



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 032 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Monday, March 21, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 21, 2016

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1105)

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): moved

That the House (*a*) recognize the good work being done by Canada's Office of Religious Freedom, in particular its work within the Department of Global Affairs to build the Department's capacity to address threats to religious freedom, and to directly promote peace, freedom, tolerance, and communal harmony; and, as a consequence, (*b*) call on the government to renew the current mandate of the Office, since the continuation of its vital work is needed now more than ever.

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: Today being the last allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 2016, the House will proceed as usual to the consideration and passage of the appropriation bills.

In view of recent procedures, do hon. members agree to have the bills distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, on May 16, 1919, Molly Pinto was born in Karachi, Pakistan, then part of greater India. Her family was originally from Goa, a Portuguese colony on the west coast of India, which had and continues to have a large Catholic population. She grew up in a Goan Catholic colony in Karachi. She remembered a very happy childhood, one populated by children and then young adults from all different ethnic and religious communities: Goan, as well as indigenous Pakistani Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, etc. Various languages were spoken: English; Konkani, the Goan language; Urdu; Hindi; etc. She recalls how people from different communities shared meaningful friendships. They would bring sweets to their Muslim neighbours at Christmastime, and their neighbours would bring them sweets for Eid.

Molly Pinto is my wife's grandmother, and the Pakistan that she grew up in looked a lot like how Canada looks today. Those on the

left and on the right who are willing to casually label religious intolerance as part of the culture or religion in Pakistan do not know their history. Countries like Pakistan had a rich tradition of multicultural, multilingual, multi-faith co-operation long before Canada even existed, and that tradition continues in the living memory of many who are still with us today. I am sure that some members of the House remember that history from their own experience, and hope and pray for a return to it.

Molly remembers how increasing tensions emerged during partition, when India and Pakistan achieved their independence and separated from each other. Her perception was that when people who had been pushed out of other places in present-day India came to Pakistan, often after seeing or experiencing violence at home, they brought a level of suspicion and tension that felt alien in what had previously been an idyllic setting.

Still, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, was very clear about the need to continue Pakistan's pluralistic traditions after independence. Like Molly, Jinnah was born in Karachi. His family were Gujarati Shia Muslims, and as a Shia, Jinnah was in many senses part of a religious minority as well. He also attended Christian schools.

Jinnah had a vision for Pakistan that made the protection of minorities central to its success. Pakistan adopted a flag which clearly demonstrated his vision, a green section to represent the Muslim majority, and a white stripe for the minority communities.

Here is what Muhammad Ali Jinnah said in an address to the constituent assembly of Pakistan in 1947:

You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State. [...] We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State.

On September 9, 1968, Clement Shahbaz Bhatti was born in Lahore, Pakistan. He would go on to become the country's first federal minister for minority affairs. In 1979, when Shahbaz was 11 years old, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. This event would have a consequential impact on world affairs, in Pakistan, and in the life of Shahbaz Bhatti .

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Western aid, and aid from other Muslim countries, was funnelled through Pakistan to support the mujahedeen in its jihad against the Soviet Union. The mujahedeen defeated the Soviets, but Pakistan paid a heavy price for its involvement because of the significant injection of extreme and intolerant ideas that came with the mujahedeen and subsequent rise of the Taliban. The rise of extremism in Iran, as well, had a negative effect on Pakistani pluralism.

Importantly, none of these developments in the Muslim world were inevitable. They reflected the push and pull of history, perhaps some policy mistakes, perhaps some policy decisions which were necessary in their time but that had unintended consequences. Either way, the evident decline of pluralism in Pakistan was not inevitable, and it is not irreversible.

Shahbaz Bhatti knew that. As federal minister for minorities in Pakistan, he visited Canada. He came here in February 2011, the month before his assassination. He met with the former prime minister as well as other ministers. He knew then how vulnerable he was. His visit followed on the heels of the assassination of Governor Salmaan Taseer, a Pakistani Muslim who, like Shahbaz, was an outspoken critic of Pakistan's blasphemy laws used to target religious minorities.

It was Shabazz's legacy and the advocacy work of his family here in Canada which led the previous Conservative government to act to create the Office of Religious Freedom. It was not some theoretical political statement about abstract rights, but an office that would and has made a real difference for people in Pakistan and all around the world.

What is the Office of Religious Freedom? The Office of Religious Freedom was established as a division of foreign affairs, now Global Affairs Canada, in the last Parliament. Incidentally, the creation of this office was announced inside a mosque. The office has an annual budget of \$5 million, which is a modest sum in the scheme of things. This is 1/180th of the cost of the government's recent changes to public sector sick leave, and it is well underneath the cost of renovating 24 Sussex Drive.

This office does three main things. First, it provides training to the public service. This training is crucial to help our public servants understand underlying religious tensions and how to advance human rights and Canada's interests in the context of these dynamics.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said, "...if I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that's how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today."

Helping Canada's foreign policy be informed by an understanding of religious tensions is critical in the current environment.

Second, this office does direct advocacy, speaking out about and bringing attention to the plight of persecuted religious minorities.

Third, this office funds direct on-the-ground projects with local partners in countries like Pakistan, projects which advance religious freedom. That is in fact where most of the budget goes.

This office has had considerable success. However, members do not have to take my word for it. Here is what the Parliamentary

Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Consular Affairs, the member for Mississauga Centre, had to say recently about the work of the office in Ukraine:

As a part of broader efforts to cultivate long-term stability, tolerance, and respect for human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, Global Affairs Canada, through the Office of Religious Freedom, is supporting two projects in Ukraine to promote interfaith dialogue and to strengthen the capacity of local authorities to respond to hate crimes.

As the hon. member is aware, the Office of Religious Freedom has advocated on behalf of religious communities under threat, opposed religious hatred and intolerance, and promoted pluralism and respect for diversity abroad.

The quote continues:

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has already stated repeatedly, we are grateful for Dr. Andrew Bennett's service as the head of the Office of Religious Freedom and for his ingenuity, sensitivity, and competency over the past three years.

That is clearly very high praise for this office from the member for Mississauga Centre.

Here is what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, had to say recently about the work of the office in Nigeria:

In its efforts to combat Boko Haram's history of inter-communal violence in the region, Canada, through the Office of Religious Freedom, supported a two-year project to promote interfaith dialogue and conflict mediation in Plateau State, Nigeria. We are well aware of the good work it has done. The project successfully developed a community-based mechanism to help defuse tensions between different religious and ethnic groups, and has been used by the Nigerian government on various occasions, including in response to attacks and bombings in Jos and in the lead up to Nigeria's elections in March 2015. While this phase of the project concluded in January 2015, our government is pleased that Canada has been able to continue to support this model for inter-communal dialogue in neighbouring conflict-affected regions in Nigeria....

Listening to those eloquent words from Liberal members, one might wonder who could possibly be opposed to this office. Who could possibly oppose this clearly good and necessary work? Given the evidence and given this good work, one might be inclined to think it would be obvious that this office should be renewed. I believe it is obvious. However, there have been critics, and it is important to take this opportunity to respond to some of the arguments that the critics have made.

There are some who seem to have something of an allergy to any office of government which uses the word "religion". They react negatively to any reference to religion in the context of government action. Let us be very clear about this. This office is not about promoting religion. It is about promoting religious freedom. These are two fundamentally different things.

Western democratic governments are not in the business of promoting religion, but all governments have to be in the business of protecting freedom, including freedom of religion. Notably, those who ask for state non-interference in religion are themselves expressing support for religious freedom.

●(1110)

Religious freedom includes atheists. It includes the right not to believe. In fact, atheists have direct representation on the Office of Religious Freedom's external advisory committee. The right to believe as a non-believer is frankly one of the most threatened expressions of religious freedom in the world today. Canada's Office of Religious Freedom advocates for atheists in countries like Bangladesh, where they are particularly vulnerable.

Freedom of religion is not a strictly religious idea. It is recognized in article 18 of the UN charter. It states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

If not about religion as such, what is freedom of religion all about?

The UN charter has it right. Freedom of religion is fundamentally about freedom of thought, the freedom for people to think about their fundamental purpose, their place in the universe, and then to act that out how they see fit. This freedom of thought is clearly essential to the human experience. Freedom of religion is about so much more than the phenomenological elements of religion. It is in fact something entirely different in kind. Again, the office exists to promote religious freedom, the kind of freedom of thought identified in the UN charter. It is not about promoting religion.

A second objection we have heard is from those who say that human rights are universal, interdependent, and indivisible, and therefore they do not see a need for a separate office of religious freedom. Of course, we can all agree that rights are interdependent and indivisible. However, we are also well served by centres of excellence within government and within the Department of Global Affairs, which focus on specific areas.

To name another example, we have a department for the status of women. Certainly, human rights are universal, interdependent, and indivisible, but we still have, and we should have, a department that focuses specifically on the status of women.

Why is it important that we have these types of centres of excellence? Because to have all types of rights lumped together risks a situation in which no one is focused upon individual specific areas of rights and rights violations. Without specific centres of excellence, individual areas that need attention could risk getting lost in one murky interdependent and indivisible soup.

Interdependence and indivisibility have never before been used as arguments against some degree of specialization. The natural sciences are interdependent and indivisible, yet we are still well served by having those who specialize in chemistry, biology, physics, and in subparts of each.

A third objection we have heard is from those who say that this is merely a political ploy, that the creation of the office was designed

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for so-called pandering to ethnocultural diaspora communities in Canada. A writer for iPolitics said this in 2013:

Diaspora politics can become a double-edged sword if left in the hands of politicians. As evidence, look no further than the new Office of Religious Freedom — a policy outcome one might expect when parties curry favour with particular ethnic constituencies.

There was something very dark about these kinds of arguments. So-called ethnic constituencies have as much right to expect that their priorities are reflected in government policy as anyone else. It is true that new Canadians, who are more likely to have ongoing personal and familial connections to those facing religious persecution in other countries, tend to be particularly supportive of this office. However, to describe policies that reflect the priorities of new Canadians as pandering is unnecessarily pejorative and it is a unique kind of pejorative tone often used to denigrate policies that are important to new Canadians.

It is certainly also true that this policy is not just important to new Canadians. Members of diaspora communities, which have been in Canada for generations, and really all Canadians, can see the value of the work that is being done here.

A fourth objection we have heard is from those who suggested the office is supposedly just about Christians and the preferencing of Christian concerns in international affairs. Of note should be the fact that this objection and the previous objection are in fact mutually exclusive and yet are often made simultaneously by the same people. The office could not possibly be both about focusing on Christians and also aimed at new ethnocultural communities. However, it would be evident to anyone who looks at the list of projects the office supports that it works with and for a wide range of different communities.

●(1115)

For example, a recent project gave \$290,000 to the Aga Khan Foundation for development and distribution of children's books that promoted pluralism among school-aged children in Bangladesh. Working through a Muslim organization, this project also particularly is important to the atheist community, which faces growing persecution in Bangladesh. Non-Christian groups, in fact, Sikh, Jewish and Muslim leaders in Canada have taken the lead on calling for the renewal of this office. Earlier this year, representatives from these three communities sent a joint letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs pleading with him to do the right thing and to renew this office.

A vast range of communities are represented on the office's external advisory committee. Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians and, yes, atheists are represented on the external advisory committee as well.

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With respect to this objection, it is important to note that this office does provide some support to some Christians. Christians are indisputably one of the most persecuted religious communities anywhere in the world. Long-standing Christian communities, which have existed in the Middle East since almost the time of Christ and since long before Christianity spread to western Europe, or certainly North America, are under intense pressure, which includes, in various cases, systematic discrimination, growing cultural bias, regular violence, and even attempts at total extermination. These people happen to share a faith with western colonizers, but these indigenous Christian communities bear no responsibility whatsoever for colonization. They have as much right to live in peace and security as anyone else.

When I talked to other non-Christian faith groups, strikingly they often raised the increasingly desperate plight of Christians as a matter of significant concern. CIJA, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, for example, has been vocal in support of the plight of persecuted Christians, and we should listen to what it has to say in this respect. This office does not focus uniquely on Christians but does not ignore them either.

A fifth and final objection that I hear to the Office of Religious Freedom is that its work is in some way colonialist. A recent commentary piece in the *Toronto Star* said:

The international promotion of religious freedom by Western states risks repeating “civilizing” colonial missions, imposing fixed standards without sensitivity to cultural and historical specificities...

Those who suggest that the good work this office is doing to advance religious freedom is somehow about advancing narrowly western values clearly do not understand the work of this office or the context in which it operates. This office does not seek to dictate to other countries. It works with and provides vital support for programs on the ground. It works with local leaders and leverages local knowledge. That is why it has earned such high praise from diaspora communities and others with whom it directly works.

This is not about western values but about universal human values laid out very clearly in article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those who object to the promotion of religious freedom on the grounds that it is a “western” value are often the same people who have the same objections to efforts to advance gender equality, democracy, and other principles of human society, which have long been recognized as universal.

Because of my family's connection to Pakistan, I can speak best to our work in that country. Very clearly we are not interested in promoting some western construction of what Pakistan should be. We want to see the restoration of the pluralistic Pakistan that my wife's grandmother Molly grew up in. This was her reality. This was Mohammad Ali Jinnah's vision, and this was Chavez Bhatti's dream: the restoration of Pakistan's historic traditions, not the imposition of western ones.

When it comes to this office, the government has refused to give a clear answer. However, with 10 days to go until the current mandate runs out, it is high time it communicates its decision, and this motion is necessary to give people working in this area the clarity they need. Most important, people who rely on this office are waiting for an answer.

If the government recognizes the good work of this office, will it simply say yes so the work can continue uninterrupted? If it is determined to kill this office, could it at least explain why, could it at least give us some kind of a reason?

Two weeks ago, I attended a commemoration held in Toronto to honour Chavez Bhatti. There I met Rimsha Masih, a Christian teenager who was accused of blasphemy in Pakistan and only found safety after being spirited away to Canada. I think of my wife's grandmother's reality as a child in pluralistic Pakistan. I think now of Rimsha's reality with the challenges facing Pakistan. This is why this work and this motion matter so much. For one-quarter of the cost of the recent member's office budget increase, this office is saving lives and giving hope to people like her. Therefore, I urge members to reflect on the good work this office is doing and to please support this motion.

• (1120)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague's speech was very dignified speech. We share his values about the universality of freedom of religion.

Could we agree among parliamentarians that today is about the best means to promote the values we share and the freedom we want to fight for everywhere in the world? This is about the means and the commitment. The commitment is the same for all members of the House and we need to find the best way for Canada to fight for freedom of religion everywhere in the world?

• (1125)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I am not willing to guarantee at all that this debate is merely about the means. The mandate letter that the Minister of Foreign Affairs was given made absolutely no mention of religious freedom. We hear more verbal support for the idea of religious freedom after our party continually has raised this issue in the House. However, again, there is no mention of it whatsoever in the mandate letter.

If the government intends to kill this office on the basis that we can do it another way, I would humbly ask it to acknowledge the incredible good work this office is already doing. If this office is working to do such good work, then what other possible explanation could there be for the government's killing it than a lack of commitment to the underlying objectives?

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for standing up for religious freedom in our country.

My question is on the member's point about having this additional office. As the chair for the status of women committee, everyone in the House agrees that women's equality is a value that we share. However, to get the progress needed, we have created a committee that will do additional work. Even beyond that, when pay equity came up as a topic, even though it could have been addressed by the status of women committee, an extra committee was put in place because of the need to make that additional progress at speed.

Business of Supply

Could the member comment on that in relation to the work that is needed to be done in the Office of Religious Freedom?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is an excellent point by the member. I want to salute the good work she is doing in the areas she has discussed.

Of course, we know that discrimination against women is interconnected with other kinds of challenges and prejudices that may exist. It may have a relationship to issues of poverty in certain cases, or issues of racial and cultural prejudice as well. However, that does not mean we do not focus on discrimination against women as a distinct area, recognizing those interconnections, but we still need a focus on it as part of the broader picture.

The same point goes for freedom of religion. Of course there is an interconnection among different kinds of threats to fundamental human rights. That is certainly the case, but actually having the expertise and the capacity within the Department of Global Affairs to understand the role that religious persecution plays is as well of great importance.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to follow up on what the Minister of Foreign Affairs so eloquently put forward for the member. In regard to Canadian values, we recognize the importance of freedom of religion and freedom of thought. We believe in this wholeheartedly. However, surely to goodness the member across the way would recognize that there are many ways the Canadian government can ensure that those values that Canadians hold so closely to their hearts are in fact addressed, whether within our boundaries of Canada or as a foreign policy, and that there are many ways to deal with this issue. Would the member agree with that?

At the same time, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out, I think it is fair to say that all members of this privileged chamber are great advocates for freedom of thought and freedom of religion. Would the member agree with that?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I have to say that the approach of the government in this respect is quite curious. It seems, from the questions, that the Liberals do not intend to support the renewal of this office, and yet they wish to profess that they believe in the underlying objectives.

May I say that we have this office that is already clearly doing a great job advancing and protecting religious freedom. We have statements from the various parliamentary secretaries and other members affirming the good work this office is doing. If there is a clear recognition that this office is working well to advance certain objectives, then why in the world would they blow it up and try something different?

If the Liberals really care about the underlying objectives, does it not make basic sense that, if it is not broken, they should not fix it? If it is working well now, why put all those who are involved in this area through the process of tearing it down and experimenting with some different structure? We should just let the office continue doing the good work it is doing. If the government is not willing to do that, if it is not willing to simply allow the office to continue doing its work, if it is not willing to avoid reinventing the wheel when there is

clearly no need to do so, then we have to ask about what its underlying reasoning is.

There is no mention of religious freedom in the mandate letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We do not hear government members talk about religious freedom, except when they are asked about it in question period and in motions like this. Therefore, it is just not clear to me why the government is not supporting the renewal of an office that, again, is doing work that is working very well.

● (1130)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have just begun this debate and it seems to be clear already that the government will not be supporting this motion. In effect, Conservatives would take that as the signal that it does not support continuing the Office of Religious Freedom.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, who supports this motion, obviously, and backs it, what he thinks would be the outcome if this office were ended. Certainly, the amount of money, the \$5 million, is not a huge amount, especially when the government is thinking of running a \$30 billion-plus deficit. It is not about the money. The government says, and we have to believe, that it supports religious freedom around the world. What does the member think will be the outcome? What is the message to the world when Canada backs out of the fight against ISIS and ends the Office of Religious Freedom?

There are a number of other things that the government is doing that, in the Conservatives' estimation, looks as if it is backing away instead of stepping up. Is that the message that is going to be sent to the global community when we, as a nation and as a government, shut down the Office of Religious Freedom, if indeed that is what happens?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, clearly, this is not about the money. The office costs one-quarter of the cost of the recent increase to members' office budgets, or 1/180th of the cost of the change to public sector sick leave. Clearly, this is not about the money. Therefore, what is it about?

Clearly, as the member suggested, getting rid of this office would send a very negative message. It would send a message that Canada is no longer making this issue a priority; and it should be. This issue is of critical importance to so many people all around the world, people who are victims of discrimination and religious violence, people who are looking to Canada and want Canada to play a positive role in this.

It is disappointing. It sends a bad message in terms of the optics of it, but it also makes it very difficult for those who are working on specific projects in this area, which need our involvement. What is going to happen to these projects if the government intends on killing the office? What about the good work being done by the Aga Khan Foundation in Bangladesh; what about the good work being done in Nigeria, Ukraine, and other places?

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This is not some theoretical debate. These are real people's lives that are affected by this office. These are real suffering people who need the benefit of this work that, over the long term, is helping to build pluralism. The government talks a good game about diversity and pluralism, so why will it not put its money where its mouth is on this motion? It just does not make any sense.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has revealed something when he says he cannot find religious freedom in the mandate letters; so, clearly the overt and repeated mention of human rights means less to him.

I would like to understand his thoughts around the way religious freedom is integrated, by definition, with human rights as a whole?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, it is good to mention human rights, but it is also important to be specific. If there were no mention of gender equality, and the government just said that human rights is included, clearly that would be insufficient because people want to see the specific mention of areas of focus.

When the government makes no mention of religious freedom whatsoever, it is transparently clear that this is not a priority for the government.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with this motion, the official opposition is calling upon the government to renew the current mandate of Canada's Office of Religious Freedom. We must first ask why, if the former Conservative cared so much about this office, it did not create it to be sustainable. Its own budget plan called for the office's mandate to come to an end on March 31. Since the office's current mandate will end March 31, the government cannot vote for this motion, and we will vote against it.

