will cover both sides of the equation, profit and risk. However, they perhaps will not take the risk, and it will be left to Canadian taxpayers.

The Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Carleton.

• (1535)

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I am not trying to backseat drive here or anything like that.

With all due respect to my colleague from Carleton, I did have to listen to him quite a bit on Sunday, and I think the House would like to hear some good Saskatchewan wisdom. So I move:

That, the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands be now heard.

I did see him standing up before the member started speaking.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1615)

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

(Division No. 150)

YEAS

Members

Alhabra	Alleslev
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Arseneault
Ashton	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Bittle	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Breton
Brison	Brosseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Choquette
Clarke	Clement

Routine Proceedings

Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Dhaliwal
 Doherty
 Dreeshen
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Généreux
 Gerretsen
 Godin
 Goodale
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Hehr
 Holland
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kent
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Lebel
 Lebouthillier
 Leslie
 Liepert
 Lobb
 Long
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Maguire
 Mathysen
 McCallum
 McCrimmon
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Moore
 Motz
 Nantel
 Nater
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Petipas Taylor
 Picard
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Richards
 Romanado
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Scarpaleggia
 Serre
 Shanahan
 Shields
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sorbara
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Stubbs
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vandenbeld
 Cuzner
 Deltell
 Dhillon
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Duvall
 Eglinski
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Falk
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fry
 Garneau
 Genuis
 Gill
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Harder
 Hoback
 Hughes
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Levitt
 Lightbound
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacGregor
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saanch—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 McGuinty
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 Nicholson
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Peschisolido
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Rayes
 Robillard
 Rota
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Saroya
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Shipley
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Stewart
 Sweet
 Tan
 Tootoo
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Vaughan

Viersen
 Warawa
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid
 Virani
 Waugh
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young
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NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anandasangaree
 Barlow
 Block
 Boucher
 Bratina
 Chan
 Damoff
 Di Iorio
 Easter
 Garrison
 Hardie
 Housefather
 Kelly
 Kmiec
 Ludwig
 MacKenzie
 Marcil
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McKay
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 Peterson
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 Albas
 Aldag
 Amos
 Arya
 Barsalou-Duval
 Bossio
 Brassard
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Cooper
 DeCoursey
 Diotte
 El-Khoury
 Gladu
 Harvey
 Kang
 Kitchen
 Lake
 Lukiwski
 Maloney
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McDonald
 Nault
 Ouellette
 Poilievre
 Rempel
 Rusnak
 Sopuck
 Strahl
 Thériault
 Vecchio
 Webber

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in the excitement of the moment, I voted both yes and no. I want to clarify that my vote is yes.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the clarification. We do not want a vote both ways.

The hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George has a point of order.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, in the moment of sheer excitement, and in a moment of reflection, I voted yes when I should have been voting no. I would much prefer to hear the hon. colleague for Carleton speak on this.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, when this motion was being read, I was yelling out that it was a shame that the opposition is carrying on in such a way—

● (1620)

The Speaker: This sounds like debate, I am afraid, and not a point of order.

The hon. member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall: Mr. Speaker, I must apologize, I had a clarification of conscience after voting yes. Now, I must tell you that my vote is no, and I did vote twice during the proceedings.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: I thank the member, and I trust that is all the clarifications for today.

Order. The hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso will come to order.

I have exciting news, and members will want to hear this.

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 Drummond, Official Languages; the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Foreign Affairs.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I am tabling the government response to questions Nos. 520 to 526.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the members in the House for having such great confidence in me, in spite of the campaign that my colleague for Carleton launched as well. I was very thankful, Mr. Speaker, that you did not have to cast the deciding vote.

I am very thankful for the support of government members, but I think they are going to be disappointed here in the next few minutes, just as Canadians have been disappointed in the last year that they have had to face the consequences of having elected the government across from us.

Certainly this has been a long year. The economy has slowed down and obviously it is affecting Canadians across the country. I want to talk a little bit about my area—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We have resumed debate. I encourage members to take their conversations into the lobbies, out on the front lawn, or somewhere other than in here.

I encourage members to listen to the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands who has the floor.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I did want to take a bit of time to talk about the impact that the current government has had on my area.

As members know, Cypress Hills—Grasslands is a large part of southwestern Saskatchewan and agriculture has been a big issue. Agriculture has done well over the last few years. Prices have been up. We have had some fairly good crops. Obviously, the snow and the weather this fall has impacted agriculture in a huge way. There has also been quite a change in cattle prices over the last year, so a lot of the cattlemen are facing pressures that they have not faced over the last couple of years.

Certainly, one thing that has helped over the past few years has been the previous government's commitment to trade agreements. It signed over 35 trade agreements around the world, which has impacted agriculture directly in our part of the world. It is good to see that CETA did not fall apart under the current government. It appears that it did everything it could to create problems with respect to having CETA implemented but we see that there was a step taken

here in the last couple of weeks, and it looks like it will be implemented at some point in Europe, and that is a good thing.

There is a question I guess on what the future of the TPP is. We have seen a change of government in the United States. President-elect Trump has made it very clear that he does not support TPP. We in this country believe that the trans-Pacific partnership generally is a good thing for Canadians and that having that partnership with those specific nations would only benefit us in terms of trade.

The second area in my riding that is of great importance to me is oil and gas. The energy sector has been a major factor in our part of the world and it is unfortunate to see the government, and the Alberta government in particular, create so much uncertainty for the oil and gas sector in western Canada. I am from Saskatchewan. I am very thankful that we have had a strong government there, one that is committed to natural resources, and a premier who was willing to speak his mind and who in many ways led the way around the world in terms of leadership on this issue. I should mention the carbon capture and storage project that is in place in southeastern Saskatchewan. It has had a huge impact and is an example of what we can do in terms of innovative technology with respect to carbon.

We would expect that the government would have a bit more interest in the kinds of things that will allow our oil and gas industry to develop responsibly, one of which is the Keystone pipeline. It has been very important to many of us. There has been pipe lying in my riding now for almost 10 years for the Keystone pipeline. I think some of it has been re-coated once already because it had been lying out long enough that it needed it. I would certainly like to see that pipeline laid underground rather than sitting on top of the ground. Hopefully, that will happen soon. So far, the government across the way has said that it will not interfere with the Keystone pipeline construction. We can only take it at its word. We hope that it is not misleading Canadians on this. We look forward to the revival of interest in Keystone across the border and the movement of several hundred thousand barrels of oil a day down into the United States to the gulf, which actually does give us an opportunity to export some of our product and to find new markets as well. Therefore, when I hear the natural resource minister say that the government is not really that interested in Keystone anymore, we need to remind him that this is an important part of economic development in western Canada and that he does need to continue to support that. It will be interesting to see whether that pipeline and growth in that sector will be supported by the government because it has already been approved in western Canada and it needs to move ahead. We do not believe that the government should stand in the way. Hopefully, it will keep its word when it said that it would not do that.

Western Canadians are becoming disenchanted with the current government and are somewhat tired of feeling like they are not being heard at all by the government, particularly on natural resource development.

Routine Proceedings

The government will need as much help as possible with economic growth. We are over a year into its mandate and it has yet to create one single full-time job, which it should be apologizing to Canadians for instead of bragging about its economic platform. Its spending is ballooning, getting larger all the time, and growing at an incredible rate. Its deficits are skyrocketing. It does not seem like that long ago that we thought it was ridiculous that it was promising \$10-billion deficits, and people in our part of the country even rejected that notion. We are now looking at deficits in the neighbourhood of \$30 billion, and perhaps more, extending out as far as we can see into the horizon and out to the future. People are tired of broken promises and they are already tired of stagnant federal leadership. It has only been a year and they are already getting tired of what they are seeing.

• (1625)

It is just incredible that after all of this and all the noise that we have heard from the Liberals, there has not been one full-time job that they can show has been created in this country by their economic plan. Their economic plan has failed. Canadians are already paying for it. We find out that the Liberals are borrowing an extra \$32 billion over the next five years, with no reason to believe that things are going to get better.

Speaking of \$30 billion takes us somewhat into the area of this new infrastructure investment bank that the Liberals are proposing and suggesting moving about \$35 billion, I believe, into this bank. It does not appear that it would be very useful or helpful for Canadians to have a large-scale infrastructure bank that protects billionaire investors who would come perhaps from other countries and from Canada. Their liabilities would be limited while the taxpayers' liabilities would be infinite. It does not seem like a fair way to treat Canadians; it does not seem like a fair way to treat taxpayers.

We had a very successful infrastructure program going. The Liberals just seem bound and determined that they are going to wipe that out just because they can.

There are a lot of other things that are taking place. There are the Liberal tax hikes that Canadians are facing. Red tape is increasing. It is just making things even worse for Canadians. We remember things like the fact that the Liberals cancelled the family tax credit for sports and arts classes; they cancelled small-business tax cuts. That was significant across the country because at the same time they want to increase CPP premiums so businesses and individuals would be tagged for up to \$2,200, perhaps even more than that, in order to cover those increases that the Liberals think they need. That CPP tax hike is something that Canadians need to be paying attention to because it would not actually impact this generation. It would take 20 to 30 to 40 years before it would be fully realized. Some people would be paying into this for a number of years and would never get anything out of it. They do not seem to understand that is the case.