Then, what the government will have to decide is how it will enhance and strengthen Canada's fight for religious freedom everywhere, because our government is of course determined to fight tooth and nail for religious freedom around the world. It is a fundamental universal right that is deeply important for Canadians, especially when they see how religious freedom is violated in many parts of the world.

[*Translation*]

Religious persecution has been on the rise around the world for at least 20 years now. Mosques and synagogues have been attacked and desecrated; churches have been burned or closed; temples have been vandalized. Every day, people die because of their religious beliefs. The people who are the targets of these attacks are unable to defend themselves, so they try to protect themselves or simply survive by going into exile or fleeing.

Religious persecution may be motivated by fanaticism or political radicalism, among other things. It often takes root where the rule of law is practically non-existent or where, in cases where the authorities themselves do not participate in or orchestrate such persecution, they turn a blind eye to it. Religious persecution violates the universal principles that all states subscribe to and swear to uphold when they ratify legal instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights. Because religious persecution jeopardizes the fragile balance underpinning societies, it threatens international peace and security. It is our obligation to respond.

● (1135)

[*English*]

Canada stands in solidarity with everyone who faces oppression, and even threats to their lives, due their beliefs. To defend and promote religious freedom most effectively, we have to choose the best tools and methods. It is not clear that the best method would be to renew the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom, in its current form.

We fully appreciate the work the Office of Religious Freedom has done. We do not underestimate the qualities of Andrew Bennett. I have known Dr. Bennett since he worked at intergovernmental affairs, when I was the minister. I know that he is a solid professional, dedicated to the missions entrusted to him.

However, the government has a duty to choose the best approaches, especially for an issue as crucial as defending freedoms. From this point of view, we have to consider whether it might not be more effective to combine all of Global Affairs Canada's efforts to defend and promote human rights into a single office to advance and to leverage the resources of the department in its embassy network around the world to advance this mission.

[*Translation*]

Our ambassadors around the world have a unique role to play in advancing human rights. These ambassadors, the eyes and ears of the Canadian government abroad, now have the power to speak. They must always take into account their responsibility to promote human rights, freedom, and inclusion, a responsibility that is part of their mandate. Our ambassadors and embassies abroad understand the local context and have built networks with governments and civilians. They will therefore be a key part of our efforts.

During my recent trip to Geneva, I had the opportunity to meet our permanent representative to the United Nations and his team. We can be proud of what our representatives are accomplishing in promoting human rights.

During my stay in Geneva, I outlined Canada's renewed commitment to the United Nations and its human rights bodies, and I reiterated the \$15-million commitment in new core funding for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights over the next three years.

My visit to Geneva allowed me to draw attention to the fact that the defence of human rights can be achieved through co-operation and commitment. Canada has reiterated its commitment to support the work of the UN human rights mechanisms and bodies by extending a standing invitation to the holders of special procedures mandates to visit Canada, reporting to human rights treaty bodies, actively participating in the universal periodic review, and following the recommendations made in these forums.

We commend the efforts that civil society organizations and aboriginal groups have made as part of these processes.

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I am proud to say that Canada is a rich source of human rights experts, who are working on a wide range of human rights issues. I am in contact with all of those groups, and we are also having many important discussions with religious leaders to make our mission a reality.

As a result of our co-operative efforts with the United Nations here in Canada and the work being done through various diplomatic channels, Canada will continue to support the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, and respect for diversity and human rights, including the rights of women and refugees.

● (1140)

[English]

However, we cannot make meaningful progress if we treat each issue in isolation. There are, in fact, solid reasons to believe that human rights are best defended when treated as interconnected. Everyone's right to pray without dictation from others, or not to pray, is a freedom indivisible from freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, and movement.

I would like to quote here, in full, section 5 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action:

All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

This declaration was adopted by consensus in 1993 by representatives of 171 states and was endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 1994.

The adoption of this declaration was a critical step in consolidating the human rights instruments with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundation. Section 5 is often invoked by defenders of human rights when faced with arguments by those who want to privilege certain rights while reducing the protection provided for other rights.

The indivisibility of rights has been at the heart of liberal philosophy for centuries. It is also at the heart of our government's political philosophy. The Prime Minister has placed an emphasis on ensuring human rights and freedoms are not only central to our strategic interests but representative of a moral world view that recognizes diversity as strength.

As such, the protection and promotion of all human rights, including the freedom of religion, must be treated as part of a comprehensive vision of foreign policy.

As one of the fundamental human rights, freedom of religion is important, and so, too, are freedom of assembly, speech, thought, and expression. Where freedom of religion is not respected, so too are these other freedoms not respected.

To address the issues, to mitigate the impact and improve the lives of the people facing the worst abuses, we must treat all human rights as a priority. We must orient ourselves to the cause of all people who face limits on their freedoms and denial of their basic human rights.

If we are going to defend them, we must continue the work of the office in a comprehensive fashion, embedding the principles that have sought to protect religious freedom with the interdependent freedoms I have mentioned.

Security challenges, economic pressures, climate change, gender equality, and inclusion across the board are all improved if we treat human rights and our fundamental freedoms together. The issues we face today are too great to be treated any other way.

Canada will support every effort to speak out when human rights are in question or where people are being persecuted for who they are or for their beliefs, including when human rights defenders are arrested and threatened for daring to speak out against human rights; when the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersexual community is the target of extreme violence and hate; when sexual and gender-based violence is committed against women and girls at alarmingly increasing levels; when 15 million young girls a year around the world are forced into marriage, keeping them from reaching their full potential, interrupting their education, jeopardizing their health, and making them vulnerable to violence; when children are abused, exploited, neglected, and turned into instruments of war, trafficked, or made to labour in inhuman conditions, or deprived of an education or adequate health care, and denied an opportunity to just be kids; and when people are persecuted for how they pray, when they pray, or if they pray and to whom.

We will seek to integrate all our fights for human rights, including the promotion of religious freedom, so that we may be more effective as a country at the broader objective of promoting our fundamental human rights at home and abroad.

● (1145)

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague opposite said that the government will fight for religious freedoms around the world. He talked about ensuring that Canada makes every effort to speak out against human rights violations, sexual and gender-based violence, and that it will look at other tools to promote human rights around the world.

Genocide is defined as an intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, racial, or religious group. We know that in the Iraqi-Syrian region, ISIL has been committing atrocities deemed to be genocide by a UN panel on March 19 last year, as well as by the United States. Both the UN and the United States have said that ISIL is committing genocide against Christians and Yazidis in the area, doing exactly what my colleague said he would stand up and fight against: sexual slavery, genital mutilation, rape, beheading, and persecution of religious minorities.

Given that our neighbours around the world are all standing up and calling this genocide and the member is talking about Canada using other tools to speak out against human rights, I would like to give him this opportunity in the House to call ISIL's actions in the Middle East what they are: genocide. Will the minister stand and call this genocide today?

Business of Supply

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, of course, we need to fight to resolve the awful crimes done by the so-called Islamic State and to do so with all the strength of our will to be sure that the killing and commission of sexual atrocities stop.

The definition of genocide is something that we need to consider. Canada is looking at that. We are a signatory of the International Criminal Court. The U.S. is not. There are legal considerations for the use of the word “genocide”. Also if we call the atrocities done by the so-called Islamic State genocide, why not also call those of al-Qaeda and Boko Haram the same?

These are the considerations that we have to take into account, but I would suggest to my colleague that she does not care more than I do. It is a matter of using the term “genocide” in the appropriate way, but our commitment to fight this group is ironclad and will never be modified.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

We recognize the importance of protecting and promoting religious freedom abroad. Would my colleague agree that Canada needs to start paying closer attention to the important issues of strengthening institutions and promoting democracy and human rights in general?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. The issues she raised are very important, as are those raised by our Conservative colleagues. The question here today is not about who places the most importance on fighting for human rights. I am very disappointed that the Conservatives are once again trying to make this a partisan issue.

This is about figuring out the best approach for Canada. The Office of Religious Freedom, whose mandate will end on March 31, might not be the best way for Canada to promote and stand up for human rights, including the rights mentioned by my colleague and by my Conservative friends earlier. All members of the House want to stand up for those rights.

To suggest that that is not the case because we will not use the word “genocide” or because we are not keeping a certain office open is appalling, I think. However, that was the Conservatives' way of doing things for nearly 10 years. This is one reason they are no longer in government today. Canadians have had enough of that attitude.

• (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the words of wisdom by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, both now and when we were on the opposition benches. I believe he well articulates the positions of the Liberal Party, and now the Government of Canada.

Canada does have a leadership role to play in the world on human rights. Even though Canada, in terms of population, is relatively small, we have the potential to carry a great deal of weight on issues such as human rights. Could he comment on the leadership role that Canada can play on this very important issue?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, of course Canada has a huge role to play. We are asked to be active on the human rights front everywhere.

There is a great appetite everywhere in the world for our Prime Minister and what he represents as a hope to fight for human rights. It is something the former government did. I am not disputing that. I think the work that was done to fight for the rights of children not to be forced into marriage is something that we want to continue.

However, the new government has a new approach and new ways, and we are very confident that with this new approach we will increase Canada's ability to fight for human rights, including religious freedom.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish this were not a partisan issue. I really wish that the government would simply agree to allow the office to continue to do its good work.

I thank the hon. member for his speech, and I know he has a lot of experience in this place and has contributed a great deal to our country, but I have to ask, listening to the way he described the Office of Religious Freedom, if he has actually been fully briefed on how it operates.

He talks about the need to have a network. He talks about the need to work with the ambassadors. He does not seem to be aware that these things are already happening, that we have an office that is not separate or siloed, but is directly within Global Affairs Canada. It is working to build the capacity of the department. It provides training to our staff throughout that department to be effective in addressing these issues. It is not siloed or independent. It is the kind of model that exactly fits the indivisibility he talks about.

There is no disagreement about the indivisibility of rights, but this office plays a central role within the Department of Foreign Affairs. Why will the Liberals not simply allow it to continue to do the good work it is doing? If they will not let it continue to do its work, if they will not even acknowledge that genocide against Yazidis and Christians is happening, then we would be wrong not to ask, what is behind this if the member is unwilling to take human rights and religious freedom in this serious way by allowing the work of the office to continue?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, it is really unfortunate to mix up the two issues as my colleague did. The recognition of a genocide is not something we take lightly. It does not mean that atrocities are not taking place. Of course atrocities are taking place, but this does have a legal meaning.

The former government, to my knowledge, did not recognize the Islamic State's actions as genocide. Why did it not do so? Is it because it did not care? Of course it cared, so why play this partisan game again? I am disgusted by this attitude.

I repeat, the Office of Religious Freedom came with some results, and we will look at how to improve our ability to work together in a more integrated way to be sure that human rights are better promoted by Canada, including rights of religious freedom.

Business of Supply

I will not accept any suggestion that we have any other motivation than this one. That would be unparliamentary.

• (1155)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in order to turn this around, I would like to hear from the minister how he would invite the opposition members to join with us in building on their beginning.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Madam Speaker, I want to say to all my colleagues that every time they identify a problem about human rights in the world, every time they have a consular case, and every time that we can work together to protect human beings, my door is open and the doors of all my colleagues are open. There are issues that should not be partisan, that are linked to our responsibilities as parliamentarians of a democracy, the great democracy of Canada. Let us work together and avoid being partisan about everything. This must end. After 10 years, let us end this game.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am a proud practising Catholic, and indeed I do acknowledge the first human right was the right of religious freedom, the right to worship as one saw fit. All other human rights emerged from this fundamental right.

As our civilization developed over the centuries, our concept of freedom became more expansive. We now believe that other human rights are every bit as fundamental as the freedom to worship freely. A perfect example of what I mean can be found in article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms".

While the right to worship freely may predate the right to not have one's body sold into slavery, the right to not be owned by another person, I think we can all agree is every bit as fundamental as any other. Implicit in the right to not be owned by another is the understanding that all human life is of equal value.

Even our understanding of the concept of religious freedom is more expansive than it was originally construed to be in that the first form of religious freedom, at least in the west, was religious tolerance. This was what philosophers referred to as a negative freedom, the freedom to be left alone. Our understanding now is much more robust.

I wish to state, Madam Speaker, that I will be splitting my time with the member for Windsor West.

I am very proud to say that the universal declaration was written by a Canadian by the name of John Peters Humphrey. Article 18 states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

I take this stroll through history to make a point, which I believe to be important; there should be no hierarchy among human rights, that the question of religious freedom has to be understood within the broader context of freedoms and fundamental rights. This is the position of the NDP. We believe that if our government is to promote human rights, it should promote the full spectrum of freedoms and

not just the freedom of religion, as significant as this freedom no doubt is.

Let us look further at these rights and freedoms, all of which are fundamental: freedom of expression, of privacy; freedom of the press; freedom of assembly; the right to participate in one's government; the right to equal pay for equal work; and the right to form and participate trade unions. There are many more that I will not go into. The point is that we should not arbitrarily limit our focus to just one of all these fundamental freedoms.

When it comes to promoting fundamental human rights, we should not play politics with them. That, unfortunately, is precisely what the Conservatives did when they were in government.

In March of 2012, former foreign affairs minister John Baird announced that the Conservative government had decided to scrap the highly respected organization, the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, better known simply as Rights & Democracy. It had been created to be a non-partisan, independent Canadian institution, established by an act of Parliament in 1988, to encourage and support the universal values of human rights and the promotion of democratic institutions and practices around the world. At the time, then minister Baird claimed that the move to close Rights & Democracy had to do with the government's efforts to find efficiencies and savings.

Fast forward to February 2013, when the Government of Canada officially opened the Office of Religious Freedom within Global Affairs Canada, with an annual budget of \$5 million. So much for efficiencies and savings I guess.

The Conservatives shut down Rights & Democracy, an organization dedicated to promoting a robust conception of human rights only to open up less than a year later another organization designed to promote just one right in particular, the right to worship freely.

• (1200)

It is important to recall, too, that the Conservative government of the time also shut down three offices of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, in Halifax, Vancouver, and Toronto, the three cities that registered the highest number of human rights complaints. During this period, the Conservative government also slashed funding to highly respected human rights organizations, such as KAIROS, Alternatives, and the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, in retaliation for their criticism of the Conservatives' appalling record on international rights.

Also during this time, the Conservatives cut funding to many organizations promoting women's rights: the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity, le Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Womenspace, and several more. Why would a government claiming to be committed to human rights slash funding to all of these organizations then turn around and open an Office of Religious Freedom? The reason, of course, is simple: politics.

To get a sense of what I mean, we only need look at the actual record of the Office of Religious Freedom.

Business of Supply

In an analysis of the ORF by Samane Hemmat, published in OpenCanada, Hemmat notes that, “Christian minorities have garnered almost twice as much of the attention...as compared with Muslim and Jewish communities”. This is not to suggest that Christians are not being persecuted in the Middle East, because they are.

This is why, during the previous Parliament, the NDP supported a study by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the human rights violations against Egyptian Christians. We also supported the committee's all-party statement condemning this violence against Christians, calling for its cessation. According to Hemmat, the ORF has also released press statements speaking out for Christians in Ukraine, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, China, and the Central African Republic, though paying special attention to Christian minorities in Pakistan and Coptic Christians in Egypt, a strong population which has immigrated to Canada.

The focus on Ukraine is especially puzzling, given the low ranking it received on the Pew forum's government restrictions and social hostilities index. I am sure the fact that Canada had the third-largest Ukrainian population after Ukraine and Russia and that the Conservatives were keen to court this population had nothing to do with ORF's advocacy on behalf of Ukrainian Christians.

As my time is drawing to a close, I would like to wrap things up by acknowledging the fact that a number of our friends in various faith communities across Canada support the continuation of the Office of Religious Freedom. I would like our friends to know that the New Democrats support the same freedoms as they do, every bit as passionately as they do, even as we do not support the continuation of the ORF.

The New Democrats believe these important freedoms would be promoted more effectively by a government body less political in nature, one designed in a way to promote a thoroughly robust and inclusive conception of human rights, all human rights and freedoms, as opposed to one designed for crass political purposes. Our faith communities deserve better and Canadians deserve better.

We believe, along with our new Minister of Foreign Affairs, that rights are indivisible, interrelated, and interdependent, that freedom of religion is unthinkable without freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, or freedom of movement. Our party is committed to working with the new government to ensure that human rights are front and centre in all decisions made, indeed, to ensure that human rights are the central organizing principle around which all policy is formulated in all matters before the state.

•(1205)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague gave an excellent speech, though I do not agree with everything. I think she has criticized the office too much. I do not think Dr. Bennett wanted to make it partisan.

However, since I agree so much with the orientation she gave, what suggestions would she give to the government on how to have better tools to promote the rights of religious freedom and other rights around the world?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, in this forum, it is very important, due to the context of the motion, to highlight some of the

more exacerbating reasons for better ways to move forward with human rights. For us to move forward effectively, I adamantly believe there cannot be a hierarchy. I believe we can move forward much as in the spirit that was done in the past with Rights & Democracy initiatives. When we do not have a hierarchy on human rights, we actually fortify human rights because they are interdependent, and we maximize our resources when we take that approach with the most vibrant way human beings are able to flourish and to express themselves in civic space.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a brief comment on Rights & Democracy, which of course is another debate. However, structurally Rights & Democracy was quite different. It was an external agency of government operating at arm's length. The Office of Religious Freedom is not an external agency; it is within the Department of Global Affairs. Therefore, it is much more in line with the indivisibility approach because it is right within the department.

The member talked about some analysis of emphasis on different groups. Is she aware that a substantial percentage of the projects of the Office of Religious Freedom is not public because it operates in very sensitive areas where those who are helped cannot make elements of it public. Surely, the member should acknowledge that when she tries to do a comparison.

Also, is the member not aware of the incredible abuse of basic rights and freedoms, including of religious freedom in Russian-occupied areas in Crimea and eastern Ukraine? I was absolutely incredulous that the member was talking about Ukraine as if there were no religious-freedom issues there whatsoever. Is her party not aware of the disastrous situation with respect to freedom of religion in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Madam Speaker, I believe certain aspects of my speech are being sensationalized right now for the purpose of this debate. However, absolutely I am extremely cognizant of all human rights issues, whether they are related to a faith practice and an organized religion or a spiritual pursuit and other faith practices as well. That is not an issue for me.

I understand that, with what is happening in the Ukraine, or in Egypt or even here at home, when the context is about human rights, it is about religious freedom as well. We do not have to pull religious freedom out. In fact, at the beginning of my speech, I mentioned that one of the very first human rights that was articulated, maybe 15,000 years BC, when we had tablets from some of our earliest populations, was the freedom of belief, of pursuing, and giving accolades to different gods. We understand where human rights are. We do not need to separate the Office of Religious Freedom.

If there are ongoing issues with regard to human rights that are secretive and not public, there are resources where this is better handled. We have people who specialize in operations that way who can be supportive. I cannot speak to those things publicly if I do not know about them. However, as a country, we are certainly capable of undergoing and continuing any kind of work to protect people in a collaborative manner that is also clandestine if need be.

Business of Supply

•(1210)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to the motion before us and speak about what Canada has been doing around the world and in the House of Commons with regard to religious freedom.

The motion talks about promoting peace, freedom, tolerance, and communal harmony. It calls on the government to renew the current mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom, which on the surface sounds like something we could support. However, when we start to look at the overall elements that are necessary for the advancement of humanity, we know that a generalized approach is much stronger for humanitarian and other rights as opposed to a more concentrated element by itself, which seems to leave out some of the things we need to look at.

For example, we in the NDP often advocate for human rights in our trade deals with different countries. New Democrats have constantly argued for elements that look at labour policies and humanitarian right policies. We look at equality issues, whether that be sexual orientation or religious beliefs. We look at all of these factors in total, because once the human rights element surfaces as an overall policy, it allows the religious aspect and other aspects, such as labour rights, children's rights, or a number of different institutions a country is involved in, to be protected. We do not single it out as an individual element because it becomes more of a natural progression, the protection of humanity versus that of religious orientation, which would not encompass the entire atmosphere necessary for human rights to evolve, and that includes women's equality.