The carbon tax is another issue. I spent six years on the natural resource committee, and we talked a lot about carbon, carbon dioxide, carbon taxes. We talked about carbon exchanges and we talked about putting a price on carbon. It seemed like every one of these schemes that is being suggested in Canada has been tried somewhere else and it has failed somewhere else. Now we come late to the game and we insist on then being part of this whole process.

I move:

That the House do now adjourn.

• (1630)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1710)

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

(Division No. 151)

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	Poillievre
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren

Routine Proceedings

Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warkentin
 Webber
 Zimmer— 81

Vecchio
 Warawa
 Waugh
 Wong

NAYS

Members

Aldag
 Alleslev
 Anandasangaree
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis
 Beech
 Benson
 Blaikie
 Boissonnault
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef

Alghabra
 Amos
 Angus
 Arya
 Aubin
 Badawey
 Bains
 Beaulieu
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boulerice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Choquette
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Drouin
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Gameau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Husson
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Laverdière
 Lebouthillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Malcolmson
 Maril
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore

Morrissey
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 Ouellette
 Peschisolido
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Ratansi
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Robillard
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sorbara
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudel
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 212

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion rejected.

Questions and comments after the speech by the hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must admit I am a little surprised. We just had a vote as a result of a member who wanted to see the House take a break. In government, we are here to work.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I know members are anxious for the House to continue.

The hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, we have an aggressive agenda as government. There is the cut to the middle-class tax bracket, the Canada child benefit program, and the substantial increase in the GIS for our seniors. We are lifting seniors out of poverty. We are lifting children out of poverty. We can talk about the investment in Canada's infrastructure. There are so many things in the budget and the government's mandate. We are disappointed that the member saw fit to attempt to adjourn the House.

The very bill that we hoped to debate today, Bill C-26, is a historic agreement that would see millions of Canadians benefit. My question for the member is very specific. Why does the Conservative Party attempt to adjourn debate when there is so much that Canadians want us to do?

Routine Proceedings

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the obvious answer is that the best thing for Canadians would be if this agenda never saw the light of day. It is unbelievable what has happened since the government has taken over. It has not created one full-time job yet. The Bank of Canada says the government's new housing rules will cost the economy \$6 billion by the end of 2018. Our bank economists around the country are publicly calling out the government, telling it to quit adding additional spending. We see that GDP growth is going to be 10% lower than had been projected, down from 1.4% to 1.2% in 2016, and from 2.2% to 2% in 2017. What more do Canadians need to hear than that this government's agenda has been a complete and total failure to this point?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's speech with regard to Canadians not being heard and that conditions are being made worse for Canadians. Then I heard our hon. colleague over the way taking offence to an adjournment motion because he is concerned that there are so many things that we need to do for Canadians.

I would like to ask the member this. Does he understand and is he concerned that we are debating a motion about CPP enhancements that are ignoring vulnerable people? They are persons living with disabilities and women who have opted out of the workforce because of child rearing. These issues could be fixed with very simple amendments. It is almost disingenuous to hear the rhetoric today, if there really is a genuine desire for us to be addressing and doing the real hard work that the House of Commons needs to do. I would like the member talk about how he understands the hypocrisy of this.

• (1715)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the member is exactly right. The frustration that Canadians are feeling with having to deal with the government is reaching limits that we have not seen in decades, probably since the time the Prime Minister's father was prime minister of the country.

The reality is that we are spending our time talking about CPP premium hikes that are going to impact every employer and employee across the country. These hikes will not come into effect for another 20, 30, and 40 years before people will be directly impacted by them. It is going to cost a lot of money, and it will slow down the economy.

During the worse economic downturn since the recession, our government had the best record of job creation and economic growth among all of the G7. We reduced taxes to their lowest point in 50 years, with a family of four saving almost \$7,000 a year as a result. After running a targeted stimulus program that created and maintained approximately 200,000 jobs, we kept our promise. We balanced the budget. We left the Liberals with a surplus, and now we have this disaster that they have brought in after only one year.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and to put forward, in a very clear way, what I believe is somewhat of a tragic story by the Conservative opposition. I believe we are seeing a Conservative Party that has really lost touch with what Canadians want to see and what their expectations are of government.

Let me go further and say that it is more than just an expectation of government, but that Canadians as a whole have an expectation of the official opposition, too. What we are seeing today is disappointment in the official opposition.

One of the things that Canadians truly believe in is the Canada pension plan. They believe in its importance. We have witnessed the provinces, territories, and every region of our country recognize the importance of the CPP. Only the Conservative Party, the party that has lost touch with Canadians, does not recognize what Canadians want. That is really what Bill C-26 is all about.

It is about delivering to Canadians what Canadians have been asking for, and not just for one year but for many years. It is the type of thing that Stephen Harper—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I am sure my friend across the way is well familiar with the rules of the House. He should know Standing Order 18, which says:

No Member may reflect upon any vote of the House, except for the purpose of moving that such vote be rescinded.

Now, he has reflected on the vote of the House, in terms of the adjournment proceedings, and he has done so repeatedly. I would ask that the member be brought to order in terms of his question and subsequent comments.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): After much discussion, I do want to indicate, first of all, the seriousness of the issue. I would tend to think that the point of order was leaning more to the debate side. There is some flexibility at this point.

I also want to remind members that when someone has the floor, we should give them that respect to have the floor as opposed to yelling across the way. That was happening.

The information is very well taken. I am sure the member is going to get directly to the issue we are now debating.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the document the finance committee brought forward is all about the budget and the consultations that took place for the 2016-17 budget. It is the first time we saw the Minister of Finance, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, the government as whole, and even members of the entire caucus reaching out to constituents.

We took it seriously when the Prime Minister said that he wanted us to connect with Canadians and listen to what Canadians had to say. We took that seriously did just that. That is the subject matter of the report that the Conservative Party chose to talk about today.

It is with pleasure that I rise and tell my Conservative colleagues that they should really rethink the way they have voted in regard to our budget. They made a mistake. They need to be reminded of just exactly how they voted on this budget.

Routine Proceedings

Let us think about it. What did the Conservatives vote against? They voted against a substantial decrease in personal income taxes on Canada's middle class. Who are they? They are our firefighters, factory workers, teachers, health care professionals, and so many other individuals, nine million plus from every region of our country. They are the ones who are getting the tax break. The Conservative Party voted against that. The Conservative Party also voted against a tax increase on Canada's wealthiest. Even Canada's wealthiest recognize that they want to participate and pay their fair share.

What else did the Conservatives vote against? We have the highest historical level of infrastructure spending by the government. That Conservative Party, the official opposition, voted against that. These—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1720)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I want to remind the official opposition again that I am hearing a lot of yelling on that side. If members look at Standing Order 16(2), it says:

When a Member is speaking, no Member shall pass between that Member and the Chair, nor interrupt him or her, except to raise a point of order.

Therefore, I would request that members respect the Standing Order and show respect for the member who has the floor.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, again, infrastructure is of such critical importance for all Canadians in every region, from coast to coast to coast. We need to invest in infrastructure. This Prime Minister and this government have recognized the need for infrastructure expenditures and we have put more money into infrastructure in the history of this country. In fact, for many years I sat in opposition and saw Stephen Harper and the Conservative government do nothing in recognition of the importance of infrastructure. That is why I feel that the Conservatives, once again, made a mistake by voting against this budget.

If we want to talk about helping Canadians, let us think back to what I made reference to in my questions. This budget would make substantial increases to Canada's child benefit program. That would assist tens of thousands of children in every region of our great nation. They would be lifted out of poverty as a direct result of this budget. What happened? The official opposition voted against the budget, denying that benefit.

However, it does not end there. What about seniors, some of the most vulnerable in our society? Let us talk about single seniors who are finding it difficult and have to decide whether they buy the medications they need or food. Quite often, seniors make the decision to buy medications and go to a food bank. This Prime Minister and this government have recognized the importance of increasing the GIS for the most vulnerable seniors in our society. Once again, the Conservative Party voted against that.

I can go on. If we want to talk about vision, this is a government that demonstrates leadership with a vision and takes actions, something we did not see with the Conservative Party. Let me provide two examples, one of which we were supposed to talk about this afternoon, the Canada pension plan in this budget. If members had listened when Liberals talked about canvassing Canadians from

coast to coast to coast, they would have heard that pensions were very important to them.

A historical agreement by this government demonstrates leadership. Provinces of all political stripes came on board. They recognized what Canadians see as very important, which was to increase CPP, because it is not just about today. We should be thinking about future generations also, and that is what having a vision and a plan is all about. That is something that this government and this Prime Minister brought to the table and were able to deliver in a substantial way.

In this entire country, as best I can tell, the Conservative Party is the only political entity that actually opposes investing in pension programs. In fact, if we listened to the speeches that the Conservatives made on Bill C-26, one would question whether they even believe in the CPP.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I believe this is something that the Conservative Party needs to reflect on in terms of its voting pattern in the House.

It does not stop there. We have the Paris agreement. How many of our constituents talked to us about the importance of the environment?

An hon. member: Many.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Many is right, and I can say that many is not just in Liberal ridings. That many—

• (1725)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. I know that this is a very passionate debate, but I am sure that members of the official opposition are able to restrain themselves.

An hon. member: It's hard.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It may be hard, but, again, I am sure members want the respect that others afforded them when they were speaking and I am sure that the parliamentary secretary would also appreciate that respect, as would the people who are watching this today.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons can continue.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, let us continue. We have the Paris agreement, which is a historical demonstration of strong leadership from the Prime Minister, cabinet, and caucus, a caucus that has recognized what Canadians really want to see, a government that is genuinely concerned about our environment. I have knocked on many doors over the last year. Many constituents have told me, whether at McDonald's, or at their door, wherever it might be, that they are concerned about the environment. They want to see a government take action. Why? It is in good part because the Stephen Harper Conservative government did nothing on the environment. That government stood by and did absolutely nothing.

Private Members' Business

Now for the first time we have seen historical action by this government in terms of leadership. We managed to get the provinces of many different political stripes come to the table and say they are in favour of having a price on carbon. That is the responsible thing to do. It is not any sort of a revenue grab. That is a false argument, because the federal government will not receive any money from the price on carbon. It will go to the provinces and it will be up to the provinces to determine what is going to happen on their side.

We have an aggressive agenda in regard to health care. We only need to ask Canadians. Members only need to ask their constituents what is important to them. More often than not we will find that health care is one of the issues that comes up all of the time.

For the first time in many years we have a Minister of Health who truly cares about the role that Canada has to play in the future development of health care. For many years the Conservative government did nothing to renew the health care accord. Conservative members talk about having put lots of money into health care. No. The federal Conservatives never put more money into health care. It was—

Mr. Phil McColeman: Are you kidding me?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: No, I am not kidding. Pay attention.

It was Paul Martin who put into the health care accord—

Mr. Phil McColeman: Six per cent a year. Sit down.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. We only have about four minutes left before the debate ends for the rest of the day on this issue. I would hope that you would want to hear what the member has to say and that you could jot down the questions that are coming to your mind instead of having to yell them out.

Before I continue, I want to remind members that Standing Order 16(2) states that “When a member is speaking no member shall... interrupt him or her, except to raise a point of order”. Therefore, I remind members not to interject when a colleague has the floor.

On a point of order the member for Brantford—Brant.

Mr. Phil McColeman: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The Conservative government put 6% a year more into health care every year—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry that is not a point of order. It is debate.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Madam Speaker, the member must address his comments to the Chair, not directly to us, but that is what he just did.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member who has the floor must indeed address all remarks through the Chair. I do hope that members will show a little more restraint.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, health care today is financed to the degree it is because of Paul Martin and the health care accord that was achieved under a Liberal administration. That is the reason why we have the funds going into health care that we have today.

We are very quickly running out of time. I do have a pet peeve when I see Conservative member after Conservative member stand up and give the impression that they represent the interests of the province of Alberta. I am a Prairie member of Parliament and for years I saw a Conservative government ignore the needs of the province of Alberta. What is good for Alberta is good for Canada and vice versa. The Conservatives failed to recognize the importance of pipelines and the environment. The Conservatives failed to deliver any pipelines to tidewater.

When we look at other issues surrounding the Alberta economy, I would suggest that the Government of Canada has been there. We can look at the employment insurance issue. We can look at how different departments work together to try to alleviate many of the pressures that are being applied in the province of Alberta. We can look at what ministers are doing to empower Albertans, such as infrastructure expenditures. The Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, who is from Alberta, clearly demonstrated a number of projects that this government has invested billions of dollars into.

The point is that this government cares about what is taking place in Alberta as it cares about all regions of this country, unlike the Conservative Party that had wedge issues divide and conquer. This is a government that truly cares about what is happening in every region of the country. Canadians know that we are prepared to listen and to act on the best interests of all Canadians.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have six and a half minutes remaining the next time this issue is brought before the House.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC) moved that Bill C-301, an act to amend the Income Tax Act and to make a related amendment to another act (registered retirement income fund), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to speak to my private member's bill, and also to interrupt my colleague's rant from across the floor, Bill C-301, the RRIF financial security act to remove the mandatory minimum withdrawal for seniors holding a registered retirement income fund account.

Private Members' Business

As members of the House should know, retirement is daunting. Planning for life after work is not easy, it is not cheap, and it is not always predictable. The Canadian government has taken great strides throughout the past decade to alleviate the stress of retirement, including increasing the guaranteed income supplement, creating tax-free savings accounts, and introducing income splitting for seniors. The previous government also took an important step forward in helping Canadians by lowering the mandatory withdrawal rate for seniors who held an RRIF.

These measures have led to the lowest poverty rate ever among seniors in Canada. This is a record of which to be proud.

There are still some seniors unable to fully and happily live out their retirement, knowing their savings are sufficient and secure. This is where we must focus our attention. They need our attention, not just in the long term, not just in the next 40 years but now. Removing the mandatory minimum withdrawal on registered retirement income funds will help all of our seniors today.

This legislation would fix an outdated structure that needlessly penalizes Canadians who have spent their lifetime saving for retirement. The probability today of a 71-year-old female living to 94 has almost doubled since 1992. For men, the probability has almost tripled. In the same time, the average return on long-term Government of Canada bonds has decreased by almost two-thirds. In 1992, a 71-year-old woman making minimum withdrawals could expect to use about two-fifths of her savings before reaching her life expectancy. Today, she needs to plan to use about twice as much. She faces a one-in-four chance of outliving her savings entirely. As her life expectancy continues to increase and the average returns continue to decrease, the problem is clear. Too many seniors are outliving their savings because of these archaic rules.

The budget 2015 reduction in the RRIF withdrawal rate was a step in the right direction. However, this response does not go far enough.

The issue that the reduction started to address was the idea that circumstances change. This is true of most private living. However, because government is a removed, cumbersome institution, it cannot possibly react as quickly as individuals can to changing life circumstances. When something unexpected happens, such as, happily, we live longer than we expected, or if our loved one needs late-in-life care, or if we simply want to enjoy our retirement knowing that our income is safe and accounted for, there is no good reason to force us to prematurely withdraw our savings and be taxed.

As mentioned, budget 2015 was a good first step. A lower mandatory withdrawal rate is better, but gone entirely is ideal. Ideal is rarely achieved, however, and we compromise on the ideal solution when it is infeasible, impractical, or undesired. In the case of mandatory withdrawals, however, there are no grounds for compromise. The fact is that a change like this is neither infeasible nor impractical. Nor are the changes undesirable.

In fact, when I was president of the Greater Victoria Eldercare Foundation, a foundation looking after six hospitals for seniors, the elderly, and the severely disabled, my colleagues and I understood that RRIF mandatory withdrawals were an unnecessary and punitive regime.

While meeting constituents in my riding of Edmonton West, the seniors I spoke with were overwhelmingly in favour of such a change.

Since introducing this bill to the House back in September, my office has received an enormous amount of calls from seniors across the country in support of this bill, the bill that would return control over their retirement, seniors like Bert and Mary Meeker who are continuously forced to take more money than they need from their RRIFs and, consequently, must pay more in taxes.

I know the government loves raising taxes, but surely even it would agree that forcing seniors to pay higher taxes is unreasonable.

Speaking to the broad spectrum of support for the measures enacted by this bill, both the C.D. Howe Institute and the Canadian Association for Retired Persons, or CARP, have indicated their support for removing mandatory minimum withdrawal rates entirely, after long calling for these changes.

When C.D. Howe released its 2014 report calling for the removal of the mandatory withdrawals, the *Toronto Star* newspaper collected reader responses. I would like to share what the *Toronto Star* readership thought of the proposal.

One reader said, "Why does the government need to run down tax-deferred assets so quickly? After saving for 40 years, you'd like to hold onto your money till you kick the bucket."

Another reader said, "Let me keep my money and use it until I die. Then the government can collect the taxes on what remains."

● (1735)

A third concerned reader wrote:

I maximized my RRSP contributions for many years until I retired at 66. I've always been a conservative investor. At age 71 when I converted my RRSPs to RRIFs, I was dismayed to see the compulsory withdrawals starting at 7.38% and increasing annually on a steadily diminishing amount because of low interest rates.

Another wrote:

It would be better to do away with the minimum withdrawals and allow individuals to manage their RRIF portfolio according to needs and market conditions. Most people would still withdraw something.

When we have a coalition of CARP, the C.D. Howe Institute, and the readers of the *Toronto Star* on the same side of an issue, it is probably a good policy and worth doing.

Why might seniors' advocacy groups, think tanks, and Canadians across the country support this legislation? It is because it addresses three specific harms brought by the existing out-of-date rules: supplement clawbacks, low-income seniors paying proportionally higher taxes, and harm to working seniors.

Private Members' Business

First, mandatory withdrawals trigger clawbacks of federal and provincial income supplements such as OAS, GIS, and provincial rent subsidies. Given that forced withdrawals count as income, they indiscriminately factor into income supplement eligibility.

This clawback happens whether people withdraw from a fund worth \$50,000 or \$1 million, despite the fact that a \$50,000-account holder is substantially more likely to rely on income supplements in retirement than the \$1-million account holder. More importantly, however, the clawback happens without regard for the notion that the \$50,000 might be budgeted for other major expenses.

Seniors like Pat Forrest, who wrote to my office regarding this bill, experience the harmful effects of forced withdrawals on a yearly basis. Since Pat turned 72 and had to convert her RRSP into a RRIF and begin withdrawing from her fund, she has lost her OAS.