Canada has signed a number of trade agreements. They are critical for the Canadian economy in different respects, and also critical for the nations who have signed on with Canada. In one aspect these trade agreements are signed, sealed, and delivered, and then just as the moon orbits the earth, there are secondary agreements related to human rights, the environment, and other things that are offsetting but cannot really be pulled into the sphere of the actual agreement itself. These other things basically become footnotes or appendages that are not even part of the overall system. They just become useless vessels to promote human rights, including religious rights, women's rights, indigenous population rights. We give up the leverage necessary to get these rights.

Canada has signed numerous trade agreements with countries that have notorious human rights elements that are difficult for us to deal with, especially once we know about these things, sign agreements, and then expect to use some type of leverage, which really does not happen. That is unfortunate, because with these things comes greater accountability and the opportunity to instill an overall pattern of support for people to be free in their society.

As has been noted, the Office of Religious Freedom has a budget of \$5 million. Its mandate was not renewed under the Conservative regime and I do not understand, if it was that important, why was that the case. Five million dollars is a sum of money for sure, but there are numerous religions around the world and in Canada. There are many different groups and organizations in Canada that will never be attended to because there is no money to do so.

The Office of Religious Freedom really does not incorporate the entire human rights aspect. That aspect has not been supported in our own country when we look at the indigenous population, women's equality, and different things in our country. We still have our own domestic problems relating to these issues, one of which deserves a national inquiry, which has taken far too long to take place. It has taken many debates in the House and many questions from different political parties over generations to try to get that basic element drawn out, which is systematic in our population.

•(1215)

Also, we are not talking about renewing or reviewing the actual operations. Therefore, the concern is this. If we set up this independent operation and if we are sending money abroad, then Parliament does deserve a review of the full vetted actions. That is a more wholesome debate than a motion brought in the House of Commons.

I would note that this is a motion, not legislation, so the binding would be different. I remember the former prime minister basically saying that, ethically, motions should be upheld in the House of Commons. He said that as the opposition leader at that time. At that time, the Liberals defended the fact that a motion is just a motion and it is technically at the will of the House. Ed Broadbent, one of our former members who will be celebrating his 80th birthday soon, was in this chamber passing motions on child poverty, which were never lived up to outside of this chamber. We have had numerous motions over the years that have not gone through anything other than a vote in the House of Commons. The Conservatives used to support motions as being the ethics of Parliament and requiring implementation. However, once they were in power they disregarded that altogether. They know that from the get-go because they have just been in power, for a number of years. We cannot scrub away all history, either from one side or the other, and that is just the reality that took place.

I was here when we passed motions on a series of different things, on some very serious issues, and others where there was generally some support. It becomes a pick-and-choose element.

A proud moment in this Parliament is when we passed motions on identifying five genocides, which are now in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We renewed that together as a group and it was reinforced. However, as I mentioned, others brought by our good friend Ed Broadbent, such as his motion on child poverty, have never been implemented. Therefore, I question the tactics of the Conservatives about this because, if they really wanted this vessel, they could have improved it and used it as a piece of legislation. It is not. Therefore, it will only stand on its own in terms of the will of a majority government, which can basically do what it wants with respect to this motion.

Business of Supply

The key issues for the New Democrats in terms of freedom are more broadly with respect to human rights and democratic development. We have seen Canada involved in these abroad. However, they again are the principal building blocks to allowing religious freedom to take place. The broader context is very important because we have the institution building, democracy promotion, and human rights promotion, which come to the forefront. With that forefront in place, it allows for religious freedom to be part of a group of elements that can be protected. That is one of the things we have out there.

If we look at some of the cases of persecution of religious freedoms out there, we see they do not just take place abroad in the larger context of the world outside of North America. I would point to—and it is interesting that I do this, coming from my riding of Windsor West—the presidential candidate Donald Trump and his statements about Muslims and preventing them from going into the United States. I can say from everyday experience that there are Muslims who are Canadian citizens, some by birth and others who have immigrated, who are doctors, nurses, health care providers, accountants, lawyers, and a number of different occupations, who go to the United States every single day. Right now they are not asked if they are Muslim or not. Rather, they are asked if they are Canadian citizens. As Canadian citizens, we need to have that basic right when we cross the border, and our strongest trading partner should abide by it. The United States is also one of our more strategic allies around the world. However, it now has someone running for president who would bar Canadians from saving American lives every single day and persecute them because of who they worship.

Maybe that office needs to focus on our neighbour.

● (1220)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the many comments made by the member. I would like to emphasize how important it is for us to talk about our freedoms: the freedom of thought and just human rights in general.

I posed this question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and I will pose the very same question for the member. I believe that Canada does have a leadership role to play in the world with respect to human rights. We are often called upon by other countries and stakeholders or third parties to take a position, to make statements, or to demonstrate leadership by participating either directly or indirectly. I am wondering what role the member believes Canada should play with respect to the whole issue of human rights and dealing with a stronger leadership role.

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I think really we should be reinforcing that. Also, reworking our relationship with the UN, in particular, is where we can actually have some practical and positive responses right away. Our humanitarian assistance has been waning in the world.

There was a bill—it was originally called The Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa bill—by which we actually have generic drugs going to developing countries, Africa in particular, but other areas were allowed to benefit from this, for a lower cost through agreements with the pharmaceutical companies and also the generic

industry. That bill was eventually passed in this House, but was only applied once because it was built to fail.

We have a failing reputation because, yes, we built legislation that was to help promote something, but it was built to fail. I think we have to stop pretending we are helping when we actually can use existing vehicles and some legislation, with a tweak, to help people out, whatever their religion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks. He made a couple of points that I think are true. He said there are ongoing human rights issues, that there are other human rights issues that need attention. He mentioned there being the need for attention to certain domestic human rights issues. He also said that \$5 million cannot help everyone. These things are fundamentally true.

However, let us acknowledge, as well, that there are specific programs in the Office of Religious Freedom that are doing a lot of good, that are helping people who need the help, that are addressing underlying tensions, that are bringing community leaders together, and the government has acknowledged the success, indeed, the effectiveness, of those programs. I talked about a program in Ukraine and a program in Nigeria during my speech, again, as acknowledged successes.

Would the hon. member, while acknowledging that there is other work to be done in other areas, also agree that these vital programs at the Office of Religious Freedom need to be allowed to continue?

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, I would disagree. I think that this office, before it even continues, needs a full review as to whether or not we are doing enough with other elements, not by its alienation but with the support of parliamentary practice.

Part of my speech was related to trade obligations that we have signed, sealed, and delivered that do not include the enforcement of human rights and environmental rights that are so germane to allowing for religious freedom to exist and to flourish; and we do not do that. The Conservatives have been pushing that aside for generations, and the Liberals as well, keeping those things outside of our actual sphere of influence when we really have the carrot-and-stick approach. The carrot is a trade agreement with Canada, and the stick approach is that, if they are not going to abide by basic human rights that include religious and environmental rights, women's rights, indigenous rights, then we have the opportunity to have something to say related to the trade agreement that we actually have signed.

It is a way of approaching from a strength position and ensuring that there is a more wholesome element, aside from a single office with \$5 million, as opposed to a practice in principle that is the foundation of Canadians.

● (1225)

Mr. David Sweet (Flamborough—Glanbrook, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan for bringing forward this timely and most important motion today.

Business of Supply

As a member of the subcommittee of this House on international human rights, the substance of this motion is something that I am most passionate about. I sincerely hope that upon reflection on this motion in this debate, the government will see fit to renew the very important mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom at a moment in the history of humanity when it is most needed.

I should note up front that I will be sharing my time allocation to speak to this motion with the hon. member for Edmonton Manning.

When the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan spoke in this House a couple of weeks ago, he ended his remarks with a parting thought that perfectly encapsulates the essence of this motion. He said:

While we cannot solve every problem, it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. The Office of Religious Freedom is the candle that is burning bright far beyond its size would suggest it could. I ask the government to please not snuff this candle out.

Let me also iterate for the purpose of this debate on this motion today a line from the joint letter sent by Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim leaders to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that noted the fact that the current Syrian refugee crisis is exacerbated by the flight of religious minorities targeted by ISIS on the basis of their faith. In their letter of support for the Office of Religious Freedom, Mr. Shimon Fogel, Dr. Amritpal Singh Shergill, and Mr. Asif Khan wrote:

This is an issue that touches the conscience of all Canadians, regardless of any particular religious affiliation, many of whom arrived in Canada as refugees fleeing religious-based persecution overseas - whether recently or in previous generations.

The point they make so eloquently is that standing up for tolerance, standing up for human rights, standing up for rights of minority faith groups is very much the Canadian way, so much so that these very principles are reflected in our own Charter of Rights and Freedoms, including, and not limited to, freedom of religion, which is why, as Canadians, we understand that we have more than a moral obligation, we have a duty, to put words into action.

This was the impetus behind the Office of Religious Freedoms when it was formed in 2013, within what was then called the Department of Foreign Affairs. With a most modest budget and a talented ambassador in Andrew Bennett, the mandate of the office is to be focused on those countries or situations where there is evidence of the worst kinds of violence, hatred, and systemic discrimination on the basis of religion.

Sadly, it was an international tragedy that brought about the formation of the office. In March 2011, the shocking assassination of the Honourable Shahbaz Bhatti, the federal Minister of Minorities of the Republic of Pakistan, shook all of us who believe in peace, tolerance, and understanding. Shahbaz Bhatti was the sole Christian minister in the Government of Pakistan, and his brutal murder in broad daylight was designed to send a wave of terror through that nation.

What was particularly disturbing to observers in both Pakistan and the international community was that Shahbaz Bhatti's life work was to promote peace, tolerance, and understanding among peoples of all faiths. He knew he would likely pay the price of his life for advocating for religious freedom for all minorities in Pakistan. He said that to me personally here in this House just weeks before he was assassinated back home.

In light of Shahbaz's life, and with the pursuit and the goal of defending those who cannot defend themselves, the Office of Religious Freedom was conceived. It was officially opened in 2013. I was honoured and privileged to attend the mosque where the announcement of its first ambassador took place.

I have been even more honoured to get to know martyr Shahbaz Bhatti's brother, Peter Bhatti, over the past few years. We have had many conversations about the work of his brother, the violence and persecution in Pakistan and the region, and the promise of the Office of Religious Freedom. In fact Peter Bhatti, who immigrated to Canada in 1997, is one of 23 prominent Canadians and leaders of faith communities who are part of the external advisory committee that advises the Office of Religious Freedom.

For those in this chamber who have heard the passion in Peter Bhatti's voice and seen the impact of his work, there is no doubt of the effectiveness of the Office of Religious Freedom.

• (1230)

Yet Peter Bhatti is not alone. The advisory committee includes the imam of the Lebanese Islamic Center in Montreal; my friend Rabbi Reuven Bulka, right here from Ottawa, who is the former co-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress; and Dr. Mario Silva, to name a few.

Many members of this House will know Dr. Mario Silva, as he served as the Liberal member of Parliament for Davenport from 2004 to 2011. I am proud that he was a colleague on the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism. In fact, he has continued his work as an international legal scholar to speak out on those issues, and I am honoured to call him a friend.

I think this demonstrates the calibre of people involved with the Office of Religious Freedom. They are leading Canadian lights on international human rights and they are making a difference on a daily basis. For this reason alone, the mandate of the office should be renewed.

However, I would also like to point out a few examples of the work of the office and what it is accomplishing on the ground in some of the most difficult places in the world.

It is clear that we live in an increasingly dangerous world. We need only to remember the Paris attacks of last November and the attacks on Canadian soil in 2014 to see this. Unfortunately, it is also clear that religious persecution underpins this brand of terrorism and extremism, the advance of ISIS, and many other global conflicts. That is why the heavy lifting being done by the Office of Religious Freedom is so crucially important.

In Iraq, support and funding of a quarter-million-dollar project with Minority Rights Group International is strengthening the ability of local Iraqi organizations to monitor and report on religious persecutions. That is directly helping persecuted people on the ground.

Business of Supply

Similarly, a \$200,000 project to document injustices faced by non-Muslim Pakistanis as well as to sensitize Pakistani parliamentarians to the circumstances of religious minorities in the country is making a difference in the very place where Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated. This is also directly helping persecuted people on the ground. What is more, the project includes work to develop policy recommendations to provide religious minorities with relief from persecution, something that the Office of Religious Freedom, with its access to some of Canada's and the world's leading lights on international human rights, is uniquely suited to do.

There is one other example I would like to highlight, because it speaks to the injustices raised and the alarm bells sounded by the international and Canadian parliamentary coalitions to combat anti-Semitism, with which Dr. Mario Silva and other past and present members of the House have been actively involved. Through the religious freedom fund, the Office of Religious Freedom is supporting the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation with \$400,000 and providing \$100,000 to UNESCO for Holocaust awareness-raising events and educational activities around Holocaust remembrance and genocide prevention. Most importantly, this particular project includes funds toward the conservation of the buildings, grounds, and archival holdings of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

As all members of this House know, especially those who heard testimony during the panel of inquiry conducted by the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism in 2010 and 2011, if the world is not to learn the lessons of history, we are doomed to repeat them. Too often the trampling of minority religious freedoms is just the beginning of something far more sinister, which again reinforces why the work of the office must continue.

There is one other case I wish to touch upon before I yield the floor to the member for Edmonton Manning. This is the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini, a courageous young Christian pastor who was arrested by Iranian authorities, beaten, and held for three and a half years in the notorious Evin prison in Tehran, often in solitary confinement. A dual citizen of Iran and the United States, Pastor Abedini was deemed by the Iranian regime to be a national security threat for peacefully observing his Christian faith in Iran.

I have spoken about Pastor Abedini's case before as part of the annual Iran Accountability Week in this chamber. Cases like that of Pastor Abedini are the reason we must continue to draw attention to human rights abuses against religious minorities and speak out for human rights everywhere.

The amazing and heartwarming news is that when Pastor Abedini offers his annual Easter message of Christian hope and reflection this week, as he did every Easter during his brutal tenure in an Iranian jail, he will be doing it from the midst of his church community in Idaho, having been freed from Iran this January.

This is what it is all about. This is what the Office of Religious Freedom is all about: upholding the global fight for freedom of religion, advancing human rights, standing up for something as fundamentally Canadian as freedom of religion, and putting words to action.

• (1235)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the

member for that speech. It was very illuminating and it gives Canadians a lot to be proud of.

Could the member explain how expanding upon the Office of Religious Freedoms and taking human rights as a whole together could possibly be any kind of threat to the good work that has begun?

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, I am not certain if I understand the question entirely about expanding the Office of Religious Freedom and having it be a threat to some kind of work that has already been done, but let me say this. For the eight-plus years that I have served on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights here in this chamber, we heard about persecutions around the world over and over again, and there are many.

However, among all of the persecutions that we studied at that committee—those against gay and lesbian communities, those against socio-economic minorities, those against those in a lower caste in countries that have the caste system—by far most of the cases that we dealt with had to do with religious minorities. It was Yazidis, Ahmadis, Christians, Muslim minorities. The persecutions, the human rights violations, were persecutions for religion.

Any expansion of the Office of Religious Freedom would obviously be welcomed by all of us in this chamber, because it would make sure that human rights of every kind were defended and that those people who did not have the opportunity to defend themselves would have a voice.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, the NDP feel strongly that Canada must continue to defend freedom of expression and freedom of conscience, human rights in general, women's rights, and aboriginal rights.

We are opposed to this Conservative motion because Canada's Office of Religious Freedom defended Christian minorities around the world at the expense of other religious minorities, including aboriginal or popular religions. In fact, it did not defend any aboriginal or popular religion.

In 2013, the Conservative government was shown to have funded Crossroads Christian Communications, a Canadian anti-gay group that was active in Uganda, where gays and lesbians face serious persecution. This organization clearly has a bias.

Does my colleague not believe that the \$5 million that is allocated annually to this organization should instead go to an organization that defends democracy and human rights around the world, and not just religious freedom?

[English]

Mr. David Sweet: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I 100% disagree with my colleague.

I mentioned the Office of Religious Freedom projects in regard to the Jewish faith and I mentioned projects in regard to a multiplicity of religious minorities that exist in Pakistan. The whole notion that the office was selective in defending any kind of stream of religion is absolutely, categorically false.

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If my colleague is concerned about other rights, such as freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, or freedom of assembly, all these fall from religious freedom. If we have religious freedom, we have all these other rights.

I am not suggesting that other efforts are not necessary. I mentioned in my speech the years I spent on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights. That subcommittee has done great work in conjunction with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs by releasing reports, holding countries to account, and being a voice for those people who are persecuted, but I certainly think that the Office of Religious Freedom is a great tool that the present government can use to continue to give a voice to those people who do not have a voice internationally. It would make all Canadians proud if it continued.

● (1240)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like to take the time to thank Canada's ambassador for religious freedom, Dr. Andrew Bennett, for his three years of devoted service, not just to Canada but to those around the world. He has worked tirelessly to promote Canadian values and to speak out against injustice. He has raised the issue of religious freedom across the country, helping Canadians better understand an issue that thankfully does not touch us directly but that is all too real for millions around the world.

I came to Canada from an area of the world where religion is much more at the forefront than in our society here. It is an area where wars have been fought in the name of religion for centuries. Therefore, perhaps I have a different perspective on the issue of religious freedom and its importance than many hon. members do. I came to Canada from a region where every religious group has experienced persecution throughout history.

Religious persecution takes different shapes or forms, but at the end of the day, it is an attempt to take people's freedom, and furthermore, their existence.

In Canada, when we talk about religious freedom we are talking about it in the abstract, and in the House, we agree that such freedom is a good thing. Where we disagree is whether it should be at the forefront of Canadian foreign policy. However, in many areas of the world, the idea of religious freedom is literally a matter of life and death, places where changing from one faith to another carries with it a death sentence.

We all need to be aware that what we are discussing today is not an academic exercise. It is not about different political visions. It is about a Canadian response to situations in which people are dying, situations in which Canada may be able to help.

Freedom of religion is considered to be a basic human right. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The UDHR is the fundamental global human rights document. However, despite the general acceptance of freedom of religion as a

universal right by member countries of the United Nations, restrictions on religious freedom have been increasing.

Canadians see themselves as a people with a strong tradition of standing up for the rights of others. With the creation of the Office of Religious Freedom in February 2013, the Government of Canada showed that it considers freedom of religion to be not only a basic human right but also a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy.

We Canadians are indeed fortunate to live in a country where democratic freedoms, including freedom of religion, are taken for granted. We do not face the realities of other countries where religious minorities are regularly persecuted. Many of the Syrian refugees who have come to Canada in the past few months have suffered religious persecution. Canadians are perhaps less insular than we once were and are more aware of what is going on beyond our borders. Addressing religious persecution in other countries is now seen, perhaps for the first time, as a moral obligation.

Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada's first ambassador for religious freedom, says that we define freedoms and human rights positively, with the understanding that freedom includes the opportunity to dissent and disagree. Indeed, rights and freedoms are not always going to be absolute.

As Dr. Bennett sees it, Canada's becoming involved in advocating for freedom of religion in other countries and exerting pressure when necessary on other nations to improve their human rights record flows from Canadians' values and understanding of human rights. He feels that Canada has the opportunity to use its position in the world and its international reputation to work with other countries for the overall improvement of religious freedom.

● (1245)

Dr. Bennett's voice is not alone. Speaking in the House about religious freedom, the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex said:

Canada has an important role to play globally, a role from which we will not shy away. Canada is a country of tolerance, acceptance, peace and security, and we are also a pluralistic society. Our diversity gives us a unique perspective on the world. Canada has long been building the conditions in which people live with the dignity others wish for—built around our fundamental values of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

This is not a partisan issue. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood, in discussing an earlier motion in the House, said:

...we should continue to recognize the importance of faith as a core component of many people's lives, not only in our society but in the broader foreign policy context.

The motion being discussed then was adopted unanimously by the House. It reads in part:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: (a) continue to recognize as part of Canadian foreign policy that (i) everyone has the right to freedom of religion and conscience, including the freedom to change religion or belief, and the freedom to manifest religion or belief in teaching, worship, practice and observance, (ii) all acts of violence against religious groups should be condemned, (iii) Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights be supported, (iv) the special value of official statements made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs denouncing violations of religious freedom around the world be promoted, (v) Canada's commitment to the creation of an Office of Religious Freedom should be used to help protect religious minorities and promote the pluralism that is essential to the development of free and democratic societies...