It is a nice fantasy that seniors can live out their days comfortably. Reality demonstrates that dying is one of the most expensive acts we will undergo in our lives, and end-of-life expenses are a real, significant budgetary item we must all account for when planning our retirement. For some seniors, that planning includes holding RRIF savings until these expenses come due and utilizing income supplements in the meantime as income for day-to-day living. The mandatory withdrawals remove this ability to save and plan for large expenses later in life without providing a meaningful supplement.

Second, through this clawback setup, low-income seniors pay an effectively higher tax rate. Just to be clear, mandatory withdrawals do not necessarily result in a higher actual tax percentage but rather in a higher hit to one's net cash at the end of the year. For example, if one withdraws \$10,000 from a RRIF at some point in the year, it counts as income. Therefore, one would lose part of one's OAS and other federal and provincial benefits, which would effectively be about a 50% tax hit. A wealthier account holder who withdrew \$100,000 would lose about the same amount in government benefits, which would result in about a 5% hit. The benefit structure is regressive and unfairly targets low-income seniors with no reasonable mechanism to account for lost benefits.

Lastly, the existing structure double penalizes seniors who wish to or need to continue working. According to multiple studies and reports, including a 2011 report on retirement by Statistics Canada, more and more Canadians are working beyond the traditional retirement age, either by choice or by necessity. Forcing them to withdraw taxable income from their RRIFs will push them into a higher tax bracket on income they are earning from work, and this is on top of the taxes they are already incurring and the increased benefit clawbacks.

These three harms have a significant impact on how seniors and working Canadians plan on saving for retirement. These punitive outcomes are needless but not permanent. Eliminating the mandatory withdrawal requirement will go a long way to ensuring that Canadians can live out retirement more comfortably.

I know what my colleagues opposite are going to say. They are going to try to argue that this benefits the wealthy. They are going to say that forced withdrawals do not mean forced spending and that seniors can simply reinvest their money. Let me pre-empt these baseless criticisms.

First, these changes do not uniquely alter the thinking process for wealthy Canadians to shield their income. If wealthy seniors want to shield income and plan for retirement, they can do so already under existing rules. This legislation does not make it uniquely easier for wealthy Canadians to circumvent the rules and hide from paying taxes.

In fact, the potential benefit of enabling seniors to continue with their savings invested rather than forcing them to prematurely sell their investments could actually increase the government's tax revenues once an account holder passes away. We must not forget that RRSPs and RRIFs are not permanent accounts. Taxes will be paid eventually. The taxman always gets his pound of flesh. This legislation ensures that we are not unfairly punishing seniors so that the government can be paid a little today.

● (1740)

The second point, to borrow a phrase from CARP, is that “re-investing is not just that easy”. While forced withdrawals are not the same thing as forced spending, the idea that seniors should simply re-invest their money is disingenuous at best. According to CARP, “this approach ignores the effect of taxation on each withdrawal and the loss of investment scale that occurs when funds are diverted from a larger pool of investments into smaller accounts”.

Moreover, forcing individuals to withdraw funds ignores the effects of market timing. It is financially imprudent to require a senior to withdraw a certain sum of their savings if the market is not performing well, forcing the account holder to sell investments at a lower return than they might otherwise have earned.

Let us make sure we have something clear here: seniors today are from a different generation, one in which saving for retirement, saving for a home, saving for anything was a way of life. Having a healthy RRSP or RRIF does not mean an individual is rich. It means they scrimped, saved, and worked incredibly hard to ensure they had enough to prepare for the days when they could not work any longer.

Arguing that a policy like this is a tax break for the rich not only minimizes the hardships faced by real seniors across all income levels, but in fact also assumes that any senior who has taken the overtime, the double shifts, the holiday shifts, and forgone many opportunities in order to save for their retirement must be wealthy and does not deserve to control their income. We know that this is not the case. We know that seniors are struggling, and we know that Canadians deserve better.

Private Members' Business

None of these trends I have noted in my remarks are expected to reverse. Canadians are not expected to lose years of their life expectancy over the coming decades, nor are investments predicted to earn any more than they do presently. Canadians are predicted to work longer. Canadians are healthier than ever before, and financial retirement planning becomes more pertinent given a longer lifespan.

Government is slow to react. This is not meant as a criticism, but is simply a factual statement. Things take longer to get done when it is the government that is doing them. In the meantime, seniors suffer, Canadians face uncertainty, and no one can adequately plan for their retirement while they wait for the government to react.

We are all going to be seniors at some point, and some of us are closer to that reality than others. This is not an arm's-length issue. Any one of us could get that call from mom asking for help because her monthly GIS or OAS was taken away due to end of year income she did not need, even though she reinvested the money. It could be me, it could be any of the members in this place in 10, 15, or 20 years.

There is only one solution: eliminate the mandatory withdrawal. Stop punishing seniors for saving, and enable Canadians to manage their retirement as they see fit. Enact this broadly supported and sound legislation.

For seniors now and tomorrow, it's time to take the next step and finish the job.

• (1745)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for raising a very important issue, as I think we can all agree as members of Parliament who all have seniors in our ridings. I would say that in my riding, there are quite a few because we have an aging population.

I would like to correct the member when he said that this government did not act quickly. Let me remind him of three things we did for seniors that will benefit not only seniors of today, but future generations of seniors, because we know that seniors care not only for their children, but also their grandchildren.

The member is well aware that very recently we managed to strike a historic agreement with provinces to enhance the CPP, which will benefit generations to come. That was the right thing to do. It is the smart thing to do.

Then we went on with the GIS top-up, as the member will know, because it was very significant. We are talking about 900,000 seniors who will be helped, and mainly women who live in poverty. I am sure that the member would agree with me that this is the right thing to do as well for our country.

Then we acted on OAS eligibility, moving the age of eligibility from 67 to 65, because that is the right policy to take to help our seniors.

What we are talking about today is about tax fairness. That is what I would like to remind the member about. Why does he not agree that when we ask people to take out some money, it is because the policy objective for that is for these funds to be used at retirement?

That is what the policy is intended to do, and that is what Canadians understand the RRIF to be as well.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the government has increased the GIS. I fully support that.

The CPP changes will not help any seniors today or in 10 years. It will help seniors 25, 30, and 40 years down the road and will do nothing for seniors today.

The OAS is still set at age 65. It is set at 65 next year, and it will be set at 65 five years from now. The government did not change it to help any seniors today.

Changing the rules for the RRIF will help seniors today. There is no reason in the world we should force them to take out their savings and be subject to the taxman just to help the government with its spending issues.

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, Canada's retirement system was founded on three pillars, and this bill will be of great assistance with respect to the pillar of personal savings.

I want to look at the situation of women. We know today that the probability of a 71-year-old woman reaching her nineties is much higher than it was even 20 years ago.

Shifting the conversation to Bill C-26, I realize that the Conservatives stand against this bill, but it more than likely has the votes to pass in this House. Would the member not agree that since the bill is going to pass, the government should at least amend its own bill to fix the provisions that unfairly penalize women with respect to that all-important pillar of government pensions for retirement security?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, the member has brought up a great point. The problem we have with the CPP is that women, seniors, and widows living in poverty are the ones who are not collecting CPP right now. Adding more money to the CPP does not help those who are living in poverty who need the help. I am sure we will support anything this bill or the government does to help those living in poverty.

• (1750)

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this bill is insightful and thoughtful.

My question is this. Will it help seniors? Will it provide dignity for seniors? Will it give them choice so that they can take care of their finances and their unique challenges as they age?

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleague is a big advocate for seniors. This will help seniors immensely, and a broad range of seniors. In Edmonton, over 5,500 seniors are living in provincially assisted care, where their rent is based on their income. The fact that we are forcing them to take money out of RRIFs pushes up their income and pushes up their rent. We are taking food out of the mouths of seniors through this archaic rule.

Private Members' Business

It will help out people with children with disabilities. We have a phenomenal organization in the west end of Edmonton called Elves, which helps out the most severely disabled children. One of the biggest issues I hear from parents is the worry that they will outlive their children. We are punishing those people by making them take out their savings and taxing it and taking care away from their children in the future.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech, I would like to again thank the member for raising a very important issue. I would also like to remind members on both sides of the House that we take issues regarding seniors very seriously. That is why we acted in the first budget of this government.

What I will do now is walk the member through the policy issues behind it and the unintended consequences that following his logic would have for seniors. Let me explain.

[*Translation*]

I rise today in the House to explain in detail how the Government of Canada is trying once again to boost Canada's economy, spur sustainable economic growth, and strengthen Canada's middle class.

In the last fall economic statement, the government presented additional measures to Canadians to ensure progress for the middle class and build on the momentum generated by budget 2016. Bill C-301, this private member's bill introduced by an opposition member today, does not support long-term income security for Canadians.

This bill amends the Income Tax Act to eliminate the minimum withdrawal requirements that apply to registered retirement income funds, or RRIFs, and makes a related amendment to the Income Tax Conventions Interpretation Act. This legislation therefore undermines our current objectives in terms of retirement income, which is the point of the retirement savings tax deferrals that are offered.

The purpose of tax deferrals on cumulated savings in registered retirement savings plans, RRSPs, and in RIFFS, is essentially to help Canadians earn replacement income at retirement. By imposing a cutoff for contributions to these plans and requiring that some of the savings be withdrawn and included in annual income once an individual has reached a certain age, the tax rules ensure that the savings are used for their intended purpose, in other words, to provide retirement income.

Compulsory minimum withdrawal rates were lowered in 2015 for individuals aged 71 to 94 in order to fall in line with recently observed historical long-term real return rates and projected inflation. These new withdrawal rates, which are considerably lower than the previous withdrawal rates, allow seniors to reduce the sums they withdraw from their RIFF and thereby keep more money in it, money that will continue to cumulate with a tax deferral, in order to meet their future retirement income needs.

Eliminating mandatory minimum RRIF withdrawals will enable high-income seniors and others who do not need the savings accumulated in their RRIFs for retirement income to postpone paying tax on the full amount of those savings until they are much older, possibly even until death, in which case the assets become part of their estate. In other words, they would not be forced to withdraw

a portion of the savings in their RRIF and could defer taxes for virtually all of their retirement.

This situation is simply not compatible with the basic purpose of retirement income from tax-deferred retirement savings held in RRSPs and RRIFs. If gradual withdrawal of assets in a RRIF were not mandatory, it would be possible for some account holders to accumulate huge amounts of money in those accounts by the time they die. Consequently, large sums of money held in a RRIF would have to be included in income for the year of death. This could motivate survivors to press for tax exemptions for a portion of the deceased's RRIF assets, which would be contrary to the basic principles of our fiscal policy.

This bill would also create a major intergenerational disparity because younger seniors would not be obligated to withdraw a portion of the savings in their RRIFs every year while older seniors were forced to do so beginning at 71.

The Government of Canada took an important step to enhance seniors' income security in budget 2016, its very first budget.

● (1755)

Middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever. However, many of them are worried that they have not saved enough for their retirement.

In fact, one in four families approaching retirement age, or 1.1 million families, might not be saving enough. For that reason, the Government of Canada promised to help Canadians reach their goal of a secure and dignified retirement, and has worked with the provinces and territories to enhance the Canada pension plan.

I will outline how Canadians will benefit from the enhancements to the Canada pension plan. Once fully implemented, these enhancements will result in an increase of up to 50% in retirement benefits. The CPP provides secure and predictable benefits, which means that Canadians will not be as concerned about exhausting their savings in their lifetime or having their savings affected by turmoil in financial markets.

Canada pension plan benefits are fully indexed to inflation, which reduces the risk of price hikes gradually eroding the purchasing power of retirement savings. The CPP is also in line with Canada's changing job market. It helps to close the gap resulting from the lower coverage offered by employer pension plans and is transferable from one job and one province to another, which promotes labour force mobility. I know that my colleagues in the House will support a measure that promotes labour force mobility.

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The CPP is also a large plan with millions of contributors, which makes it possible for the CPP Investment Board to take advantage of economies of scale in order to generate healthy net returns for all Canadians. Since CPP contributions are deducted automatically for all workers across the country, the CPP is an easy way to save.

This enhancement also enables us to put young Canadians facing a difficult job market on a more solid footing. This new measure is an important step that will help ensure a secure and dignified retirement for all Canadians, something that I am sure all parliamentarians want for Canada's seniors. Enhancing the Canada pension plan is an efficient and effective way to improve retirement income security for workers and their families.

Furthermore, enhancing the Canada pension plan is a responsible budgetary move on the government's part, unlike the private member's bill introduced here today. The 28th actuarial report on the CPP tabled by the chief actuary confirms that the level of proposed contributions and benefits under the enhanced CPP is sustainable in the long term. Canadian workers can therefore count on an even stronger and more stable pension plan for many years to come.

With its fall economic statement, the Government of Canada is maintaining the momentum generated by budget 2016. It is taking action to keep the promises made to Canadians, thus laying the foundations of a better Canada for today and for future generations.

In closing, I would like to once again thank my colleague on behalf of all parliamentarians for bringing this subject before the House this evening. I think that he will understand the goal of the public policy that we are proposing, which is to ensure tax equity among generations and ensure that Canadians can retire with dignity.

I have travelled all over the country, from Moncton to Yellowknife, to talk to thousands of Canadians, and I can assure members that what we have done in budget 2016 and our proposal to enhance the Canada pension plan are exactly what Canadians expect from a responsible government, a government that puts their interests first.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Edmonton West for bringing the bill forward. I am sad to hear from the parliamentary secretary that the government will be opposing the bill. When we look at the three pillars that Canada's retirement system is based on, we know that workplace pensions are really the pillar that is suffering. Therefore, the government has to look at the other two. They are the ones where the government can have a real influence.

To the government's credit, it is bringing in Bill C-26, and it has made some amendments to the guaranteed income supplement, which deals with that third pillar of personal savings. If we allow seniors, especially in this unstable retirement environment, more freedom to choose how and when they withdraw their retirement savings, that is all the better for them.

The bill is obviously not a panacea for the difficult issues facing our seniors today, but private members' bills have to be very careful. To succeed, they have to focus on one little item where they can

make a real difference. It is really up to the government to do the rest. We will certainly be keeping our eye on the Liberal government to ensure it does that.

There may be some watching this debate who are unclear on the difference between RRSPs and RRIFs. We know that RRSPs give everyone the ability to save for their retirement, as long as they have contribution room available and based on their earnings. A PRIF is used as the fund people can withdraw from during their retirement. However, there are mandatory minimum withdrawals that a person must make every year.

The rules for these mandatory minimums were created back in 1978. While I acknowledge there certainly have been some modifications over the years, basically we have old rules that are not very well adapted to today's society and today's reality in which many retirees are living. Seniors are now living much longer than they were in the 1970s. Now RRIF holders face the very real likelihood that they will run out of money in the later stages of their retirement. When that pillar of personal savings is taken out, a person's quality of life can take a significant downhill turn. We certainly want to ensure, through this bill, that we address that very issue.

I venture to say that all members of Parliament in the chamber believe Canada's seniors deserve to retire in dignity and that the government should be doing everything it can within its power to make that a possibility. I strongly encourage support of the bill at second reading so we can at least bring it to committee for further study and hear from expert witnesses. We should at least do the bill that justice.

This has been a battle the New Democrats have been waging for some time now. I would like to point out for hon. members that it was in the previous Parliament that our pensions critic brought a motion before the House to review the retirement income fund mandatory minimum withdrawal threshold. That was John Rafferty, the former member of Parliament for Thunder Bay—Rainy River. His Motion No. 595 stated:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should review the Registered Retirement Income Fund mandatory minimum withdrawal thresholds and amend them to ensure that they do not unduly force seniors to exhaust their savings too quickly.

The NDP has a history of supporting the intent of the bill. I am very happy to be offering my support of this bill at second reading. I believe this issue deserves further study.

Our party ran on support for any action that would address mandatory minimum withdrawals from RRIFs, so the ultimate aim is to ensure that seniors are not outliving their savings. We have supported this because of the very fact that if we follow the current withdrawal schedule, we will have many retirees with average savings, which are not very high, running out of money when they are in their 90s. No one in the House should support that.

If we look at the future, it basically means people who have saved diligently all their lives could have their quality of life significantly reduced later in retirement. When the income they were relying on from their personal savings suddenly dries up, because they had to follow that mandatory withdrawal schedule, suddenly they become reliant on just the government pension system. Of course, the guaranteed income supplement will respond accordingly in some way.

• (1805)

However, removing one of those pillars, such as personal savings, could have a very drastic influence on someone. I would argue that for a senior who has made it to the age of 90 and beyond, this is the last thing we need to do to them at that particular age. They have enough concerns when they are in their 90s, they do not have to suddenly worry about their income.

When we look at Canada's demographics, we have a real tsunami heading our way. In the next 20 years, the population of Canada's seniors is set to double. Time is of the essence. This is the time when we seriously need to be bringing forward proposals. To the government's credit, they have done some but I would argue this particular measure by the member for Edmonton West is something we could also be doing for that critical third pillar of personal savings.

We know that the probability of a woman who is now 71 living into her mid-90s has basically doubled. The same rate for men has actually tripled. We basically have 265,000 Canadians right now who are in their 90s. By 2021, just a few short years away, we are going to add another 100,000 Canadians to that number. I think that mandatory minimum RRIF withdrawals are becoming increasingly irrelevant as women and men are living much longer and working more years.

This bill does not address everything. On this side, the NDP will be working hard. We will continue to work hard to improve the lives of our seniors. We will support this bill, but we think that much more needs to be done so that workers can retire with adequate incomes. More importantly, we need to make sure that seniors have access to the services they need to maintain their quality of life.

As I go on, I want to talk a little about some of the other areas where I think seniors need considerable help. I want to give a nod to my colleague, the member for London—Fanshawe for the incredible work that she has done on behalf of seniors, on the national seniors' strategy. It is a real honour to sort of inherit the mantle of the NDP seniors' critic. It is like Isaac Newton once famously said:

If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.

Certainly, the member has done such incredible work, it has allowed me to build on that base.

We know that more than a quarter of a million seniors are living below the poverty line, and that without concrete action, many more are going to fall into poverty in the future. We need that national seniors' strategy that my colleague from London—Fanshawe has brought in. It will ensure that seniors have access to high-quality and affordable health care and housing, and additionally improve the financial security, quality of life, and the integration of seniors within

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our society. This is really such a multi-faceted issue, looking at the issues that seniors face.