Business of Supply

All parties supported the Office of Religious Freedom then. Why not now? Apparently the government intends to do away with the office, perhaps as early as in tomorrow's budget.

We stand up for rights at home. Why would we not do the same in countries or situations where there is evidence of systematic violations of the right to freedom of religion, violations that could include violence, hatred, and systemic discrimination?

There are those who say that religious rights should not be separated from our understanding of other rights, that there is no need for a separate office to promote religious freedom. I wish that were true, but regrettably it is not. There are millions of people worldwide being persecuted because of their religious beliefs. Religious rights are indeed in a separate category in much of the world, a category too often ignored by Canada in the past.

Dr. Bennett says that the role of the Office of Religious Freedom is to advance, promote, and defend freedom of religion in the world, in countries where it is under threat, in countries where, typically, many freedoms are being violated.

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees all Canadians the right to freedom of conscience and religion. It is our first freedom. It is also a freedom not enjoyed in much of the world. If we believe so strongly in this freedom, why are we not willing to promote its benefits to the nations? Why not have an Office of Religious Freedom?

We need the office because freedom of religion is a human rights issue, and the mandate of this office is really a human rights mandate. In advancing freedom of religion, we are also advocating for human rights.

For the Canadian government to return to the mindset in which religion is ignored, or at best a subset of a number of variables, is to ignore the reality of the influence of religion in global society.

The Office of Religious Freedom is not pushing religion to the forefront of foreign policy, but an acknowledgement that religion is an important consideration in public life, both domestically and internationally.

• (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, from a number of the member's comments, the first thing that comes to mind is the fact that Canadians are very much in favour of having a very strong federal government on the issue of human rights.

Freedom of religion is all about freedom of thought. There are many other freedoms that Canadians hold very close to their hearts.

I am wondering if the member would not recognize that in reflecting Canadian values, even members of Parliament inside the chamber acknowledge the importance of religious freedom or freedom of thought. Would he not agree, what is most effective in dealing with human rights, including freedom of religion, is to have a focused approach where we see a strong national government that advocates for human rights, which include the freedom of religion?

Does he not see the human rights issue, in essence, as an area in which the Canadian government needs to play a larger role where it can, and try to demonstrate leadership throughout the world?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, what he said at the end of his question is right, that we are aiming for a bigger role for Canada. That role could definitely be better played if we had an Office of Religious Freedom.

Specifically, religious freedom is very fundamental. As I said, I am from an area in the world where conflicts have taken all different shapes and forms among all the religious groups there and any other groups. In this region, every religion has taken a beating throughout history. For Canada to play a fundamental role, the Office of Religious Freedom has to continue to be powerful. Maybe the Liberals should expand it rather than shutting it down, as the current government will do tomorrow.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of organizations that have been shut down, I want to mention Rights and Democracy, an organization that defended all rights around the world and was closed by the Conservative government.

When my colleague's party was in power, it decided to close Rights and Democracy, citing efficiency and savings, but a year later, it opened the Office of Religious Freedom. I would like my colleague to explain why the previous Conservative government shut down Rights and Democracy.

[English]

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, this is not a partisan issue. The members opposite are trying to suggest that we have done this for political reasons somehow and that there is no agreement. We disagree that we shut down democracy in the past; rather, we played democracy to its best while we were in power, and we will continue to do so in the House.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very concerned that with all of the different human rights issues that exist in the world, by shutting this office down and lumping it in with everything else, we will really dilute the focus on this important issue. I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on that.

• (1255)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Madam Speaker, basically, we are in a world where we all know that religious freedoms are the first to be targeted among other freedoms, all of which have been taken away from people. It is very important that Canada, with its Canadian demographic mix and the multicultural society we live in, plays a fundamental role. We should not be hesitant to make any effort to continue playing our role. We do truly believe that the Office of Religious Freedom is a great example of doing so.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga Centre.

Business of Supply

I am grateful for the opportunity to rise to draw attention to Canada's efforts to promote and protect human rights, including freedom of religion or belief.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." These words are inscribed in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and are as powerful today as they were when the declaration was adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Yet, religious intolerance and discrimination continue to increase around the world. Recent data from the Pew Research forum shows that in 2013, 5.5 billion people, an incredible 77% of the world's population, lived in countries with high or very high levels of restriction on religion, because of official government restrictions on freedom of religion, social discrimination, and hostilities involving religion. This is an increase from 68% of the world's population in 2007. The past decade reflects the deeply disturbing fact that freedom of religion, for most people in the world, is not possible without fear of reprisal.

Religious discrimination causes suffering, spreads division, and contributes to a climate of fear, intolerance, and stigmatization. It is why the previous government established the Office of Religious Freedom, and it is why we are examining ways to strengthen its value in the context of human rights as a whole.

Freedom of religion is but one of several universal, indivisible, and interdependent rights. Mobility rights, freedom of assembly, freedom to be a woman, all are interconnected with freedom of religion. Human rights are not chosen from a smorgasbord according to which rights you like. Human rights are taken together as one.

The promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, is an integral part of Canada's constructive engagement in the world, and, of course, was enshrined in our own Constitution in 1982.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked, how can we enjoy freedom of religion if we do not have freedom of conscience and freedom of speech? It is absolutely important to press for freedom of religion, but it is unnecessarily narrow and sidesteps the essence of what human rights advocacy must entail.

Canada's Office of Religious Freedom was established on February 19 2013, to protect and advocate on behalf of religious communities under threat, to oppose religious hatred and intolerance, and to promote the Canadian values of pluralism and respect for diversity abroad. Led by Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada's first ambassador for Religious Freedom, Canada's efforts have been pursued through policy, programming, advocacy, and outreach. Policy work conducted by the office is focused on ensuring that freedom of religion or belief is promoted and integrated in Canadian diplomatic efforts.

To enhance international co-operation, encourage greater multi-lateral action, and strengthen coordination between countries in

promoting religious freedom, Canada recently established an international contact group on freedom of religion or belief. Through interreligious dialogue, research training and capacity building, and legal and legislative support, Canada has supported programming initiatives around the world to promote and defend freedom of religion or belief.

These projects have provided crucial support to individuals and communities facing persecution due to their faith or belief, built the capacity of civil society and human rights defenders to address religious persecution, and strengthened governments, institutions, and local organizations striving to build pluralist and inclusive societies.

The mover of the motion has suggested that other members of the House are somehow unaware of the work of the office. If I have not already disabused him of that, I would like to show examples of the good work that has taken place.

In Bangladesh, as part of broader efforts to advance pluralism, Canada supports a project with the Aga Khan Foundation that has developed educational materials to aid in the long-term promotion of pluralist values and prevent conflict and exclusion arising from intolerance.

In Nigeria, as part of efforts to address intercommunal violence in the region, Canada supported a two-year project to promote interfaith dialogue and conflict mediation in Plateau State. The project successfully developed a community-based mechanism to help defuse tensions between different religious and ethnic groups, including Christians and Muslims, and has been used by the Nigerian government on various occasions, including in response to attacks by Boko Haram in the lead-up to Nigeria's elections in March 2015.

In Pakistan, Canada is supporting a project to promote respect for diversity at the institutional level through the establishment of broad coalitions that span across party, ethnicity, and religion, to advance policy and legal reforms which protect religious minorities against discrimination and abuse. This past year, the project was successful in advancing 11 new and amended pieces of legislation in Pakistan.

● (1300)

In Ukraine, Canada is supporting two projects to promote interfaith dialogue and strengthen the capacity of local authorities to respond to hate crimes, in order to cultivate long-term stability, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

Finally, as part of efforts to confront ISIL's extremist ideology and violence, Canada supports projects in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria to help strengthen social cohesion among religious communities in the region and build their capacity to monitor human rights violations. This is a core aspect of our foreign policy in that regard.

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Dr. Bennett conducted a joint visit to Burma with his U.S. counterpart, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom David N. Saperstein, at a key juncture in the country's democratic transition. Together, they engaged with a variety of Burmese government officials and civil society members in order to advocate on behalf of persecuted religious communities in Burma.

We understand and we value this beginning. We are grateful for Dr. Bennett's service as the head of the Office of Religious Freedom. We believe that the Office of Religious Freedom should be situated in the context of all human rights, because it is impossible to think they can be upheld without relying upon the way in which all human rights reinforce one another.

We are committed to building on and strengthening the work undertaken by the Office of Religious Freedom. Canada's experience as a multicultural and multi-faith society is a model for peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity. Intolerance is a global issue that is on the rise. Canada's experience is that diversity is a tremendous source of our strength. Diversity is precisely what human rights are there to protect and defend.

In countries where democracy has developed strong roots, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity is continuously reinforced in a society and its institutions through the fundamental freedoms that all citizens have a responsibility to ensure and the right to enjoy.

As a multicultural and multi-faith country, Canada is well placed to champion inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights internationally. Canada is deeply committed to helping build a world in which pluralism and differences are accepted, encouraged, and celebrated.

There is so much to improve upon in the field of human rights, at home and abroad. The promotion and protection of human rights is central to our government's foreign policy. We will work continuously to promote positive change and to reach out to the members in this House to join with us in this most important work.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague and thank her for outlining Dr. Bennett's role in all areas, including the very significant list of achievements.

If the government intends to do more to promote religious freedom and the government has a plan to do so, that would mean there is no financial implication for the office to speak about. Therefore, the financial part of it is not in the account.

Why, then, would the government shut down this office? If the government wants to do more, why would it not keep the office running with Dr. Bennett, who has made tremendous achievements in the role that he has played? Why would the government not keep this office going for as long as it takes? It has a fundamental and important role to play.

• (1305)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Madam Speaker, religious rights, religious freedoms, are only strengthened by looking at human rights as a totality. I gave examples.

I know this question is understood by the opposition. My answer would be, why would we not embrace all of the human rights together in order to especially understand, prevent, and protect people's right to religious freedom?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that if they want to ask a question to please stand up in the House, as opposed to yelling at people while they are making their speeches. I think we owe those who are responding or making speeches that respect.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

In light of what has happened, what does she think about Canada's ideological interference in protecting certain rights around the world? Does she think that there should be as little ideological interference as possible when it comes to protecting human rights? All rights are important, and Canada must protect and defend them around the world.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Madam Speaker, I am not going to comment on the politicization of the rights of religious freedom. However, I would like to say that whenever we separate one right from another, whenever we take away from the totality of the humanitarian aspect of all of these interconnected rights, then we risk perhaps being viewed as politicizing something that is far too important to politicize.

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is only one piece of the puzzle in protecting human rights and freedoms around the world.

In my opinion, freedom of conscience also includes the freedom to be religious or not. We all have a right to freedom of thought and belief, and we also have the right not to have beliefs. This freedom is a personal choice, as it should be everywhere in the world. I do not think anyone should tell another person what they can or cannot believe when it comes to their own religious thoughts.

Canada sets a good example for other countries on freedoms, and I do not want to disparage Canada's Office of Religious Freedom. However, I would like my colleague to tell us in what other ways we, as a country, can promote human rights and freedoms.

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Madam Speaker, certainly the subject of human rights runs throughout the mandate letters. It is the responsibility of many of the ministries. It is something which our minister is very passionate about, and very eloquent in speaking about. We look forward to infusing this government's leadership in the world with human rights and with our common humanity.

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today to speak to this important motion.

I want to start off by sharing my story with the House.

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I grew up in the Middle East as a member of the majority. Most of the people who I was raised with, neighbours, friends, my parent's friends, were all from the same sect. We all had the same faith and cultural background. I grew up in an environment where things were black and white, where things were simple, where we knew right from wrong. There were a lot of minorities but they kept to themselves.

The things I usually heard about minorities as I was growing up were unfortunately mostly negative stereotyping. It was the belittling of their traditions. It was the questioning of their loyalty. It was the questioning of their lifestyle and their vision. This was done by well-meaning individuals who did not really mean any malice. They lacked an understanding of what other groups and individuals aspired to be. Their stereotyping and accusations were never questioned. As a kid, I never questioned them myself. It was quite common. As a result of these questions, it was no surprise that many minority members kept to themselves. They kept their backgrounds to themselves. They would try to blend in with the majority and avoid any types of questions or stereotyping.

I immigrated to Canada at a young age and quickly became a member of the minority. Well-meaning individuals would ask me questions about my background, my faith, and wanted to understand some things they read about in the media. These types of questions or generalizations never gave me reason to ponder the ramifications of stereotyping up until I became a recipient of them.

This was an important journey for me. It helped me understand the importance of respecting each human being regardless of faith, background, sexual orientation, or gender. To this day, I carry with me the deep understanding that regardless of our faith, we all share humanity and the common desire to do well for ourselves and our family. Regardless of how different we are, we must always extend to each other respect and understanding even more than tolerance. Tolerance means we tolerate each other even though we might disagree. We have to advocate for respect and understanding. For me, that journey was the cornerstone of my deep commitment to human rights regardless of background and upbringing. I am extremely proud to be a member of a government that is deeply committed to that understanding and that belief.

Our government has taken action with respect to promoting human rights. Let me share with the House some of the steps that our government has taken.

Our right hon. Prime Minister has announced that Canada will be seeking a seat on the United Nations Security Council. Our government has announced that Canada will be seeking election to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, underscoring Canada's commitment to advancing gender equality globally, and the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls.

• (1310)

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs recently addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the first such address for a Canadian foreign minister in several years. At the Human Rights Council, the minister also clearly restated Canada's opposition to the death penalty and announced that Canada would, once again, be leading the annual resolution on the elimination of violence against women in June.

Furthermore, the Minister of Foreign Affairs recently met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and announced a \$15 million contribution over three years to support the work of his office. Before Christmas, the Prime Minister personally welcomed some of the 25,000 new Syrian refugees upon their arrival in Canada.

Let us not stop there. Canada, with clear direction from both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, worked to have human rights incorporated into the Paris agreement. At the last commonwealth summit, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs were unequivocal in expressing our support for the human rights of LGBTI persons.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has also engaged directly with some of Canada's leading civil society organizations and national indigenous organizations to seek their views on international human rights.

The government is committed to doing more in the promotion and protection of human rights. We will be seeking opportunities to engage with a broad range of partners, traditional allies, and emerging bridge builders to strengthen the international human rights architecture. The UN will be the principal forum in which we will advance our international objectives, including our human rights objectives. We will also engage in other forums, both established and emerging forums, wherever we can be most effective.

Canada has been instrumental in shaping the international system of human rights that sets global standards, monitors situations, provides early warning, addresses crises, reviews whether international obligations are being met, documents violations and abuses, and helps to prevent impunity. This work has been within both the United Nations and regional organizations engaged on human rights. Extending the strength, reach, and capacity of the UN human rights system is critical to Canadian interests.

The UN human rights system needs Canada's voice, but it also needs tangible financial contributions. In recent years, Canada has not contributed to the core funding of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Our government has corrected this. The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that our government will support the important work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights through a contribution of \$15 million over the next three years, funding that is new, un-earmarked core funding. A stable base of un-earmarked core funding is critical to the office's capacity to fulfill the mandate that we as member states gave it. Put simply, it cannot be an effective and objective promoter and protector of human rights absent predictable resources. Canada is also making an additional contribution to strengthen the on-the-ground presence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi.

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Our government is committed to hearing the views of Canadians with regard to human rights. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has engaged directly with some of Canada's leading civil society organizations, as well as national indigenous organizations, to seek their views on international human rights. Officials at Global Affairs Canada are continuing this engagement. Engagement with civil society organizations is essential to the success of our approach to human rights. We need their knowledge and expertise. We welcome their criticisms. Even in cases where we do not agree, we need to hear and consider the views of all Canadians. Our government has empowered offices to continue this engagement.

Our commitment to the promotion of human rights is deep and solid. While we acknowledge and celebrate the work of the Office of Religious Freedom over the last few years, we intend to expand it, to enhance it, and to continue to promote human rights here and abroad.

• (1315)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite and my fellow engineer for stating his support of our values of freedom of religion.

I heard the Minister of Foreign Affairs say this morning that the government intended to close the Office of Religious Freedom on March 31, at the end of its planned mandate. Could the member please tell me the priorities that the government will be addressing first and what resources will be put in place since that work begins 10 days from now?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the hon. member to be patient. We expect an announcement to be made shortly, once we finalize our decision about how to move forward. However, I am pretty sure she will be satisfied, and I am pretty sure Canadians will be proud once that decision is made.

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I hope that the decision my colleague mentioned will not result in a hierarchy of different rights, as was the case with the Office of Religious Freedom. I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for highlighting his commitment to all human rights. I would like him to tell us whether he believes, as I do, that there should not be a hierarchy, that is, that certain rights, such as religious rights, should not take precedence over other rights, and whether this will be reflected in the decision on the renewal of the office, which will be announced shortly.

• (1320)

[English]

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Madam Speaker, I agree with my colleague. Human rights are human rights. They all have the same level of importance, and they are all sacred.

There are times when we have to balance rights, but our intention and belief is that rights are indivisible and comprehensive. Freedom of religion is as important as the freedom of sexual orientation, freedom for LGBTI, freedom of conscience. I do not want to forget any rights, because it is a risky proposition; however, all rights should be treated equally and are sacred.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I really appreciated hearing the member's own story.

It is curious, because I find myself agreeing with the Liberals' high praise of the office, yet they go on to say that the office should be eliminated after praising its good work. The government is like someone who buys a new house and then rips out one of the walls, saying not to worry, that they will hold up the roof another way. Why do we not maintain the system we have in place, which is working so well? The Liberals are not expanding it. They are not building on it. They are levelling it first and then maybe they will figure something else out after that.

We have 10 days to go until this office runs out. Build on it by all means, but why do the Liberals at least start by renewing the good work that has already happened?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Madam Speaker, I am not sure why the member does not believe that better is always possible. There are always ways to make things better. In fact, he referred to a house. A lot of people buy houses and celebrate their new homes, but they end up doing some renovations to them. That does not take away from the beauty of the houses they just purchased.

Does my hon. colleague want me to criticize the work of the office? I will not do that. We support the work the office has done, but we think better is always possible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a question I have asked the minister before. It has to do with Canada's role in the world when it comes to human rights. It should be one of very strong leadership. Could the member provide his thoughts on Canada's role in dealing with human rights?

Mr. Omar Alghabra: Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. I took quite a bit of time in my speech to enumerate some of the leadership activities our government has taken around the globe, on the international stage, to promote human rights and to advocate for their promotion.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to speak to the motion today. I will be splitting my time with my friend and neighbour, the great member for Portage—Lisgar.

The reason the debate today is so important is that we want to talk about human rights, but we have to focus in on the great work that has been done by the Office of Religious Freedom under the leadership of the Ambassador Andrew Bennett. We need to remember that, when we look at most of the atrocities that have been committed around the world, when we look at most of the human rights violations that too many people have had the misfortune of experiencing, we see it always starts with an attack on religious freedom.

Not one of the countries today that have the worst human rights violations has freedom of religion or recognizes the people's right to choose which religion they want to practise.

It comes down to watching what is going on in the world today.

Business of Supply

I was encouraged to see U.S. Secretary of State Kerry say this past week that what ISIS is doing in Iraq and Syria, and indeed around the world, is genocide. Its targets are religious minority groups. It is the Assyrian Orthodox, the Yazidis, and the Chaldean Christians. It is those groups ISIS is focusing on. It is Shia Muslims and progressive Muslims it is targeting. Anyone who will not accept ISIS' demented idea of religion and ideology, those are the ones whom it is not just persecuting but exterminating.

We have to take a strong stand to stop these types of atrocities, to stop this genocide in particular in Iraq and Syria. That is why our party has always supported being part of the combat mission to actually stop the genocide, to exercise our responsibility under the UN charter, which is the responsibility to protect, which was agreed to under the Geneva Convention. We have a responsibility, and that is why the Office of Religious Freedom that we established a few years ago in Canada is so important.

I want to talk from the standpoint of my experience of what we are seeing happen in Ukraine today. Despite some of the earlier comments made by the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, I want to make sure people understand that there has been a huge attack on religious freedoms in Russian-occupied Ukraine, whether it is in Crimea, in Dombass, or by their proxies like former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich.

In Crimea, since the occupation began, when the little green men showed up on the streets in 2014, there was an immediate attack on the Muslim minority there, the indigenous Crimean Tatars. Almost systematically the government of Ukraine, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, as well as his proxies, his so-called Crimean self-defence forces in Crimea, made sure that they first went and shut down their mosques. Then they attacked their media, based upon their religion; so freedom of speech and freedom of the press were automatically shut down after they attacked their ability to worship.

They shut down the Crimean Tatars' newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Then they attacked their right to assembly and shut down their legislative body, which they have enjoyed under the authority of the Ukrainian government in the autonomous region of Crimea, since Crimea and Ukraine became independent in 1991, their Mejlis, which is their legislative body where they elect leaders, make policy decisions, and advise the government of Ukraine as well as the government within Crimea on the type of things they need for their people, the Crimean Tatars.

Those attacks on their religion were all orchestrated by the Kremlin out of Moscow. Those attacks on their human rights—freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech—were all attacked by the Kremlin. We have to take a strong stance against these types of human rights violators.

• (1325)

That is why Andrew Bennett, the ambassador of the Office of Religious Freedom, travelled on numerous occasions to Ukraine to highlight the abuses that were occurring in Crimea by the Russian Federation. We have to applaud the Office of Religious Freedom for taking that type of leadership role, because on the other side of that, we have *Russia Today*, the Russian television that is broadcast into Canada, saying that the Mejlis, the Tatars' legislative assembly, is a terrorist organization. It said that the Tatars are not allowed to

assemble in their mosques or Mejlis because they are planning unrest within Crimea. This just stinks of the time in 1942 to 1944 when the Soviet Union systematically tried to stomp out the Tatars' culture, their religion, and their ability to be within their homeland, by deporting them to the gulags in Siberia and eastern Russia. They were allowed to return in the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union's Iron Curtain began to crumple. They were allowed to go home to reclaim their properties and to re-establish themselves as a community under the leadership of the free and independent Ukraine. However, all of that has now been turned back. Crimean leaders have been arrested, many of them have disappeared, and that is very disturbing.

Amnesty International has made a number of different statements, along with Freedom House, on everything that is happening to the Tatar community in Crimea. Amnesty International has said that since the annexation by the Russian Federation, “the fundamental rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression have been repeatedly violated in Crimea”.

It further states:

The Crimean Tatars, recognized as the indigenous people of the peninsula prior to the deportation of their entire population to remote parts of the then Soviet Union in 1944, began the painstaking process of re-establishing themselves in Crimea in the late 1980s. It is the Crimean Tatar community which is bearing the brunt of the above violations.

Some of those leaders have been persecuted, and some are now living in Ukraine because they are fearful of returning to Crimea, like Mustafa Dzhemilev, who has been here and met with us in Canada and with whom I have met in Kiev on a number of occasions, a true leader of the Tatars and a true leader within the political circles of Ukraine, who is banned from Crimea. Ahtem Ciygöz, his successor to the Mejlis, is missing because he appeared at a protest against the Russian occupation and illegal annexation and took strong stands against what Putin was doing in Crimea. He was detained and has not been seen for some time, along with other Crimean leaders. Russia continues to violate religious freedoms in Ukraine.

Also, the Russian Federation has gone after the Greek Orthodox Church in Crimea. It has gone after members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, mainly because it believes that the Kiev patriarchate is not in concert with the Russian Orthodox Church because it often talks about the freedom and nationalism of Ukrainians. Again, the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom, under the leadership of Ambassador Bennett, has spoken out strongly against violations—for example, Greek Orthodox priests were beaten on the street, and 200,000 Greek Catholics within the Crimean area have fled the country because they feared for their safety.

It should also be mentioned that in Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine, where the fighting is taking place, one of the first things the Russian proxies did was go to the synagogues and ask all Jews to register. It smacked of Nazism, it smacked of the fascism that was experienced in Germany leading up to World War II, and it is repeating itself in Ukraine today and being perpetrated by the Russian government.

Therefore, we need to continue to take a strong stand in support of religious freedom; otherwise we will not have human rights respected in those regions.

Business of Supply

•(1330)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, we would prefer that funding for the Office of Religious Freedom be allocated instead to an organization that defends human rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of conscience around the world. The Conservatives rejected this when my colleague was a member.

The Conservatives closed the offices of Rights and Democracy, which caused an uproar. In my riding, many people were very disappointed and angry because the organization defended democracy and human rights around the world.

Could my colleague comment on that?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I should mention that the budget of the Office of Religious Freedom is very small in the big scheme of the government bureaucracy. It is only \$5 million a year, and most of that funding was dedicated specifically to human rights and religious freedoms in countries that were struggling to make sure those avenues were being respected.

As I said in my speech, if we look at the countries that are the worst offenders and worst violators of human rights and deny freedoms to their own people, we see it almost always starts with their violation of religious freedom and the right to worship as individuals see fit.

That is where the Office of Religious Freedom has put its efforts. Human rights go hand in hand with religious freedom, and that is the point that I think everyone on our side of the House has been trying to make today.

•(1335)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, freedom of religion is a human rights issue. We have heard many members from all sides talk about the importance of human rights. I was quite pleased with the reference that the member made to Ukraine. Like him and other members of the House, I have had the opportunity to travel to Ukraine and get first-hand experience with some of the limitations on those freedoms that were being put on the citizens of Ukraine, and we wish them the very best.

The issue on which I think we need to focus more of a concentrated effort is human rights in general. When we talk about freedom of religion, what we are really talking about is freedom of thought, which is a part of human rights. If we make reference to what the member referred to in terms of what was taking place in Ukraine, most people would look at it and say that the issue of human rights and the role Canada can play today should not be limited to one aspect of human rights, but rather the broader picture.

Does the member not believe that there might be a better way of dealing with freedom of religion and freedom of thought, all under that issue of human rights, and maybe investing where we can, so we can demonstrate that leadership, whether in Ukraine or any other region of the world?

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I thank my friend from Winnipeg North for his comment. As he mentioned, he and I have been to Ukraine a number of times. I have been there over a dozen times in the last two and a half years. The issue of religious freedom is paramount to how human rights are implemented within a country. He and I both witnessed that in Ukraine.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not say freedom of thought. It does say freedom of religion, so it is freedom of religion that we have to focus on here.

If they are going to protect freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly, they have to protect freedom of religion first and foremost. That is because those who violate our human rights around the world first attack the ability to express religious freedoms through worship, through assembly, and through freedom of speech.

That is what we have witnessed in Ukraine with the Russian occupation of Donbass and Crimea. We have to continue to speak out against Putin's aggression and Putin's illegal occupation and illegal annexation of that region, and to stop the human rights violations, which start with his cracking down on those people who do not share his Russian Orthodox views.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am very happy and honoured to rise today on behalf of my constituents of Portage—Lisgar to speak in favour of the opposition motion. The motion does a couple of things, but two things would be accomplished primarily if the motion were passed.

First, it would recognize the good work being done by Canada's Office of Religious Freedom. I think that is something we could probably all agree on in the House. There seems to be a consensus that Dr. Bennett and the folks he has worked with at the Office of Religious Freedom have done good work.

It is the second part of the motion that seems to be contentious. That is where we are calling on the government to renew the current mandate of the office. The reason is that its continued vital work is needed now more than ever.

I want to speak to both of those topics and a bit about my experience since being a member of Parliament and prior to that, in terms of what I learned about how blessed we are to live in Canada. We have religious freedom and many times we take those religious freedoms for granted. As a member of Parliament, I learned from colleagues in other countries about the lack of religious freedom. It is not just emotional or social persecution but physical persecution to the point of death that individuals in other countries have had to suffer.

Business of Supply

It is important to note that the issue of religious freedom around the world is a growing concern. Religious freedom around the world is not expanding. If anything, it is contracting. That means that people who are living in Muslim countries are not freer to practise their Christian faith. That means that people who are living in Communist countries are not freer to practise their Sikh, or Muslim, or Jewish faith. According to Global Affairs Canada, nearly 77% of the world's population lives in countries with high government restrictions on freedom of religion and/or where social hostilities committed by individuals and groups involving religion are allowed by the government. Seventy-seven per cent of all the world's population is living with restrictions on religious freedoms.

In terms of the Christian population in the world, according to The Voice of the Martyrs, 85% of the world's population is subject to persecution if they are Christian or if they are Sikh converts to Christianity. Not only are they not allowed to practise their religion, if they are of another religion and want to convert to Christianity or to a different religion, they are also restricted from doing that.

This is a growing problem, not just for Christians. It is an issue for all the major religions of the world, including for Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and, as has already been mentioned, those who profess no faith. There are people in our world who have no faith. They are atheists. However, in the particular country they live in, they are not allowed to publicly profess that or they will face death, prosecution, or penalties for having that particular non-belief. It is a problem, and it should be recognized and called out as an issue.

The Office of Religious Freedom was created by our Conservative government. It was actually an election promise. When we were elected in 2011, we can say with confidence we were given the mandate to create the Office of Religious Freedom. None of the other parties opposed that office when we created it. All parties agreed it was needed. It was given a modest budget. However, even with that modest budget, it was able to accomplish a lot of good work.

It was created to, among things, defend religious communities abroad and to advocate, analyze, and develop policy and programs to protect religious communities under threat. It has been doing that work. Even with the small budget of \$5 million, it has been able to do work in Bangladesh to educate school-age children. So many times that is where religious intolerance starts. At a very young age, wrong teachings are given to children.

It has increased awareness around the world about the Holocaust. We are seeing anti-Semitism grow, so to see awareness of the Holocaust and capacity-building seminars on the Holocaust, and remembrance of it being taught, is so important.

• (1340)

The office has engaged in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. This includes engagement with youth, religious leaders, relevant authorities, and community members in those countries to increase inter-religious dialogue for the promotion of religious freedoms and tolerance.

I could go on and talk about all the good things that the Office of Religious Freedom has done, but, as I said, I think we are in agreement on that.

It seems that the case the opposition has to try to make to the government is that we need to single out the issue of religious rights when it comes to making a strong defence of such rights.

I would readily admit that as Conservatives, we do tend to call out issues pretty specifically and then try to address them. When we were in government, we did that on our maternal and newborn health initiative. We recognized that around the world, women in other countries had no value. There were women who were given no resources, women who were dying when giving birth to children. Children have no value in some countries around the world. We directed our international aid dollars specifically to help women, who were suffering when they were in childbirth and young children. We were very specific. We called it out. We did not just say that we should protect all humanity and throw money at helping all humanity. We were very specific and said that as Canadians and as a Canadian government, we were going to help women.

We also did it when we strongly called out our support of Israel and spoke of that support. We, as Conservatives, and sometimes we are criticized for it but I know I will not change my mind on it, tend to call out offences as we see them. Creating the Office of Religious Freedom was one of these areas where we did not want to lump the issue together with women's rights or LGBT rights or with other infractions of human rights.

For some reason, religious rights always goes to the bottom of the list when talking about human rights. As Conservatives, we wanted it and we created the Office of Religious Freedom.

I remember my daughter, who is now 21 years old, coming home when she was in grade 3. She was fairly popular. She was a very pleasant little girl. She did well in school and had lots of friends. She was quite enjoying her grade 3 class and all of her friends. However, my daughter came home in tears a number of days. She said there was a little boy who was being bullied, that kids were mean to him, but she was scared to say anything because she felt if that if she did, they would then be mean to her and they would not like her and she would not be as popular.

That is a pretty common concern of children. When they see someone else being bullied, they, as children, do not want to be targeted as well. They want to continue to be asked to all the great parties, to be part of the cool group, to be in all the pictures.

Sometimes, when someone stands up to a bully, they are not popular. Sometimes they have to make a stand, and in making that stand they lose a little bit of popularity. Dare I say, maybe this is what has happened. Some say that Canada is back under the Liberals. I would say that Canada will maybe be more popular now when it comes to being invited to the parties, maybe being invited to a seat at the UN, because maybe now Canada maybe will not be offending some of the biggest religious rights violators that are sitting at the table at the UN. However, I would dare say that Canada should be standing up for the rights of those who are bullied, the rights of individuals like Shahbaz Bhatti who gave his very life. He was assassinated for standing up to the bully.

Business of Supply

I would ask that the government reconsider its decision with pride, stand up for women, stand up for minorities, and stand up for religious freedoms by continuing the good work of the Office of Religious Freedom.

• (1345)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, clearly, religious freedoms are an important subset of human rights.

No one on this side of the government would argue with that. In fact, we are very much in favour of promoting and supporting human rights. The issue, as was brought up by the member, is that it is a very narrow definition.

Another point that was brought up was the question of atheists. These people have decided they are not religious and do not ascribe to any religion. Unfortunately, the Office of Religious Freedom would not protect them, because they are not ascribing a religion to them. It would be a concern of mine to say that if someone has decided not to be part of a religion, they should not have their human rights protected.

Is the member not concerned by that and should we not be protecting atheists as well? If we are to protect atheists who are religious, would we not want to look to expand the question of religious freedoms?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, I am very happy to answer that question by my colleague.

The Office of Religious Freedoms absolutely promotes the protection of all religions, including those who hold no religion, around the world. We would agree 100% that Canada and any of the Canadian funds that would go toward the Office of Religious Freedoms would also protect those individuals around the world who are atheists and have no religion.

I would absolutely agree with my colleague on that, which is what this office has done and would continue to do. We are absolutely on the same side on that.

• (1350)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been hearing members on the government side say they want to protect freedom of religion, that they want to be on top of things, and all of that kind of stuff, but it seems like there is a double standard. They want to protect and continue working on religious freedoms, and in the meantime, they shut down the Office of Religious Freedom. This is a double standard, and it seems like this is the Liberal way of doing things.

I am not sure if my colleague would agree with me on that.

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, the problem that we are having on this side is trying to understand exactly what the government's position is on this.

For the Liberals to say they are just protecting all human rights, that they do not need to call out religious rights separately, sounds a little hollow. Something does not quite ring true about that.

The Prime Minister has been very clear in promoting women's rights. He very proudly calls himself a feminist. He is talking abroad

about the rights of women. The Liberal Party is very proud to stand up for specific minority rights, yet for some reason it is shying away from stating emphatically that we need to promote religious freedom.

Truthfully, I do not have an answer to my colleague's question. We are trying to find out what the Liberals are afraid of. Whom are they afraid of offending? Are they afraid that we are somehow promoting western civilization and, as a result, encouraging criticism?

I do wish the government would articulate exactly why it is afraid of in singling out religious freedoms.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Madam Speaker, I ask the member about the issue of the indivisibility of rights, because I think all of us agree that rights are in some sense indivisible, but of course we have things like Status of Women Canada and the Minister of Status of Women singling out a specific area of rights.

Of course, we recognize the interconnections of all rights, but does it not make sense to have centres of excellence focusing on specific areas of rights, recognizing the interconnectedness, but also bringing a specific focus and helping to ensure that that aspect of rights is also part of the wider picture?

Hon. Candice Bergen: Madam Speaker, I just returned from an international conference of parliamentarians in Berlin on combatting anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise. People of Jewish faith are afraid to even wear their kipa to show their faith because of persecution and violence. We have to call it out, whether it is anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity, or anti-Islam. Anti-religious views and the negating of religious freedoms must be called out.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We will be resuming debate, but before we do that, I just want to advise the member for Brampton East that he will have only about five minutes, and then he will be able to resume debate after question period and the other orders of the day.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Don Valley East.

I am thankful for the opportunity to rise and draw attention to Canada's effort to promote and protect human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, which is central to Canada's foreign policy.

Indeed, Canada has made recognition of respect for diversity a priority, both at home and abroad. Canada's multi-ethnic and multi-faith heritage, as exemplified in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, makes us well placed to share our experience internationally to help build a more tolerant, peaceful, and prosperous world. As the right hon. Prime Minister has said, Canada is strong, not in spite of our differences but because of them. It is this very principle that will be at the heart of both our success as a country and in what we offer the world.

Statements by Members

As Canadians, we know that diversity is not an obstacle to be overcome or a collective difficulty to be tolerated, but rather it is a tremendous source of strength. More than one-fifth of Canadians are foreign born, yet they choose to immigrate to Canada. Our largest city, Toronto, is considered one of the most multicultural cities in the world, with more than half of the population born outside of our borders. My home riding of Brampton East is the second-most diverse riding in the entire country. Canada's story, while imperfect, is demonstrative that diversity, pluralism, and acceptance, regardless of place of birth, mother tongue, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or belief, is a proven path to peace and prosperity.

The mandate letters for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development include championing the values of inclusiveness, accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights, including the rights of women and refugees.

Our government has already engaged with many domestic stakeholders and international stakeholders in this regard, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Today the Minister of Foreign Affairs is proud to be hosting, in Ottawa, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. To date, all have been supportive of this Canadian foreign policy as a priority to protect human rights. Canada is an example for many. Respect for diversity is a global issue that concerns us all, given the misguided belief by some that diversity in all its forms, whether cultural, religious, ethnic, political, or social is a threat.

Unfortunately, there is a worrying global trend regarding intolerance and discrimination. The latest report from Freedom Health underscores that global freedoms have declined for the tenth year in a row. Restrictions on religion and social hostilities directed at various religious minorities, which contribute to this global trend, also continue to rise. Recent data from the widely respected Pew Research forum shows that in 2013, 77% of the world's population, some 5.5 billion people, lived in countries with high or very high levels of restriction on religion, an increase from an already high 68% in 2007. These can include both government restrictions and social hostilities involving religion.

Discrimination in all its forms causes suffering, spreads division, and contributes to a climate of fear, intolerance, and stigmatization. Discriminatory actions motivated by intolerance have no place in any country and are in opposition to values such as respect for diversity and justice.

This troubling reality argues for new and collaborative global efforts to foster peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity and oppose intolerance and discrimination. In this regard, Canada is a useful model and has much to share and contribute.

Fortunately, Canada is not alone in such efforts. We can partner with and engage with like-minded countries, United Nations bodies, multilateral forums such as the G7 and G20, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, and with civil society to promote pluralism and diversity internationally. All have a role to play and can be important collaborators of global re-engagement of peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights.

The Office of Religious Freedom was established in 2013 to protect and advocate on behalf of religious communities under threat, oppose religious hatred and intolerance, and promote the Canadian values of pluralism, respect for diversity abroad—

• (1355)

The Speaker: I apologize for interrupting the hon. member, but he will have five minutes remaining in his remarks when we resume the debate after question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

MONTREAL CANADIENS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on March 30, we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Montreal Canadiens' first Stanley Cup win. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep admiration for the team and everything it has done to help lead Quebec toward emancipation.

One hundred years ago, francophones were vigorously oppressed both politically and economically. That oppression still rears its head today, but it is different. The Habs gave Quebec francophones a team of their own, and the team enabled many Quebecers to rise above their circumstances and display their great talent. That is how they created the legend of the blue, white, and red.

With a record 24 Stanley Cup wins, the Habs have been an inspiration to the Quebec nation, and their success belongs to all Quebecers.

* * *

• (1400)

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This scourge still affects many Canadians. The UN recently examined contemporary forms of racism and intolerance, which are much easier to disseminate via the Internet.

In this context, I would like to commend the efforts of a law professor named Michel Doucet and everyone who signed his letter. Last week Mr. Doucet wrote to the CBC to denounce the hateful, anti-French comments being made about Acadians in New Brunswick, comments that had been posted anonymously on the CBC website. A number of mayors and senators in my riding also showed their support by signing the letter.

As a result of this initiative, the CBC announced that it would stop allowing anonymous comments on its website. We applaud this new policy, which will solve at least part of the problem.

Colleagues, as we in New Brunswick celebrate how proud we are to be francophone this week, let us all make an effort to denounce and fight racism and intolerance in all forms.

Statements by Members

[English]

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spring officially arrived yesterday, and I have seen my first robin of the year. Along with spring comes some very important celebrations.

In two weeks, on April 2, I will once again have the privilege of serving at the Elmira Maple Syrup Festival. This is the world's largest one-day maple syrup festival. The thousands of pancakes flooded with fresh maple syrup are something one does not want to miss. In fact, if Mr. Speaker would join me in Conestoga on April 2, I will be happy to serve him personally, and any one of my colleagues in the House.