We certainly want to see some measure on home care. We do not want to see the same funding proposal kept that the previous Conservative government brought in. We would urge the government to look at that escalator to make sure it does not drop down to 3%, but to keep it at the current 6%. Health care budgets are drastically affecting our provinces' ability to deliver services. Now is the time for the federal government to take real leadership on this issue, to reinstate that funding that was cut under the previous government.

We need a system of a national pharmacare plan. That is one of the greatest costs that our seniors face. We do not want our seniors to have to choose between food and proper prescription medication. We also need to have real food security. One of the fundamentals of healthy living is making sure that proper, nutritious meals are available for our seniors, as well as affordable housing.

On the pension system as a whole, while I appreciate the 10% increase to the guaranteed income supplement, it really took a fairly small number of seniors off the poverty rolls. Much more needs to be done.

In conclusion, this is also a good time to remind the government that their members need to keep the promise that was made in the March 2016 budget and introduce that seniors price index. That seniors price index needs to be introduced so that we make sure our old age security and guaranteed income supplement are keeping up with the rising costs. I certainly hope to see some news from them soon.

• (1810)

In conclusion, I will be voting for this bill to go to committee for further study, but we must never rest until every senior is out of poverty and can retire with dignity.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a real honour to speak to this bill. Bill C-301 is a very important bill. As we have heard already, it is very important for Canadian seniors.

Bill C-301 proposes to amend the Income Tax Act to remove the requirement to withdraw minimum amounts from the RRIFs. It would allow Canadian seniors to adjust their withdrawals according to their individual financial situation, lowering the tax burden on them and providing more sustainable retirement income. That is it in summary. It is the right direction to go.

I would like to give a little history. I did some studying of it. It was actually back in 1978 under then prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau that the RRIF rules came in. It is kind of ironic. Here we are many years later, under the son of that former prime minister, who is the Prime Minister of the present government, being asked to fix the problem and to provide dignity and respect for seniors.

Private Members' Business

The RRIF rules came into place in 1978. Under those regulations, Canadians must withdraw from RRIFs at age 71 and their savings are subject to mandatory minimum withdrawals. These mandatory minimum withdrawals are designed to virtually empty their RRIFs by the age of 92. Given today's likely increase in life expectancy, many of the RRIF holders face running out of money, and that is not providing our Canadian seniors with the dignity they deserve.

I listened intently to the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. He is the NDP critic for seniors, and I want to thank him for the work he does. His recommendation was to send this to committee, as it is the right approach. Procedurally, this can be killed and ended in a very short period of time before the House rises. The bill would die because the Liberal majority in the House can kill the bill. The message that would send is that the Liberals do not want to hear from seniors and from seniors' stakeholders like CARP.

CARP, probably the largest seniors stakeholder in Canada, has been calling on the federal government to completely eliminate mandated minimum RRIF withdrawals. The previous government took a major step in that direction. The fact is the previous government reduced the amount that had to be withdrawn from 7.38% to 5.28%, a dramatic reduction. It was a step in the right direction taken just over a year ago. It showed that the previous government was listening to seniors and to the seniors' stakeholders.

I have been given the honour to be the official opposition critic for seniors. I have met with many of these stakeholders over the last year. It has been wonderful to hear from them. What I have heard is that they want to be listened to. They want a minister for seniors. Previous governments had a minister for seniors. The current government has a Minister of Status of Women and a minister for youth, the Prime Minister himself. There is a minister for everything except for seniors. Why is that? There are special advisers to the Prime Minister for special interest groups, but a minister for seniors is absolutely ignored. That is the number-one request I have heard across this country, to please appoint a minister for seniors. Second is to create a national seniors strategy so there is a plan.

Right now in Canada, one in six Canadians is a senior. There are more Canadian seniors than youth. They want a voice. They want the government to listen to them. They want to hear from the government that they are being listened to.

• (1815)

In six years one in five Canadians will be seniors, and in 13 years one in four will be. They will face unique challenges. They want a plan. They want the government to come up with a minister and a plan to prepare for this aging population. Part of that plan should be to make sure that we do not have a cookie-cutter approach that the Liberal government had in 1978 when life expectancy was much shorter and the government put in mandatory withdrawal requirements. Seniors want that to be reviewed.

I really thank the member for Edmonton West who came up with this idea. Let us consider it, let us debate it, and let us hear from seniors. Let us have the government listening to Canadian seniors and letting them have a voice. That was the suggestion of the member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford. He said that we should allow this to go to committee. How would that happen? When this is voted on after the second hour of debate, the government could

support the bill's going to committee so that seniors could be listened to. They would have their voice. It would go to committee and the committee would call witnesses.

I am disappointed that the government has not yet appointed a minister for seniors. The Liberals do not have a plan and they need one, but are not listening to seniors. They do not have to continue down this path, but can start listening to seniors. They can realize that dignity and respect need to be shown to seniors. It begins with some evidence that seniors are being listened to. We have heard announcements from the government that it is not going to do this, that it will kill the bill at the first opportunity. That is sad.

Groups like the Canadian Association of Retired Persons have asked for this. The C.D. Howe Institute has asked for this. It has said:

Governments impatient for revenue should not force these Canadians to run their tax-deferred assets down prematurely. Reforming the withdrawal rules for RRIFs and similar accounts would help retirees enjoy the post-retirement security they are striving to achieve.

If we allow seniors to take the money out if it is needed to repair a roof, for example, to allow them to age in place in their homes, it will save millions of dollars in health care dollars by allowing them to age there and not prematurely have to move out. That shows dignity. Seniors may need to have railings put in their houses. They may need to have a ramp built and need to withdraw the funds they have saved by being good financial managers during their lifetime. We should reward them for that. We should trust them and show them respect and allow them to withdraw the money as needed.

However, the archaic regulations established in 1978 by the then Liberal government say that "you must follow our cookie-cutter approach because we know best". We do not know best. The government does not know best. We need to listen to seniors. The only way that can happen is if the government shows respect for seniors by allowing this to go to committee. Without that, it will be a sad day for seniors. They will not have a minister for seniors, they will not have a plan, and some time in the sweet by and by we do not know what will happen to seniors. They are not being listened to.

I hope the government rethinks its position and shows that it is willing to listen to and respect seniors by allowing the bill to go to committee. That will only happen if at the first opportunity to vote, the Liberals support its going to committee. It does not mean they are bound to support it through the whole process, but at least they will indicate that they respect seniors and are willing to listen to them.

• (1820)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up the challenge put forward by the member about the importance of our seniors to society as a whole.

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There is a wide spectrum of things we all do as elected officials to reach out to get a better understanding of issues of our country. It does not matter where we go, the issue of seniors needs to be given special attention. Not only do I think about seniors during election time, but I also think of seniors between elections. I have constant dialogues to try to get a better understanding of the different things government can do to provide not only a better future for the seniors of today, but also for the seniors of tomorrow.

I understand what the member is proposing in his private member's bill. I appreciate the initiative private members take to allow for a debate on what they perceive as important issues in their constituency, and in fact for all Canadians. Therefore, I applaud the member for bringing the bill forward, but I do not necessarily agree with it.

There is a better way of dealing with seniors and the way in which money is withdrawn out of RRIFs. I have found the current system effective. It seems to have stood the test of time. I know members opposite would argue that times are changing and people, on average, are dying at an older age, and that is true. However, I do not think the arguments I have heard this afternoon have changed my opinion.

I appreciate the member making reference to Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the role he played on the issue of pensions. It clearly demonstrates how this policy has proven to be the most effective when we put it in a holistic attitude of how we best deal with pensions. The private sector does play an important role.

When I speak with the seniors I represent, pension issues that consistently come up are primarily dealing with the CPP, GIS, and OAS. It is very rare that I hear many comments regarding RRIFs. Now, it does happen. If my memory serves me correctly, I can honestly say that I cannot recall someone from my constituency pointing out that there is a problem with this and that this really needs to be acted upon. I have been at this for a number of years, in excess of well over 20 years as a parliamentarian, close to 19 years in the Manitoba legislature and approaching six years in this beautiful chamber. What a privilege it is to be here.

When the member says that we should be sensitive and listen to what seniors tell us, I recognize the importance of the many different ways in which a senior can retire, have an income, and often supplement an income.

● (1825)

That is one of the reasons I spent a great deal of my time earlier today debating the budget and talking about some important initiatives that the government has already taken. It is important that we recognize that. The member appealed to the Prime Minister and government members to think about what seniors have to say. I believe we have been very aggressive in dealing with important issues related to seniors. I will highlight a few of those initiatives. One is that my colleague made reference to the guaranteed income supplement.

Maybe before I get to that, I will provide some background, if I can. The lifestyles of seniors vary immensely in virtually every riding. Every member of Parliament, no doubt, would be able to comment on the degree to which lifestyles among seniors vary.

There are those who have, for a wide variety of reasons, a fairly high standard of living—it depends on how one defines the word “standard”, but I mean from a financial point of view—compared to those who are more challenged.

We could talk about the snowbirds. There are thousands. Winnipeg has a large number of snowbirds who go south. It is great that they have the financial means to do that and I would not want to take any of that away from them, but there are those who are a bit more challenged, and then those who are extremely challenged. I made reference to this in a speech earlier. There are many seniors in Winnipeg North who have to make decisions on whether to buy the medications that they require and their doctors tell them they need or to buy food that they also require.