Not only is the festival filled with good food, sugarbush tours, pancake-flipping contests, and many other activities for all ages, the money raised from the festival goes to support local service groups which provide help and hope to those who are in a tough spot.

Speaking of hope, this coming weekend is Easter. A message of reconciliation, redemption, and hope is seen powerfully in the story of Good Friday and Easter.

I wish all of my colleagues a happy and hope-filled Easter.

* * *

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to stand to recognize Greek Independence Day, which takes place on March 25.

Canada is home to more than 250,000 Canadians of Greek heritage. As the son of Greek immigrants, I am extremely proud to call myself a member of this vibrant community.

In 1821, after more than 400 years of foreign occupation, the Greek people fought back and won their liberty. Of course, there have been challenges since: World II and a Nazi occupation, a brutal civil war, and a divisive period of military rule. Yet, all of this was overcome.

The economic downturn that Greece has experienced since 2008 will also be overcome. Greece is a resilient country and home to resilient people.

The Greeks use the word “zito” or “long live”. So today I say,

[Member speaks in Greek]

Zito Ellas. Zito Canada.

Efharisto poli kirye prodere.

And before the Speaker says that it is all Greek to him, this simply means, “Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.”

* * *

[Translation]

FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite all the progress made in Canada, we

still have a long way to go to fight racism in all of its forms. In addition to being cruel and unfair, racism has adverse social, psychological, physical, and economic effects.

[English]

Every day, racism creates divisions in society that affect individuals, communities, and the country as a whole. Racism creates barriers, limits participation, reduces productivity, and makes us all the poorer.

In Canada, systemic racism towards indigenous peoples is a sad part of our heritage that cannot be seen as anything other than shameful.

As we mark the 140th anniversary of the Indian Act, the current climate of optimism must be tempered with an equal dose of reality. Only a true nation-to-nation dialogue will be the foundation of any solutions that address historic wrongdoings.

In this House, we have a special role to play. As representatives of our communities and regions, we must always challenge ourselves to recognize discrimination and racism in its many forms, and do our utmost to combat it through our work, words, and actions.

* * *

● (1405)

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight some of the great work happening in Brampton South at Sheridan College. At the Davis Campus a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to tour the Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Design Technologies, the Centre for Healthy Communities, and the EIRC clinic. My favourite part was learning more about how 3-D printing technology can be applied to the health care field. I want to thank the staff at Sheridan College, especially Dr. Rayegani, Mr. Benmergui, and Dr. Zabudsky, for arranging the tour. The innovative work that is taking place at Sheridan College will make Canadians healthier and smarter.

I am very proud of our government's innovation agenda led, by the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development and the Minister of Science. Together, we are making real change happen.

* * *

SWIMMING CHAMPION

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, whether it is the Hart Memorial and Art Ross Trophy winner Joe Thornton, Olympic gold medalist Dave Willsie, Vancouver Canucks' Bo Horvat, or Olympic curling coach Jim Waite, my uncle, Elgin—Middlesex—London has some of the finest Canadian athletes.

Statements by Members

Today I would like to celebrate one of the best in the world. Currently holding one world record and seven Canadian records, Gordie Michie is making waves in the pool. The son of Gordon and Linda Michie, Gordie started swimming at the age of 14 and shortly afterward decided he wanted to enter into competitive swimming. He joined the Jumbo Jets in his hometown of St. Thomas, led by coach Penny Bosma.

Trying to keep up with Gordie's accomplishments is a real feat, since he has won hundreds of medals, trophies, and ribbons. His most recent accomplishment was at the 2015 Toronto Parapan Am Games, where he won gold, silver, and two bronze medals. This April, Gordie will be diving into the pool to reach his Olympic dreams. Starting April 5, Gordie will be competing in the Olympic trials to represent Canada in Rio.

On behalf of the constituents of Elgin—Middlesex—London and all Canadians, we wish Gordie the best on his road to Rio. Bring home the gold.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a sure sign that spring has officially arrived in Vaudreuil—Soulanges is the start of all the festivals and events that are so vital to our communities.

On the weekend, I had the honour of participating in the 7th annual St. Patrick's Day parade in Hudson, an event where the young and not-so-young are invited to be Irish for the day.

[*English*]

This year's parade was led by our grand marshal, Ted Bird; the Irishman of the year, Derek Johnson; our parade queen, Shannon Pine; and her princesses, Olivia O'Keeffe and Maria Isabel Massironi.

The opportunity to sport a green beard, wear a green bow tie, and delight in some of the great local Irish fares are just some of the reasons that the citizens of my riding look forward to it every year. The event is so popular that the quaint and historic town of Hudson jumps from a population of 5,000 to over 10,000 for the day.

I would like to thank the members of the organizing committee—Jim Beauchamp, Gary McKeown, Mike Klaiman, and Ken Doran—as well as all the volunteers who worked tirelessly to make it happen. Cheers.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was saddened by the news of the attack at the Canadian Armed Forces recruitment centre in the member for Willowdale's riding on March 14.

I think I speak for all members of this House when I say that we are proud of the way CAF members showed bravery in the face of such a threat. This is what we have come to expect from the men and women in our military. Senseless violence has no place in our

society. It is because of the work of the members of our armed forces that we enjoy peace, security, and freedom in Canada.

We stand with the Canadian Forces today and every day and we hope for a speedy recovery for those people who were injured in this senseless act of violence.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been more than seven months since the four children of Alison Azer, formerly of St. Albert, were kidnapped by their father and taken to Kurdistan. They are in an area of escalating violence. With a spring offensive taking place as we speak, there is urgency for action, and I call on the government to use diplomatic and all other means necessary.

I also encourage all hon. members to join Alison after question period at a candlelight vigil in front of the Centennial Flame. Let us stand united in solidarity for the safe return of these four Canadian children.

* * *

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, March 20, we celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie, which is an opportunity to celebrate our linguistic diversity and to appreciate just how closely the Acadian and French languages and cultures are intertwined with history and shared values. It is something that unites francophones around the world.

As the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, the secretary general of La Francophonie, said so well:

...let us seize the opportunity presented today, March 20, to make the language we share the language of resistance, by restoring meaning and power to the words that bind and unite us.

I would like to tell francophones around the world to consider immigrating to minority environments, such as Nova Scotia, if they are considering immigrating to Canada.

In order to safeguard our vibrancy, our language and our culture, we must fully include new Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

While we have made great strides in advancing racial equality, we must recognize that much work lies ahead as we strive to eradicate racism in Canada and around the world.

Statements by Members

Today I want to highlight the systemic failures of our criminal justice system toward racialized groups, particularly our youth. The numbers are shocking and speak for themselves. Among federal inmates, 25.4% are indigenous men and women, and 36% of women in federal prisons are indigenous. The justice system failed over 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and their families. Young black men are more likely to be stopped by police in major urban centres.

Our justice system is rooted in the rule of law and the protection of charter rights. These are important values cherished by all Canadians. Our system of justice is said to be blind, but for many marginalized, racialized groups, the reality is different.

I ask my colleagues to recommit our efforts to eradicate racism everywhere and most urgently within our criminal justice system.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time to point out that yesterday, March 20, was the International Day of La Francophonie. Since Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, the French language and culture have been part of Canada's DNA from coast to coast to coast.

Today, over 10 million French-speaking Canadians have taken their place in the sun, and the international Francophonie gives them a forum where they can share their pride in their culture and their hope for the future with the world.

The Francophonie is alive and well in Canada and in every country. It is a driving force of economic development and innovation, and it helps bring people together throughout the world. I am delighted to know that francophones and francophiles across Canada and around the world joined together in celebrating the International Day of La Francophonie.

* * *

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was originally my intention to stand in the House today to recognize Nowruz, the first day of the vernal equinox, which is celebrated by more than 300 million people around the world. I planned to congratulate in particular Iranian-Canadians on the start of a new year filled with new possibilities for a community that contributes so thoroughly to Canada.

Instead, however, I rise today to acknowledge the unsettling events that unfolded in my riding last week, when an assailant approached the armed forces recruiting detachment in Willowdale and injured two members of our armed forces. I am happy to report that both Canadian Armed Forces members have fully recovered. However, the incident, as emphasized by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, once again serves to remind us of the sacrifices our brave men and women in uniform make every day.

I would also like to acknowledge the Toronto Police Services and in particular the members of 32 Division, headquartered in Willowdale, for their much-needed co-operation—

• (1415)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beloeil—Chambly.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SERGE ALLAIRE AND MONIQUE COUTURE

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was saddened to learn, late last year, that the J'ai faim à tous les jours foundation would be ceasing operations.

Its founders, Serge Allaire and Monique Couture, will be taking a well-deserved rest. The foundation, created nearly 16 years ago, aims to ensure that disadvantaged children receive lunch at school. This helps children to focus on their education and take advantage of their time at school.

The foundation launched with a spaghetti supper at the École de Bourgogne, and since then, the foundation has built a name for itself thanks to its founders and its activities, such as the Karaté Don fundraiser, which I attended on Saturday.

I do want to mention that these children's needs will continue to be met. Organizations in the region will take up the foundation's cause to ensure that the mission of J'ai faim à tous les jours continues to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace the passion and dedication of Serge Allaire and Monique Couture.

That is why I pay tribute to them in the House today. On behalf of my constituents, I want to extend a special thank you to them.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 56 years ago today, a peaceful protest in apartheid South Africa ended in violence when 69 people were brutally killed for simply demanding the right to move about freely in their own country. Six years later, the UN declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Fifty years ago, the international community loudly proclaimed that such racial violence and discrimination was inexcusable.

Today that same message needs to be heard around the world. While many people now live free of discrimination based on the colour of their skin or their background, we should remember that many challenges remain.

For world leaders who have not completely rejected these ideologies, we hope that this day serves as an incentive to do better, to acknowledge their wrongdoing, reverse their approach, and reconcile their differences with those who have been wronged.

On this day of unity, we urge the Government of Canada to continue promoting Canada's compassion and tolerance globally so that all people have the opportunity to live freely.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Ms. Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, on International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, let us remember that our skin colour may reflect the many shades of humanity, but our hearts all beat the same.

I am a young brown Muslim woman. My family is an immigrant family. I have faced the challenges, pain, and anger that racism can lead to.

I came to Canada in 1998 and struggled in this foreign land. Canadians opened their arms, and soon our house became our home, the neighbourhood our community, and this land our nation.

Today I stand as the member for Mississauga—Erin Mills and I am proud.

Canadians embrace diversity. In the words of our Prime Minister, we are “strong not in spite of our differences but because of them”.

We have come a long way but still have a long way to go. Let us strive to combat racism in all its forms and keep Canada the land of equal opportunity the world knows it to be.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know at least three things in tomorrow's budget: the Liberals plan to borrow a lot of money; the Liberals have no real plan to create the jobs we need today; and the Liberals will have to raise taxes because borrowed money has to be paid back. We know, with previous track records, that when Liberals spend a lot of money, it usually leads to waste and mismanagement.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that because of his mismanagement, Canadians will be stuck with his bills, and not just us, but our kids and our grandkids?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in last year's election campaign, Canadians had an opportunity to listen to the various perspectives that political parties put forward and the plans for the future of the country. We put forward a plan that focused on investing in our communities, helping the middle class, and creating growth in a way that would help all Canadians. That is exactly what we campaigned on. That is exactly what we are going to be delivering in tomorrow's budget.

We are comfortable with the fact that Canadians know we need investment and growth, because for 10 years they simply did not get that from the previous government.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows full well that we had the best growth record in the G7.

Unfortunately, tomorrow is shaping up to be a very expensive day for Canadians. When it comes to spending other people's money, the Liberals just cannot help themselves. They are borrowing billions of dollars. They have no plan to pay back this money, other than raising taxes, and across the country, hard-working Canadians and families are losing their jobs.

Does the Prime Minister think it is fair that average Canadians are digging deeper and deeper into their pockets to pay his bills?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians understand that we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7. They are lower and the low interest rates—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I hope we can all hold our applause until the Prime Minister finishes his answer.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, record low levels of interest rates right now mean that this is an opportunity to invest in our future. Confident, optimistic economies are willing to invest in their future, in their children's future. For 10 years, the previous government did nothing but shave away and cut instead of investing in the kind of tomorrow that Canadians needed.

This is the budget that Canadians have been asking for through the last election campaign. This is what we are delivering to grow the economy and help the middle class.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that business investment has dropped off the cliff since the Liberals have been elected.

[Translation]

The Liberals have broken all their economic promises. They have no credibility. During the election campaign, they promised a modest deficit of \$10 billion.

Will the Prime Minister admit that because of his mismanagement, Canadians will be stuck paying for his out-of-control spending?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we put forward a plan that will allow us to invest in our communities, help the middle class, and create economic growth. That is exactly what the business community and economists here and abroad are saying that the Canadian government should be doing.

Our plan is in line with what Canadians want and with experts who are saying that now is the time to invest in our future, not to cut the services we deliver to Canadians. That is what will create economic growth and what we are going to deliver tomorrow.

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, the parliamentary budget officer announced that our Conservative government balanced the budget. I would like to quote Mr. Fréchette, who said, “We are still forecasting a surplus of \$1.2 billion for 2015-16. Our official position is that the budget was balanced [in 2015-16]”.

This morning, we learned that 69% of Canadians are concerned about their financial security. What does the Prime Minister have to say to the thousands of Canadians who are concerned about the country going on a spending spree?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign last fall, it became clear to us that Canadians were indeed worried about their financial future. Despite all of the previous government's posturing, promises, and so-called economic action plans, Canadians were really worried about their future.

That is why they chose a government that would invest in their communities, help the middle class, and create the kind of growth that Canadians had not seen for 10 years because of the former Conservative government's failure to show leadership.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when Canadians see the big tax hikes, they will understand what the government is up to.

The forestry industry is just one sector that is going through difficult times. As we know, such important matters as the renewal of the Canada-United States softwood lumber agreement are looming. Things are difficult. The forestry industry contributes \$20 billion to the Canadian economy. It was not even mentioned in the throne speech. Tomorrow, we will see what is in the budget for the forestry industry.

Can the Prime Minister tell all the regions that depend on the forestry industry what measures are in the budget for them?

● (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to presenting a budget tomorrow that will address the concerns of Canadians across the country, including those living in the regions and working in the forestry industry. We know that it is time to invest in innovation, in our regions, and in our natural resources in order to stimulate growth and job creation, which did not happen for 10 years under the previous government.

The time has come for us to turn the page on 10 lost years. We must invest again in the future, and that is what we are going to do for the forestry industry, the regions, and all of Canada.

* * *

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learn that Bombardier is planning to move another 200 good Canadian jobs abroad.

This is in addition to the 2,400 Canadian families who lost their livelihood at Bombardier last month. Our aerospace industry needs help, but not at the expense of our workers and their families.

Does the Prime Minister intend to protect good Canadian jobs in any assistance agreement he might sign with Bombardier?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very important question.

At the end of the day, what we all want is to protect good Canadian jobs in the aerospace industry and in other industries. That is why we are taking the time we need to assess the proposals and the Bombardier situation in order to ensure that any investments that might be needed will be made in the short-, medium-, and long-term interests of aerospace industry workers across Canada.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, job losses are mounting elsewhere in Canada as well. Workers need help, but fewer than four out of 10 people who need employment insurance have access to it.

The Liberals voted against our motion to force them to honour their own commitments on employment insurance. The budget will be tabled tomorrow.

Will the Prime Minister finally honour his own commitments on employment insurance, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, in our election platform we committed to improving access to employment insurance for people across the country, including in regions hard hit by the drop in oil prices.

I can assure my hon. colleague that we will keep our election promises in the budget that we will table tomorrow.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot wait.

[*English*]

First nations children across the country are living in crisis because the federal government does not provide them with the same resources other Canadian kids get. We have children in Kashechewan suffering from horrible sores because they do not have access to clean, safe drinking water. We have children who desperately want to learn but are forced to attend schools in third world conditions.

Will the Liberal budget provide full equivalent funding to end the gap on health, water, and education for first nations children?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is an important one.

Oral Questions

Indeed, as we have put forward since the beginning of our mandate as government, renewing the relationship and building a strong infrastructure and support in communities across the country, particularly in those most vulnerable communities for indigenous children, are things we are making a priority. Tomorrow's budget will feature historic investments in first nations and indigenous Canadians right across the country to begin to make it right, which we have not done for so many decades in this place, in this building.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seven months ago Alison Azer's children were kidnapped. We are talking about four Canadian children taken to Kurdistan in the middle of a war zone. Today, I met with Alison in Ottawa, and she is asking once again for the Canadian government to intervene and help bring her children home.

The need for action is urgent. Why has the Prime Minister not bothered to call President Barzani to bring these kids home?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are fully seized with the importance and urgency of this case. Canadian consular officials are working extremely closely with the appropriate government authorities in Canada and abroad, including law enforcement, to return the children safely to Canada. Consular officials are in regular contact with Ms. Azer as we pursue the safe return of her children. Rest assured that the safety of those children is a high priority for this government.

* * *

● (1430)

FINANCE

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very concerned about massive deficits because they lead to increased taxes. In fact, polls today show that Canadians' concerns are economic in nature: first jobs; and second, taxes. That is what members on this side of the House have heard in the run-up to the budget that the government will be presenting tomorrow.

Therefore, I would like to know when the Minister of Finance will actually admit that in the Liberals' campaign they misled Canadians and said that the deficits would be moderate, but indeed they are not, and that these massive deficits of the Liberal government are nothing more than broken promises.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians made a clear choice last October. They decided to have a fundamentally different approach to managing our economy.

Our priority is growth. That is exactly what we will deliver tomorrow in our budget. We will focus on the middle class, we will help Canadian families, we will create growth. That is what Canadians expect of us and that is exactly what we will deliver tomorrow.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I fear the Liberals' approach is fundamentally different, and that is to spend until there really is a recession unfortunately.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada hosted the Minister of Finance for a photo op on Friday. While I laud the location choice, and it is a great organization, I am very concerned about the message that he may have left for these young kids.

The Prime Minister's best friend Kathleen Wynne has already saddled these kids with \$22,000 each of provincial debt. Could the minister tell us whether he explained to these kids as well that his out-of-control borrowing would actually top up what Kathleen Wynne's government already saddled these children with for long-term debt repayment?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that the Minister of Finance and I went from coast to coast to coast to listen to Canadians. We did that over the months. We were elected in October. We heard from thousands of Canadians. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians have submitted ideas online.

As we approach budget day tomorrow, we took all of that into consideration and we made a budget that would work for Canadians. For once, they will know that this government is on the side of Canadian families.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Minister of Finance will officially plunge Canada into an extended period of massive borrowing. Already TD Bank has said that the Liberals will put Canada into a deficit for at least 10 years. Experts across the board are increasingly warning that this year's \$30 billion Liberal spending spree will not have any major impact on economic growth.

We are not in a recession and this budget will not deliver any major boost to the economy. Why exactly is the Minister of Finance borrowing \$30 billion?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the economy is growing slowly, that is the time to invest. That is what the IMF has said, that is what the World Bank has said, that is what most economists in our country have said. At a time when interest rates are low, that is the time to invest in the economy. That is what Canadians expect of us and that is exactly what we will deliver tomorrow.

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just that the Liberals will break their fiscal promises this year, we are now told that the real big ticket spending will not start for a couple of years.

For the Liberals, a \$30 billion deficit is just a starting point. Already the Minister of Finance is talking about raising taxes on small businesses, taxing start-ups, and professionals. What other businesses will see their taxes go up in tomorrow's budget?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we will present tomorrow is exactly a budget that will focus on the middle class, help Canadian families, and create growth in this country.

That is the choice Canadians made on October 19, for a fundamentally different approach to running this economy. That is what most economists have said and that is what most international institutions have said.

Oral Questions

This is a budget for Canadian families and for the middle class, and that is what we will deliver tomorrow.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are concerned. A billion dollars of taxpayers' money will still result in Bombardier shipping production to Mexico and China.

There is a better solution that does not cost taxpayers a dime. A private Canadian company came forward with a major order for C Series aircraft. They just need a little longer runway.

When will the minister allow the expansion of the Toronto island airport and get Bombardier employees back to work?

• (1435)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we in this government are very proud of Canada's aerospace industry.

As I have repeatedly said with respect to the question my hon. colleague asked, we made the right decision, one of choosing a balance between commercial interests and the interests of the community, including the development of the waterfront.