The fees for ambulance services are astronomical. These are the types of real issues that seniors are talking about. When the member asks about seniors and whether Liberals are really listening to seniors, I want to assure the member that not only am I, but the government is listening to what seniors are saying in a very real way. As much as possible, we are doing what we can to address those needs.

When I talk about medications, even ambulance care, one thing I believe we do not talk enough about is the importance of a health care accord, because that would deliver many of those senior services. Why is that important? It is because, at the end of the day, if people with relatively modest pensions fall ill, the money to cover medications will quickly consume a great percentage of their pensions.

The issue of how much seniors should receive is something I constantly talk about. That is why I lobbied, wherever I could, to increase the guaranteed income supplement for the poorest of all seniors. That is why I argued, when I was in opposition, that we needed to decrease the age of retirement back to 65, as opposed to Mr. Harper and the Conservatives increasing it to 67. This is why we have to invest in CPP, because it is about the future of seniors.

When we look at what Bill C-301 would do, it really is not consistent with the basic retirement income objectives of tax deferrals provided by RRSP or RRIF savings. It would create significant inequities in tax deferral opportunities. My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, picked up on that point.

● (1830)

Suffice to say, we have today a government that is genuinely concerned about a wide spectrum of issues, including the issue of pensionable income. It is a government that is open to it and is prepared to do whatever it can in many different ways.

This is a bill that I cannot—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the bill is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening, I once again have the pleasure of speaking about official languages. As my colleagues know, I am a tireless supporter of official languages. I am therefore pleased to often be here to participate in the adjournment proceedings.

Today, I would like to come back to a question that I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage on November 27. That day, the minister appeared before the Standing Committee on Official Languages. I asked her a very simple question, but one that is very important for official language minority communities, a question regarding the principle of by and for.

That means that services must be offered by and for official language minority communities. This extremely important issue has been brought forward by many groups, the two main ones being the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada or FCFA and the Quebec Community Groups Network or QCGN. These are the two largest national groups that represent the two minorities, the anglophone minority in Quebec and the francophone minority in the rest of Canada. They put forward the important principle of by and for.

Unfortunately, submissions by certain federal departments, such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada, do not cover the importance of the principle of by and for. I am not talking about provincial organizations. The provinces are free to use their transfers as they see fit. We owe it to them to respect their jurisdiction.

The Official Languages Act mandates not only respect for linguistic duality but also the promotion of linguistic duality and official language minority communities. Offering some services is not good enough. A whole range of service must be made available to the community. For example, people who need immigration services should not be referred to other services available in French, such as cultural, health, or justice services.

I would like to remind the House that I introduced Bill C-203, which would amend the Supreme Court Act to make equality before the law a reality in the Supreme Court. In other words, it would make bilingualism a requirement for Supreme Court justices so that all Canadians can have access to justice in the Supreme Court. The NDP is alone in championing this. I hope that the Liberals will change their mind and support my bill to entrench the bilingualism of Supreme Court of Canada justices.

Why do government members not support the principle of by and for, which is meant to ensure that services are available in official language minority communities?

• (1835)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Drummond for his question.

The minister and her department consider the information and the clarifications made to both chambers of Parliament in October to be quite useful. The minister's appearance before the Standing Committee on Official Languages provided the opportunity for a constructive dialogue, starting with the issue of services by and for the communities.

I am of the opinion that the vitality of official language communities includes the availability of services in its language, whether those services are in health, education, early childhood, general economic development, and so on. Whenever possible, these services should be provided by community organizations. These organizations are often more aware of their members' situation and, as such, can be more effective in providing services that are suited to the reality in the community.

I know something about that because I was the chairman of the board of the Conseil de développement économique de l'Alberta and of the Fédération du sport francophone de l'Alberta. We were leaders in the field and well versed in how to properly manage these files.

What is more, when community organizations provide the services, the community is able to come together and thrive. This greatly enhances community vitality.

However, it is important to look at the unique identity of each case and to always have the best interests of the community and its people at heart.

[*English*]

As a government, we are fully committed to delivering on our federal government's obligations as they pertain to the Official Languages Act. This will remain at the heart of our concerns.

[*Translation*]

The government has a cross-cutting approach to official languages, and the President of the Treasury Board and the minister are very proud to be providing leadership in this area by working with cabinet members to that end. In particular, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is clarifying and reiterating official languages regulations as they pertain to the services of the RCMP. We have already noted progress on the issue of bilingual RCMP staff on Parliament Hill.

[*English*]

With respect to the Translation Bureau, the government's response was tabled in October by the Minister of Public Services and Procurement. We reiterated our government's support and commitment to providing official languages through the comprehension tool designed to facilitate and encourage the use of both official languages in the workplace. Many recommendations from the Standing Committee on Official Languages have already been implemented, namely those concerning the language comprehension tool, and the minister is confident that her colleague, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, is giving it all the attention it needs.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[Translation]*

Together with our colleague, the Minister of Justice, we have also made progress with respect to the requirement for Supreme Court justices to be bilingual. Additionally, with the support of the Minister of Defence, we have reestablished Saint-Jean Royal Military College as an educational institution for the military.

We are very proud of our achievements with respect to official languages. We are cognizant of the issue of services by and for the communities. We will continue to champion the linguistic rights of minority language communities. We are working on meeting our objectives and responsibilities with respect to the Official Languages Act, as is our duty.

• (1840)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I will just take a second to remind my colleague that the Commissioner of Official Languages recommended creating an oversight mechanism for the RCMP to ensure that French services are available. I have been looking for that oversight mechanism since August 31, 2016, but I have not yet found it. If anyone manages to find it, please let me know because I am looking for it. Almost three months have gone, and still not a word.

With respect to the Translation Bureau, newspaper readers cannot believe the headlines. According to the Translation Bureau, the minister's response totally misses the mark and virtually ignores the commissioner's report. When it comes to the Translation Bureau, I do not think the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage has anything at all to be proud of.

Sure, the Liberals did a few things. It is good to have bilingual Supreme Court justices, but there is no law in place, so no permanent arrangement. That is important.

The principle of by and for is essential. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage should take some time to talk to his minister about it because she does not seem to be in the loop.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to reiterate once again that our government truly believes in the importance of bilingualism in federal institutions and their capacity to serve Canadians in the official language of their choice.

I would therefore like to reaffirm this government's commitment to ensuring that all federal services are provided in full compliance with the Official Languages Act, and that they are of the highest quality, whether in reference to the RCMP, the Translation Bureau, or in our communities.

[English]

We have clearly stated that in terms of official languages, our government employs a horizontal approach which involves coordinated and concerted action by several departments.

[Translation]

We are very proud of the progress we have made on official languages, thanks to our cross-cutting approach and our consultations with the communities themselves, which are in the process of wrapping up after 22 round tables were held across the country.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and follow up on a question I asked earlier about the Office of Religious Freedom, the government's decision to abolish it, and the still new and undefined, what we have called "office of everything", that was dressed up as a replacement to it.

I will provide a bit of background. The Office of Religious Freedom was instituted under the previous government but at the time there were no objections, in fact, there was some support from the party represented by members opposite.

The Office of Religious Freedom was an innovative model in that it was situated within the Department of Foreign Affairs and it was very much well-positioned to work collaboratively with the rest of the department, to inform the work of the department, to listen to the department, to provide feedback, to provide training, these sorts of things. It also had its own ambassador who had the capacity to speak out publicly and advocate on the issue. The office did advocacy work and it provided training and support within the department. It also ran active programs on the ground that were making a difference in respect to promoting religious freedom.

I will say parenthetically that recently I was in the United States where I had the opportunity to meet with a senior official from the American equivalent. I cannot remember the exact title, but it is the office of religious freedom within the state department. There was a recognition of the importance of Canada being at the table on these issues, the way in which religious freedom as a human right has not been perhaps emphasized historically as much as some other rights, and how the Americans have been active on this file but Canada can bring a unique perspective coming out of our own history in terms of pluralism, and our long history of religious tolerance and accommodation. There was also the recognition that we do not have some of the baggage that maybe former colonial powers or the Americans have.

There were major opportunities for Canada to lead in this area but after taking power the government instead chose to eliminate the Office of Religious Freedom. Its new office really lacks focus. There is certainly important work to do when it comes to human rights but there is no more focus on religious freedom that the previous office provided.

If the government was interested in a focused and serious way in moving forward with some of these other human rights issues that it mentioned, one being dealing with indigenous rights abroad, which is a worthwhile thing for Canada to be involved in and speak about, then it should do so.

The Office of Religious Freedom model could have been replicated with another small separate office. There would have been more effective ways of building on the past success of the Office of Religious Freedom rather than burning it to the ground and trying to start from the ground up.

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I would challenge the government on this point. If its new office is actually important, if the government is actually invested in international human rights, then why not have an ambassador? The absence of an ambassador and the fact that this new creation is simply led by a director means that it is a significant downgrade in terms of the profile of the office. It does not have the profile or the capacity to do public advocacy in the same way as Ambassador Bennett at the Office of Religious Freedom previously did. His work was praised by government members before they decided to get rid of this office.