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Beauce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government is preparing to give \$1 billion in financial assistance to Bombardier, Bombardier is preparing to outsource even more jobs.

[English]

Everybody knows that subsidies are inefficient and a waste of taxpayers' money. When will the government understand that it is not fair to force small entrepreneurs to pay taxes to fund subsidies for a corporation like Bombardier?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand the importance of the aerospace sector, the high-quality jobs it provides, and the contribution it makes to our national income. That is why we are engaged with Bombardier. We understand this company employs people not only Quebec, but in Ontario, Manitoba, and across the country. These are high-quality jobs.

We will make sure that we work with the company so we have investments in R and D and head office jobs here in Canada. It is about growing the economy, investing in the aerospace sector, and fighting for good-quality jobs.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one month ago, the community of Kashechewan declared a state of public health emergency. A month later, nothing has changed.

A number of children are grappling with serious skin infections. The photos of these children are unsettling and disturbing. How can we let this happen to our children?

It is no secret that there are problems with drinking water, mould, and housing. This is going to take more than a band-aid.

What measures will the government take to fix these problems once and for all? These problems should not be happening in a country like ours.

[English]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Health Canada is fully aware of the concerns with first nations children in Kashechewan. We have been involved in that community and will continue to be.

There are immediate steps that have been taken. A number of children have already been transported out of the community to get the medical attention they need. There is a medical team from Moose Factory going into the community to identify further cases by going door to door. There will be further steps taken to prevent further infections.

We will address the public health needs in the community as well as the social determinants of health.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been over a month since the communities of Treaty 9 declared a medical state of emergency, and this weekend Canadians saw that shocking face in the children of Kashechewan.

I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Health for working with us on an emergency plan for the most severe cases, but they know the crisis is systemic—the mould, the lack of clean water, the need for a proper medical system.

Will the minister commit to a timeline and a plan so we can end this state of emergency and reassure these children that they can grow up in their communities, healthy, hopeful, and safe?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, Kashechewan First Nation is among a number of communities in our country facing very serious gaps in health outcomes. We are absolutely determined to address these gaps.

I am working with my colleagues in Health Canada to address not only the immediate health needs of communities like Kashechewan and many other indigenous communities across the country that are facing serious concerns, but also to look at how we can prevent these conditions.

I am working with my colleague, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, to address the underlying causes, and we will make sure that the health gap has been addressed.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are more delays by the Liberal government on job-creating infrastructure.

This time it is liquefied natural gas in British Columbia that is getting roadblocks from the Liberal government. In fact, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change does not even bat an eye at interfering with legislated timelines.

Oral Questions

Is this the type of political interference that the Liberals promised would happen at their cabinet table?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we promised during the election campaign, our decisions relating to environmental approvals will be based on science and data, and indigenous consultation.

Our government is ensuring that environmental risks associated with resource development projects are addressed before projects are allowed to proceed. With respect to the PNW project, on March 4 the proponent submitted new information with respect to this project. The request from the agency for more time reflects the fact that we must do more assessment of potential effects on fish, marine animals, and human health.

We recognize the importance of timely decisions, and once the proponent has provided the additional information, we will respond within 90 days.

• (1440)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as a reminder, LNG from B.C. going to Asia will reduce coal use in the southern Pacific. It is good for the environment globally. It is good for the Canadian economy.

Again, we ask the Liberal government, why will it not stand up, why will it always get in the way and not go to bat for LNG, instead of throwing LNG under the bus?

Truck drivers and workers in B.C. are concerned. Workers in British Columbia are looking for the government to stand up for LNG in B.C.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member also knows, the Woodfibre project was actually approved on Friday, because we had thoroughly assessed the science and the data, and made the decision that it could move forward in an environmentally sustainable way.

We are going to take the time with the Pacific NorthWest project to ensure that we understand the science and the data before we make an appropriate decision.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I met with natural resource developers in beautiful B.C.

The construction of the Kitimat LNG facility and the Pacific NorthWest LNG project will create over 9,000 jobs and many opportunities for first nations. Some 330 long-term, local careers will sustain the PNW project.

On behalf of the thousands of people who are counting on it, will the Liberals support job-creating LNG development or will they hinder it with ongoing uncertainty and higher taxes?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House understand that the environment and the economy go hand in hand in the modern era.

We are working through the process to ensure that the science and data associated with ensuring that good decisions are made are fed into the process.

As we discussed, the Woodfibre project was approved on Friday. We are taking the appropriate time to ensure that decisions are not based on politics, but based on good science.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people understandably doubt the Liberal position on Canadian energy. The Prime Minister hired anti-energy protestors, like a senior advisor who said two-thirds of our fossil fuels should remain in the ground. The PM's right-hand man, Gerald Butts, wrongly believes Canada's natural resources cannot be developed while reducing GHG emissions.

How can Canadians trust the Liberals to support our responsible energy development when those at the top are so against it?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend has said, there was a major project approved just last Friday in British Columbia, which was a decision of sustainability that understands that we will create these jobs while protecting the environment of British Columbia, as we will do with other major projects.

We think that we can now proudly say that we have done the right thing the right way, and we will do it again.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, workers are waiting far too long to find out whether they are entitled to employment insurance benefits. They have to wait an average of 39 days, and it is practically impossible to get in touch with anyone at Service Canada. It is stressful enough to lose your job without the government adding to that stress with interminable wait times. Unemployed workers do not have the luxury of waiting.

Will the government quickly hire staff to reduce wait times?

[*English*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that the employment insurance program in Canada needs modernizing and repair. Canadians are waiting too long. It is too difficult to collect the benefits they actually pay for.

It is time, and we are proud to say we are the government that will provide those changes to modernize the EI system.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, NDP): Mr. Speaker, under previous Liberal and Conservative governments, thousands of new mothers were unfairly denied EI sickness benefits while on maternity leave. These mothers, who became seriously ill, were forced to turn to the courts, and the government has spent millions fighting them.

Oral Questions

During the election, the Liberals promised to drop the court case immediately, but six months have gone by and it is still ongoing. These women have been through enough already. When will the Liberals stand by their promise and drop this court case against these women?

• (1445)

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we understand that these kinds of lawsuits are difficult, costly, and stressful for the women who are involved in these cases. Unfortunately, I am unable to speak about the case because it is before the courts at this time, but I do look forward to resolving all outstanding issues that are before us.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, excitement is growing following the recent announcements about the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation in 2017. It will be a year of great celebration.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House more about the vision and the main themes of Canada 150?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent question.

The 150th anniversary celebrations will feature four main themes: youth, inclusiveness and diversity, reconciliation with indigenous peoples, and the environment.

We made several announcements last week in Halifax, Toronto, and Montreal in order to propose development projects that will leave a lasting legacy and inspire future generations.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Office of Religious Freedom was given a specific mandate and it has been successful in carrying that out. It has been recognized internationally for its work and its leadership.

The current government has a choice. The Liberals can dilute the mandate and destroy the international work of the office, or they can enthusiastically support it and ensure its continued success.

This small office has had a huge impact around the globe. Will the government commit to continuing the present mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. They are interrelated and best defended and promoted together.

As the Prime Minister has stated repeatedly, Canada's diversity is a source of strength, not weakness. Therefore, to expand on the initial good work of the office, Canada will explore the best way to

situate freedom of religion within a broader human rights framework. Our goal is to build on and strengthen the good work of the office by including the protection of religious freedom as a fundamental component of a comprehensive vision of the promotion of human rights.

Better is always possible.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, atheists in Canada are very concerned about the growing persecution of non-believers in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere. Religious freedom includes the right to not believe. While some atheists were initially skeptical about the Office of Religious Freedom, they are now represented on its external advisory board. Atheists remain skeptical, of course, but not about the work of this office.

Will the current government finally give atheists some hope for the future, some assurance of things yet unseen, and support our motion to renew the Office of Religious Freedom?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a sense of humour is a wonderful thing. There is hope.

As a multicultural and multi-faith country, Canada is well placed to champion all human rights internationally. In fact, our own charter guarantees everyone the fundamental freedom of religion, and freedom of expression, association, and assembly, which is precisely what the member opposite was getting to. I thank him for his question.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United States, the European Union, and the Vatican have characterized the barbaric actions of ISIS as genocide, but the Liberals refuse to use the term to describe the slaughter of Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims in territories ISIS controls.

Is that because the government's watered down, so-called non-combat mission in Syria and Iraq can do nothing to stop genocide under the terms of the UN convention?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada strongly condemns the crimes perpetuated by the so-called Islamic State, including those committed against religious and ethnic minorities. However, genocide is not a term to be used lightly, and Canada is a member of the International Criminal Court, which means the use of that term is different than it is for the United States, which is not a member.

We are committed to preventing and halting genocide and crimes against humanity. We are committed to holding perpetrators of such serious international crimes to account; and our new, strong, three-year anti-ISIL strategy seeks to address the ongoing crisis in Iraq and the destabilizing impacts on Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

Oral Questions

• (1450)

The Speaker: I am hoping we will keep showing respect for each other and listen carefully and not interrupt.

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

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand my colleague's explanations, but I am going to ask the question again.

The European Parliament, the Pope, and even the Prime Minister's good friend President Obama have characterized the terrorist acts that ISIS is committing against religious groups in Iraq and Syria as genocide. All that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has done is weakly condemn those crimes.

Does the minister agree with the Obama administration? Will he confirm that this is indeed a genocide?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat that Canada is a member of the International Criminal Court. The term genocide there means much more than the term genocide in terms of halting genocide, and the opposition should know that. This is absolutely serious. This is not the United States of Canada, and our strategy—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Colleagues, we all know that each side gets to have its turn to speak: to ask questions and answer the questions. Let us let each other take their time. Even if you do not like the answers or the questions sometimes, let us show respect for this place.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our anti-ISIL strategy, in fact, is an example of our strengthening conviction against the hideous crimes of ISIL. That is all I have to say.

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HEALTH

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a national epidemic of drug overdoses, and the Minister of Health has acknowledged that safe injection sites like Insite in Vancouver make sense and save lives. Public health officials in Toronto and cities across Canada are asking for federal help to open these desperately needed facilities. Yet, Liberals are refusing to repeal Conservative legislation that blocks communities from providing harm-reduction services.

Will the government stop stalling, make an evidence-based decision, and repeal the Conservatives' Bill C-2?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague well knows, we are a government that bases our decisions on evidence. In terms of the matter of problematic substance use, we will address this on the basis of public health concerns as well as a focus on harm reduction.

I am very pleased that communities across the country have recognized that our government is supportive of supervised

consumption sites, which have been known to save lives, prevent infections, and help people to access the health care system in a safe way. We will continue to work with communities to make these sites more available.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, concerns have been raised about millions in federal funding for Regina's Global Transportation Hub. This crown corporation spent \$21 million buying land at inflated prices from businessmen with cozy ties to the governing Sask Party. Two weeks ago, the President of the Treasury Board promised to look into this scandal. Even a former Sask Party MLA has called for a police investigation.

Will the minister now report what he found, and will he be referring this matter to the RCMP?

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and also for his inquiry when I appeared before committee.

The reality is that the provincial government in Saskatchewan has actually engaged its auditor general to look into this matter. It is a provincial matter. We look forward to seeing the result of the auditor general's inquiry on the provincial side. The hon. member has played a role in provincial politics in Saskatchewan in the past. That is very good, but we would urge him to focus on his role as a member of Parliament and the federal issues that we are seized with today.

• (1455)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has come to light that the Minister of Justice actively opposed the Site C dam project. The minister worked closely with Treaty 8 first nations to oppose it for years. Now with her role at the cabinet table, how can we be assured that she will stay neutral? The minister's mere presence will still have an influence.

Will the minister remove herself from the discussions on this project?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2014, the former government approved the project and set out a range of legally binding conditions with which the proponent must comply. BC Hydro must meet the requirements set out in the decision, and we are active in verifying compliance. We will continue to be proactive in that regard. We continue to reach out to indigenous groups to ensure that they are consulted and that we understand the concerns that are being brought forward.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Benjamin Bergen was the executive assistant to the current Minister of International Trade and her campaign manager. Now, he has begun lobbying the Liberals. His relationship with the minister gives him access to her and her cabinet colleagues. He has even stated that he has an extensive network among senior public sector officials that would be of benefit to their organization.

What is the Prime Minister going to do about yet another insider getting special access to Liberal ministers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the members opposite are looking for stories where there are none. Ben Bergen worked for me in my constituency office and never worked for me in my ministerial capacity. I am absolutely confident that he will follow all ethical guidelines.

I would like to add, however, that I am a strong supporter of Canadian innovators and entrepreneurs, particularly in the tech sector, and I am delighted to have met with him and will continue to support this crucial indigenous Canadian industry.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while people across this country were working hard this winter to balance their household budgets, our Prime Minister was in the Caribbean working hard on his tan. What is worse is that Canadian taxpayers are on the hook for \$50,000 so the Prime Minister could enjoy his sunny ways. Fifty thousand dollars is just the bill for the private jet to sit on the tarmac.

How much will the Canadian taxpayers have to shell out for the Prime Minister's private Caribbean vacation?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the Conservative Party know well that there is a long-standing government policy, for security reasons, that prime ministers always use Royal Canadian Air Force aircraft for every purpose, including personal travel. As was the case with the previous prime ministers when travelling for personal reasons, the Prime Minister and members of his family reimbursed an economy airfare.

They also know that standard procedure requires, within three hours, the Prime Minister to be able to return to Canada in case of a national emergency. That policy existed under previous governments, and we are respecting that same policy today.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Geng Tan (Don Valley North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the CETA agreement, started by the previous government, stalled since September 2014, I was thrilled to learn that our government was able to get the talks back on track for signature and implementation next year.

In 2008, Canadian goods and services exports to the European Union totalled \$52.2 billion.

Would the Minister of International Trade tell the House what the impact of CETA will be for Canada and how it can benefit Canadians through increased growth and prosperity?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was delighted last month to announce that the legal review of this gold-plated deal was finally complete and that we have successfully responded to Canadians' concerns about transparency and fairness in the investment chapter.

I am thrilled that this progressive deal is now moving ahead at full speed toward implementation next year.

I am also pleased that this evening I will have a chance to discuss the agreement with visiting members of the European Parliament's

trade committee—a further sign of the new momentum behind CETA.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, defeated Liberal candidate Jocelyn Coulon is now working for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Coulon once said that NATO was amplifying the Russian threat to Ukraine and Europe because it wanted member states to increase their military budgets.

He even wrote that “They use any argument, even the stupidest, to advance their rearmament agenda.”

Does the minister agree that the Russian threat to Ukraine is just a pretext for boosting NATO military budgets?

● (1500)

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada stands steadfast with Ukraine. We always have and we always will. We have been explicit in our condemnation of Russia's unlawful annexation of Crimea. The Russian interference and invasion of Ukrainian territory is completely unacceptable. We have one of the strongest sanctions in the world, strengthened further last week in order to apply economic pressure on Russia and the Putin government for its aggression.

As the government of Ukraine has said, “I believe Canada will be strong and firm in its pressure on Russia”.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Al-Obeidi, a citizen of Iraq and former political prisoner of Saddam Hussein, managed to escape and became a government-sponsored refugee in 2002. He landed in Canada in 2007. Ten years after he fled, Saddam Hussein is no longer a threat. He travelled back to visit his family and to get married. In 2012, cessation provisions became law and now the government wants to take away his permanent resident status. This law makes no sense.

Will the minister repeal the cessation provisions in Bill C-31?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is some sense in these laws applied in certain ways, but on the whole I would agree that this is part of the long legacy of things inherited from the previous government that must be reviewed and quite likely changed.

I have sympathy with the point expressed by the hon. member. I can assure her that we will review these provisions with a view to improving them in the future.

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PARKS CANADA

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my home, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada's first incorporated city, established in 1783, deserves to have its story told, about its place in our nation's proud history. Unfortunately, national historic monuments like Martello Tower, Fort La Tour, Fort Howe, and Partridge Island are falling into ruin and have been ignored by previous governments. Projects like the restoration of Partridge Island would be transformative for my community by celebrating our past and promoting our future.

What is the government's plan for reinvestment in our national parks and historic monuments?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Saint John—Rothesay for his advocacy on this important issue.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change was pleased to recently visit Saint John, where she announced investments totalling more than \$21 million in several Parks Canada sites across southern New Brunswick. This includes significant rehabilitation work on Carleton Martello Tower National Historic Site and major investments in Fundy National Park.

Our government is creating jobs and taking action to ensure our treasured places are protected, celebrated, and preserved for future generations.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, several groups have called on the Liberals to make special changes to help address specific labour challenges across this country. Last week we learned that the Liberals were moving to help the fishing industry, but agriculture was left out in the cold. Surely the Liberals understand that agriculture is an important industry in this country, contributing billions of dollars to our national economy each and every year.

I am wondering if the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will stand up in the House and demonstrate a real commitment to help solving the labour challenges being faced by our farm families.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to address a national agriculture-agrifood conference in Winnipeg this past week. We talked about a number of changes that are facing the agricultural sector, including very rapid industrial and innovation changes to equipment and the challenges of finding high-skilled operators.

There are new advances in training and skill development, and we are working actively with the agricultural sector.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, March 10, my colleague from Joliette asked a question about the Isle of Man tax avoidance scheme involving KPMG clients. In response, the Minister of National Revenue stated, "there is no amnesty".

I have a simple question. Since there was no amnesty, what penalties is the CRA imposing, and when will criminal charges be laid?

● (1505)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is only one set of rules, as I said.

The CRA exposed the scheme. It audited taxpayers and has taken legal action. The CRA's work is not done.

I encourage all of my colleagues to be prudent and avoid jumping to conclusions.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the Paris conference, the government made a commitment to the entire world to fight climate change.

According to the Pembina Institute, however, if the energy east pipeline goes into service, greenhouse gas emissions will increase by 32 million tonnes a year. That is the equivalent of adding more than seven million vehicles to Quebec's roads.

Will the government finally admit that the energy east project is completely at odds with the Prime Minister's commitments at the Paris conference?

[English]

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, this government understands that work on the environment and the economy go hand in hand. We have a plan with respect to climate change that involves a range of tools around carbon pricing, around mitigation measures across various sectors, and around a range of different measures that will allow us to meet the commitments we made in Paris.

We have never said that energy projects will stop. We have always said that this will be done in a broad and comprehensive way as we move through the next 40 years in a transition to a lower carbon economy.

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[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian homelessness strategy, which focuses on a housing-first approach, is simply not working.

Routine Proceedings

The Prime Minister publicly supported the strategy developed by organizations that work with the homeless to protect Quebec's more broadly based approach, while also promising to increase Quebec's share to \$50 million a year.

Will the Prime Minister honour his commitment, or is he going to penalize those in need?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for that important question. This issue is very important to us. As we have pointed out, this is about the vulnerability of the most at-risk and poorest members of our society.

I think the hon. member will be surprised in the coming weeks by the new relationship that we plan to build with the provinces regarding this important issue.

Hon. Denis Lebel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on what the parliamentary budget officer had to say last week. For a long time, I have heard that what the parliamentary budget officer has to say is important.

I would like to table a Department of Finance Fiscal Monitor that proves that our government left the house in order with a surplus of more than \$3 billion.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table the document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: In my opinion, we do not have unanimous consent.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1510)

[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 two petitions.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Halifax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (C) 2015-2016: Vote 3c under Canadian High Arctic Research Station and Votes 1c, 5c and 10c under Indian Affairs and Northern Development."

[Translation]

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, entitled "Supplementary Estimates (C) 2015-16: Vote 1c under Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Votes 1c and 5c under Justice".

* * *

[English]

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition in this House from Land Over Landings, an organization in my constituency. For decades, Land Over Landings has advocated that the federal lands in Pickering be used for natural and agricultural purposes. The lands, which encompass class 1 greenbelt farmland, has the potential to become a major food source for the GTA and the province of Ontario.

I am proud to support Land Over Landings in these efforts, and I look forward to continuing to bring forward these issues in this House.

* * *

• (1515)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 45 and 48.