I want to ask the parliamentary secretary: Why not have an ambassador? We may disagree on the model, and we may disagree on exactly what kind of office is best, but at least why not have an ambassador? The elimination of the position of ambassador advocating for international human rights in this respect really shows the government's lack of interest in this.

The last we heard on programming was that this new office was looking for programming opportunities. I hope the parliamentary secretary is prepared to at least provide some update. What is this office doing in terms of programming that addresses religious freedom?

• (1845)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canada's constructive engagement in the world. We have consistently advocated for all universal, indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent rights and freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief and expression; rights of sexual minorities; rights of women, children, and indigenous peoples; sexual and reproductive health and rights; and abolition of the death penalty. We have promoted these human rights alongside the strength of diversity and the power of inclusion.

We have seen what exclusion and marginalization of others leads to, in the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, and in the former Yugoslavia, for example.

Canada is dedicated to embracing diversity and defeating exclusion through choosing inclusion. As the right hon. Prime Minister stated at the UN General Assembly on September 20, "In Canada, we see diversity as a source of strength, not weakness. Our country is strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them."

What is the alternative? To exploit anxiety, to turn it into fear and blame, to reject others because they look or speak or pray differently than we do.

In an era of unprecedented interconnectedness, we need to focus now more than ever on what unites across borders, across economies, and across belief systems.

On September 21, the Minister of Foreign Affairs convened an interactive high-level panel, "Diversity is strength", which, building on prior high-level events on migration and refugees, focused on how the global community can work together to better accrue the economic, social, cultural, and civic benefits of inclusion and diversity.

More recently, on October 31, the Minister of Foreign Affairs convened a round table in Ottawa with representatives of Canadian faith and belief communities and civil society organizations to discuss the state of freedom of religion or belief in the world.

For sure, as a part of our commitment to human rights, freedoms, and inclusion, on May 17, 2016, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced the creation of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. This office has expanded on work previously undertaken on freedom of religion or belief by bringing those efforts together under a comprehensive vision that includes all human rights and the nexus of inclusion and respect for diversity.

I am pleased to say that the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion does not have just one dedicated ambassador, but in fact has 136, as all Canadian heads of mission, ambassadors, high commissioners, and consuls general have been tasked with promoting human rights, freedoms, and inclusion as part of their core objectives.

Canada's permanent representatives to the United Nations in New York City and Geneva have a clear mandate for the advancement of human rights, which is a key component of Canada's re-engagement with the United Nations.

By way of example, Canada's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations in New York has been active in promoting inclusion, respect for diversity, and human rights, including combatting anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

The member opposite asked for some concrete examples. Canada will be supporting the Lifeline Project, which helps protect human rights defenders in a variety of countries when they are threatened. Second, Canada will partner with UNESCO and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to improve education about genocide. Finally, Canada is sponsoring a reconciliation effort by Equitas International Centre for Human Rights Education in Sri Lanka. These two partnerships predate the establishment of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion and are a testament to Canada's continued commitment to advancing freedom of religion and belief internationally.

There is much to be improved upon in the field of human rights, at home and abroad, and Canada is working continuously to promote positive change.

• (1850)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I have to say it is a little bit frustrating, because I asked this parliamentary secretary a specific question, and we hear verbally about the government's commitment to human rights, but we almost never hear specifics.

To say that having many ambassadors where this is included in the government's mandate, respectfully is clearly not the same as having an ambassador who has an expertise and a focus on raising issues of religious freedom.

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I asked about where the programming is. She identified some programming that does not at least appear from those brief descriptions to be specifically focused on religious freedom at all, and I asked, where the programming on religious freedom is. If the government is actually committed to continuing this, why can she not identify programming? Maybe it is because that programming is not actually happening anymore. In fact, the programs she identified in some cases, as she said, predate the creation of this new office.

It is just not enough for the government to verbally say these things about international human rights, but when the rubber hits the road, to actually never undertake the programming, never undertake the steps that matter.

I asked the member recently in question period to condemn violations of human rights—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will go over the budget, which is dedicated to the promotion of human rights, pluralism, inclusion, and respect for diversity. It is three times the amount originally committed to in previous efforts, and hardly a downgrade.

All I can say is that I believe that the member opposite should stop living in the past and should recognize the work we are doing, building on its beginnings and expanding to the inclusion of all human rights.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, after the government announced it was going to deploy our troops, our men and women in uniform, on a mission, I asked the Minister of National Defence a very simple question: Why? Why would he do this? More importantly, why would he do this without debate in this place?

The talking points that he used in answer to me were shameful. They denigrated the service of our men and women in the armed forces. They denigrated Canada's commitment to upholding the rule of law and democracy around the world, because they could not explain why. That is wrong. It is plain wrong.

I asked someone who has significant experience in this field why we should deploy our men and women, why we should do this, why, in any situation, should Canada's troops be deployed into a situation? The response I got was that there should be some return on investment. In the heady decision of sending Canadian Armed Forces into harm's way, the potential loss of life that we incur should be justified by some sort of end goal.

The problem here is that the government cannot tell us what the end goal of this deployment is, and it cannot explain why we are doing this. There has been no discussion with Canadians. Even worse, the government does not have the courage to back that of our men and women in uniform when they go into the field. The government does not have the courage to take the debate to this place.

It is absolutely wrong. Here is what is going to happen tonight. I am going to ask my colleague across the way: Why? Why are we sending men and women into harm's way? This is what is going to happen in response. A woefully unprepared member is going to read

government talking points, obfuscating the fact that the government will not bring this to a debate in the House of Commons.

Every time that Canada has sent men and women into harm's way, we have had a debate in the House of Commons and a vote in this place, so that men and women who have been elected to serve their constituents can go back to them and say, "Here is why we are sending people into harm's way." The government will not do it.

There are decades of precedent for doing this. It is being overruled by the government. Why? It is not going to explain that to Canadians. It is not going to explain that to Canadians tonight. My suspicion is that it is because it wants to trade such a mission for a seat on the UN Security Council.

Here is what Canadians are going to get when my colleague rises across the way: government talking points and a lack of courage. She will not answer this very question. She will not stand up and say to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces, "This is why we are sending you into harm's way. This is how we are going to provision you. This is what we are going to communicate to the Canadian people about why we are doing that."

I will say this right now, that lack of courage to answer the basic question of why is shameful. It is a denigration of the act of public service in this place.

I ask very simply: Why are we sending men and women in uniform into harm's way? What is the ROI? What is the return on investment for our armed service to put their lives on the line? Why? Why will the government not put this question to the House of Commons?

• (1855)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is a determined peace builder and will do its part in the world to contribute to peace and security. We demonstrated this by re-engaging with the United Nations. We will not lose that opportunity, which the previous government did, and we will commit up to 600 Canadian Armed Forces members for deployment to peace support operations.

We have the support of Canadians. In fact, a recent Nanos Research survey showed that nearly 75% of Canadians think that participating in UN peacekeeping missions is a good or very good use of Canadian Armed Forces personnel and equipment.

As the member opposite knows, no decision has been made as to where the Canadian Armed Forces will be deployed. This decision will be based on informed consultations with the United Nations and with Canada's allies. Our policy is one of engagement, not of isolation, unlike the previous government.

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It is also important to the decision-making process to have an informed understanding of regional requirements, which can only be gained by on-the-ground assessments. That is why the Minister of National Defence recently travelled to Africa. There he met with senior government officials and ambassadors from the United States, France, and the European Union. He also met with representatives from non-government organizations, think tanks, and the United Nations. This visit builds on previous trips to Africa and, of course, to the United Nations headquarters.

In August, the Minister of National Defence travelled to Africa with General Roméo Dallaire and Madam Justice Louise Arbour, who assisted him in gathering information and provided their interpretation and understanding of the needs in terms of peace support.

These meetings and discussions help inform how the Canadian Armed Forces can best contribute to building peace and security within the whole-of-government approach.

The Canadian Armed Forces have a lot to offer in this regard. Our troops are highly skilled and can make a meaningful contribution through a range of capabilities. These capabilities could include ground troops, leadership for command and headquarters positions, air transport, and capacity building.

Rest assured, the safety of our troops is always at the forefront of any mission. We will always act to mitigate, as best as possible, the level of risk Canadian Armed Forces personnel face. Wherever our troops are deployed, they will have the appropriate equipment, the necessary training, and the proper rules of engagement.

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, can members imagine being the spouse or the family of one of our Armed Forces members who the government is going to ask to go on this mission and hearing that response? That was shameful.

The present government cannot answer a simple question. It cannot answer why. Why would we send our men and women into harm's way? Why are we doing that? Why is it prioritizing this?

I ask my colleague opposite, if she has any respect for this job, to stand up and give Canadians the truth. Give them the reason why men and women should go there. If she cannot explain why, will she simply deny and simply put to bed the allegation, the rightful allegation, that the only reason the government is doing this, the only reason the government is taking this measure, is to secure a seat, for its own political gain, on the UN Security Council?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces for their dedication to service.

Second, this government is committed to international peace and security, with an informed, whole-of-government approach.

Third, seeking a seat on the UN Security Council is one tool in a range that we bring to Canada's role in the world, and we certainly are not going to let Canadians down in that regard, as the previous government did.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

● (1900)

[*English*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:58 p.m.)

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