[Text]

Question No. 45—**Hon. Tony Clement:**

With regard to the Minister of Foreign Affairs' stated intentions in the Ottawa Citizen on November 11, 2015, that the government needs to engage with Iran much more than before: (a) has the government been in contact with any officials from the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to re-opening diplomatic relations with that country; (b) if the answer to (a) is affirmative, what has been the response; (c) has the government indicated an intention to re-open a Canadian mission or office in Tehran; (d) has the government done an analysis of the need to protect Canadian officials and assets in the event of a Canadian mission being re-opened in Tehran; (e) has the government decided to lift any of Canada's current sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran; and (f) has the government taken any measures to impose sanctions on certain Iranian individuals and companies due to recent ballistic missile tests in Iran, as did the Obama Administration?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the government cannot confirm nor deny contact with officials from the Islamic Republic of Iran with regard to re-engaging diplomatic relations with that country. In processing parliamentary returns, the government applies the principles set out in the Access to Information Act, and has assessed that it cannot provide such information in keeping with those principles.

With regard to (b), it is not applicable.

With regard to (c), the government is cautiously evaluating the process of re-engagement, which may include the reopening of a Canadian mission in Tehran. However, there are no plans to reopen an embassy at this time.

With regard to (d), the safety of Canadian officials will be of paramount importance if and when we look at re-establishing a diplomatic presence.

With regard to (e), on February 5, 2016, Canada amended its United Nations-mandated sanctions against Iran in order to comply with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231 from 2015, in coordination with P5+1 countries and other like-minded countries. That same day, Canada also amended its autonomous sanctions under the Special Economic Measures Act, SEMA, by lifting the broad ban on financial services and imports and exports imposed on Iran. Under SEMA, Canada continues to prohibit the export of listed proliferation-sensitive goods, and also maintains a list of individuals and entities subject to asset freezes, with whom all transactions involving property are prohibited. Canada also restricts the export to Iran of the most sensitive goods under the Export Control List.

With regard to (f), on February 5, 2016, Canada added six additional individuals and one entity related to Iran's ballistic missile program to its list of sanctioned individuals and entities under SEMA.

Question No. 48—Mr. David Tilson:

With regard to the government's refugee-intake priorities for 2016, what are the government's planned 2016 refugee allocation numbers for both privately-sponsored and government-assisted categories, broken down by country of origin, including Syria?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship tables the "Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration" on or before November 1 of each year, or, if a house of Parliament is not then sitting, within the next 30 days on which that house is sitting after that date. The 2016 immigration levels plan, which was recently tabled alongside the annual report, includes admission ranges for resettled refugees by stream—government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees, and blended visa office-referred refugees.

The 2016 plan sets a target of 44,800 resettled refugees—government-assisted refugees, blended visa office-referred refugees, and privately sponsored refugees—within a range of 41,000 to 46,000. This level of admissions is more than triple the admissions in 2015 and is sufficient space to allow the resettlement of 25,000 government-supported refugees from Syria, and also to meet ongoing multi-year resettlement commitments, outlined below.

More specifically, the levels plan establishes the following admissions targets for resettled refugees: 24,600 government-assisted refugees, within a range of 24,000 to 25,000; 2,400 blended visa office-referred refugees, within a range of 2,000 to 3,000; and 17,800 privately-sponsored refugees, within a range of 15,000 to 18,000.

Routine Proceedings

For the government-assisted refugee stream, each year, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC, allocates admissions in the levels plan to various vulnerable populations to support the department's multi-year resettlement commitments. Canada's ongoing multi-year commitments are as follows: Eritreans, 4,000 persons by end of 2018; Congolese, Democratic Republic of Congo, 2,500 persons by end of 2017; Colombians, 900 persons by end of 2016; and mixed populations out of Turkey, e.g., Iranians, Iraqis and Syrians, 5,000 persons by end of 2017.

Accordingly, government-assisted refugees resettled in 2016 will include individuals from the countries of origin listed above. Resettled refugee admissions not allocated to a multi-year commitment are used for individual protection needs, and new refugee situations, as they emerge. Refugees resettled under the blended visa office-referred stream are selected from the same pool as government-assisted refugees referred by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees according to the above criteria. And, blended visa office-referred refugees will, correspondingly, be from similar countries of origin.

Admissions in the privately sponsored refugee stream are not determined in advance in the same way admissions for government-assisted refugees are guided by multi-year commitments. Private sponsors name the refugee(s) they wish to sponsor, and thus the number of sponsored refugees from different countries of origin fluctuates from year to year based on sponsorship. In 2014, for example, the top nine countries of origin of privately sponsored refugees were Eritrea, Syria, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Congo, Pakistan, and Sudan.

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[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Question Nos. 44, 47, and 49 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 44—Mr. Mark Strahl:

With regard to the setting of the Total Allowable Catch for the Offshore Arctic surf clam by the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard: (a) what scientific analyses of Offshore Arctic surf clam stocks were completed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; (b) what recommendations were provided to the Minister by independent analyses of the Offshore Arctic surf clam stocks; (c) what recommendations have been provided to the Minister by the Surf Clam Advisory Committee (SCAC); (d) who are the current members of the SCAC; (e) whom in the industry has Minister instructed the SCAC to consult; and (f) by what date has the Minister instructed the Committee to make their recommendations?

Business of Supply

(Return tabled)

Question No. 47—**Mr. David Tilson:**

With regard to the government's commitment to land government-assisted and privately-sponsored Syrian refugees in Canada: (a) what is the total number of government-assisted Syrian refugees landed in Canada between November 4, 2015 and January 31, 2016; (b) what is the total number of privately-sponsored Syrian refugees landed in Canada between November 4, 2015 and January 31, 2016; (c) what was the total cost to process applications and provide security clearance for those applicants, to date; (d) how much did the government spend on (i) transportation, (ii) food, (iii) accommodation, (iv) healthcare, (v) clothing, (vi) furnishings, (vii) language instruction, (viii) miscellaneous or incidental allowances, (ix) supervision and support services, (x) all other associated costs related to Syrian refugees landed between November 4, 2015 and January 31, 2016; (e) with regard to both government-assisted and privately-sponsored Syrian refugees who have landed in Canada between November 4, 2015 and January 31, 2016, how many of these refugees are 14 years of age and younger and how many are over the age of 14; and (f) what is the complete and detailed breakdown of all resources, methods and procedures used during screening and security checks of Syrian refugees?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 49—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's instructions, in his mandate letter to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, that the latter should implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP): (a) is it the government's policy to "consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands or territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploitation of mineral, water or other resources"; (b) is it the government's policy to adhere to the principles of the UNDRIP before it is formally implemented; (c) given the Site C Clean Energy Project's expected impacts on Aboriginal people, is it the government's policy to (i) meet with the affected First Nations to hold discussions on treaty infringements, (ii) review the original decision to approve the Site C project, (iii) hold approvals and authorizations until a time when free, prior, and informed consent has been obtained; (d) is it the government's policy that the principle of free, prior, and informed consent will apply with respect to the approval of future pipeline and resource-extraction projects; (e) by what standard does government policy interpret the principle of free, prior, and informed consent; and (f) is it the government's policy that the principle of free, prior, and informed consent shall apply with respect to the approval of projects under Interim Measures for Pipeline Reviews, and specifically to (i) Trans Mountain Expansion Project, (ii) Energy East Project?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

The House resumed consideration of the motion

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brampton East had five minutes remaining in his comments.

The hon. member for Brampton East.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Don Valley East.

The Office of Religious Freedom was established in 2013 to protect and advocate on behalf of religious communities under threat, oppose religious hatred and intolerance, and promote the Canadian values of pluralism and respect for diversity abroad.

Led by Dr. Andrew Bennett, Canada's ambassador for Religious Freedom, the office has a \$5 million annual budget, including \$4.25 million in grants and contributions. Its mandate is in place until March 31, 2016.

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. As the Minister of Foreign Affairs has elaborated, how can we enjoy freedom of religion if we do not have freedom of conscience and freedom of speech? Canada will increase its effectiveness by situating freedom of religion or belief within a broader human rights framework.

Our goal is to build on and strengthen the work of the Office of Religious Freedom. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has heard from a variety of Canada's religious and belief community leaders who have written and spoken in support of the work of the office. We thank them for their important views and perspectives and look forward to building upon the excellent relationships Dr. Andrew Bennett has established with them through continuing deep engagement.

We are grateful for Dr. Andrew Bennett's service as the head of the Office of Religious Freedom, and for his ingenuity, sensitivity, and competency over the past three years. He has been a leader in championing freedom of religion and belief worldwide.

Rest assured that as Canada enhances its approach to champion peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity and human rights as a whole, we are making every effort to build on and strengthen the work undertaken by the Office of Religious Freedom.

As the right hon. Prime Minister has said, we have a responsibility to ourselves and to the world to show that inclusive diversity is a source of strength and a force that can vanquish intolerance, radicalism and hate.

I would like to restate that Canada is deeply committed to help build a world in which pluralism and differences are not only tolerated and accepted, but encouraged and celebrated.

There is still much to be improved in the field of human rights, at home and abroad, and Canadians know that our government will work continuously to promote positive change.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member referenced consultation with other stakeholders. He knows that the World Sikh Organization, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and leaders within the Ahmadiyya Muslim community sent a letter to the government that was very specific. It was not just about these rights notionally, but it was about renewing the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom.

The existing model respects the indivisibility of rights. It respects that sense by having the office within the Department of Global Affairs.

I ask the member very directly. There are so many projects this office is involved in that are making a real difference on the ground. Should these specific projects, the work already under way, not be allowed to continue through the renewal of the mandate of this office?

• (1520)

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work with the various stakeholders the member mentioned in his question.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has said that the Office of Religious Freedom has done very good work and we look forward to building upon that great work by broadening the mandate to include freedom of speech and freedom of conscience to ensure that these values Canadians hold so dear in our country are protected in a human rights framework.

I am sure the hon. member will agree that once the review is completed and a new mandate is issued, he will be on board to support a human rights framework that includes the protection of freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we talk a lot about religious freedoms, and there is no doubt that this is a part of the values Canadians hold very dear to their hearts. However, when we think of freedom of religion, we think of freedom of thought.

I will talk about the importance of human rights in general. This is something I believe governments, particularly the Government of Canada but governments around the world, should be encouraged to promote.

To what degree does the member believe Canada should be playing a leadership role in dealing with human rights issues as a whole, as opposed to just one aspect of human rights, that being freedom of thought or freedom of religion?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, human rights are a universal right. It does not matter where one comes from or what one believes in. Whether a Sikh, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, believer or non-believer, we are all united by our human rights. The important thing is that Canada has a long and rich history of promoting and protecting human rights.

Our government knows and understands this. That is why we are reviewing the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom. We will be expanding it to ensure it includes freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, and freedom of belief to ensure that in the human rights framework that is being developed we can not only be a leader in this area, but continue to ensure that diversity is seen as a strength. Not only can we take a lead in this role, but we can also show other countries, where discrimination is a big problem, that diversity is a strength in their society. Canada can lead as an example.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a concern about the term “conclusive diversity as a source of strength”. Specifically, I am concerned about the protection of religious freedom being watered down by the government.

When the mandate for bringing the refugees into our country was shared with the various parties, we had an opportunity to ask questions. An individual from the NDP was very thankful that we

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were bringing refugees from the most vulnerable groups identified by the UN into our country. He was very pleased we were bringing in the homosexual community, which was under great stress of being killed in Syria. It even set up separate camps for those people so they could be brought here and could identify with that homosexual community when it arrived here. That is a concern, and I am very grateful this protection is there. No one should have to die because of those specific perspectives.

My question that night was about the Christian communities in Syria, those vulnerable people who were not being brought to our country, and the fact that there were people here who wanted to help them. The response was that they were helping the most vulnerable groups. Three of them were identified that evening, but not the religious vulnerable group as one of the groups we were supporting bringing to Canada.

As we know, that is not a priority for the government. I would like to know why we are not bringing more of those groups from Syria to Canada.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the question was on the Office of Religious Freedom, but our government has made a pledge to help the most vulnerable refugees come to Canada.

I am very proud to be part of a government that met its commitment of bringing 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. The hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship is doing tremendous work to ensure that Canada, once again, is taking a lead around the world in ensuring the most vulnerable refugees have an opportunity to live the Canadian dream in Canada.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's debate is important because the promotion and protection of human rights, and especially the freedom of religion or belief, are integral to Canada's leadership in the world.

[*English*]

Today's world is challenging and complex. It is rife with conflict, oftentimes along sectarian lines, where human rights abuses are rampant and the rule of law is non-existent.

The world is seized by the crisis created by the Syrian conflict, the horrific abuses of Daesh, the extraordinary flow of refugees that has resulted, and the toll that has taken on the entire region.

Faced with what are global challenges, some have retreated into xenophobic sentiments, which is a worrying trend we should aim to slow, stop and reverse.

[*Translation*]

Our government is committed to renewing and strengthening Canada's role in protecting human rights abroad. The Prime Minister has said many times that Canada's diversity is a strength and not a weakness.

As a multicultural and multi-faith country, Canada is well suited to promote inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights all over the world.

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[English]

As Confederation approaches its 150th anniversary, it is interesting to note that on the international stage, Canada is seen not only as a safe and prosperous country, but also as an open country where each individual has the opportunity to participate in all aspects of society and has a say in the decisions that affect their lives. Regardless of their place of birth, mother tongue, gender, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs, the respect for diversity and for every person's inherent dignity is truly a Canadian value.

[Translation]

Our new approach will make the most of Canada's pluralist experience as a multicultural and multi-faith country, in order to improve our efforts to protect peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights.

[English]

Pluralism involves co-operation, active dialogue, and compromise in order to achieve a balanced, inclusive, and equitable participation of all citizens in political, economic, and socio-cultural life. This is as it should be.

Canada is committed to promoting these values at home and abroad. One example serves to concretely demonstrate this point. The government's decision to welcome more than 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada has demonstrated that we take seriously our shared responsibility to help people around the world who are displaced and persecuted. We are proud to have taken this step, and we are confident that these refugees will enrich and strengthen Canadian diversity and culture.

We believe there is a critical role for Canada to play in sharing our successes with the world and, yes, some hard lessons learned. Inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights are fundamental values that make Canada strong, culturally, politically, and economically.

Canada has been an example for many as respect for diversity is a global issue that should concern us all, given the misguided belief by some that diversity in all its forms, whether cultural, religious, ethnic, political, or social, is a threat. Canada's pluralistic experience as a multicultural and multi-faith country provides an opportunity for the promotion and protection of human rights.

● (1530)

That is why our Liberal government in 2005 partnered with His Highness the Aga Khan in the development of the Global Centre for Pluralism here in Ottawa, Canada. His Highness stated, "Successful experience with democracy, civil society and pluralism are the national genius of Canada of which much more of the developing world is in dire need."

In countries where democracy has developed strong roots, pluralism is being continuously reinforced by the respect for fundamental freedoms that all citizens enjoy. We are talking here about respect for the rights of freedom of expression, of association, of peaceful assembly, and of religion. In countries where these freedoms are upheld, dialogue is fostered and people can express their views peacefully. Canada has a clear role to play in promoting these values internationally, and can do so through bilateral and

multilateral diplomatic engagement and through international development assistance by supporting democratic institutions and representative bodies; supporting other countries in the strengthening of their legal and judicial development; advancing democratic participation in civic life and decision-making; ensuring a safe and enabling environment for civil society, including for women, youth, and marginalized groups; and supporting free and fair electoral processes and institutions.

As previously mentioned by my colleague, the Office of Religious Freedom, which was established under the previous government, has done good work. Mr. Andrew Bennett has to be thanked for the work he has done, and we would like to expand on the work. That is why it is important that we look at expanding or broadening the scope of this institution.

That brings me to quote a genius on pluralism, His Highness the Aga Khan. He said, "Canada is in an almost unique position to broaden the scope of her engagement with the developing world by sharing very widely her experience in humane governance to support pluralism, the development of civil society, and meritocratic premises for action."

We, the government, believe that the role of the Office of Religious Freedom as it is currently set up should be broadened. It should not focus only on protecting minority rights based on religion but also on ensuring the development of human rights and pluralism. This is done by working with our international partners and civil society to ensure that this is implemented. That is why our government is pursuing a comprehensive agenda, one that marshals our diversity and our support of all human rights in pursuit of peace. The strengthening of institutions supporting pluralism is as critical for the welfare and progress of human society as poverty alleviation and conflict prevention.

I would like to conclude this speech with an inspiring quotation from His Highness the Aga Khan. In 2010, His Highness spoke these words during an annual discussion on citizenship and public good:

The world we seek is not a world where difference is erased, but where difference can be a powerful force for good, helping us to fashion a new sense of co-operation and coherence in our world, and to build together a better life for all.

These are our goals, and Canada has a role to play.

● (1535)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has quoted His Highness the Aga Khan, someone for whom I have great admiration. His Highness spoke here in Parliament. Let me read another quotation from when he was here. He said:

Again, Canada has responded in notable ways, including the establishment [...] of the Office of Religious Freedom. Its challenges, like those facing the Centre for Global Pluralism, are enormous and its contributions will be warmly welcomed. And surely it will serve as a worthy model for other countries.

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The hon. member has selectively quoted His Highness, when in fact the Aga Khan has endorsed the work of the Office of Religious Freedom. Our government successfully partnered with the Aga Khan Foundation, giving \$290,000 for an important project in Bangladesh, so rather than selectively quoting His Highness, will the member support our ongoing partnership with him and his foundation and support the renewal of this office?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, what we are saying is we would like to broaden the scope.

We cannot just focus on religious minority rights. We need to focus on human rights. We need to focus on pluralism. That can be fostered by going out and supporting international organizations and civil societies in developing pluralistic societies.

With war and people getting carried away with sectarian violence, it is important that we work with His Highness. Every government has worked with His Highness because His Highness is a genius in pluralism.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech. The previous speaker also mentioned the possibility of expanding the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom.

I would like to know whether the Liberals plan on maintaining this office and expanding its mandate to include all rights. It would then have a mandate that is very similar to that of Rights and Democracy, an organization that was abolished by the Conservative government.

Can the member confirm whether the Liberals plan on maintaining the Office of Religious Freedom and expanding its mandate to include all human rights?

[English]

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, we would like to keep the Office of Religious Freedom, which was very narrow in its focus, but we would like to expand it.

The expansion will look at democracy and democratic rights and ensure that people understand that pluralism is a strength, not a weakness—pluralism in culture, pluralism in language, pluralism in religion, pluralism in different beliefs.

It will be important as we consult that we ensure there is an expansion to include rights and democracies.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the same way that I do, the hon. member very much appreciates the Office of Religious Freedom and the importance of the good work it has done.

Based on that speech, does the hon. member not agree that in broadening the mandate, enhancing the number of rights we are looking at, and tackling it at a global level, there is absolutely nothing to limit what we are doing on the religious issue? Does she not agree that the enhanced broader office will allow us to do exactly the same work on religious freedoms as the current office does?

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that when one pitches one religious group against another, it creates more problems for that religious group.

It is important to expand the mandate to allow not only religious freedom but freedom of everything. Democracy means the ability to be able to practise one's faith without persecution and without any negative consequences. It also means that there are civil societies that are allowed to talk freely and media and journalists who are allowed to write freely, and that is what this office should be doing.

● (1540)

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak today in enthusiastic support of the motion. I will be sharing my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

Canada's Office of Religious Freedom has, in the three short years since its inception, clearly established itself as an integral part of Canada's foreign policy leadership, and as Canada's first ambassador for the Office of Religious Freedom, Dr. Andrew Bennett has established himself as an outspoken champion against the rapid spread of religious persecution around the world.

Why did our former government create this institution? Almost 80% of the world's population—77%, to be precise—live in countries that impose restrictions on freedom of religion or live in countries where individuals or groups freely and widely commit a range of unacceptable acts based on religious hostilities. We know that religious freedom is a specific element in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but we also know that widespread violation of religious freedoms impacts religious communities of all of the world's major faiths, including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews, as well as those who profess no particular faith. We were reminded in question period today by my colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan that atheists would fall under this belief category.

As the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Falun Gong, I can say that we should be aware that in the early 1990s there were more than 70 million practitioners, not of a religion, but of the spiritual practice that is followed by adherents of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong. However, in 1999 the Chinese government brutally and cruelly cracked down, inflicting persecution, beatings, imprisonment, and even torture and death on tens of millions of Falun Gong practitioners. In recent years, thank heaven, recent Chinese presidents have demonstrated a greater tolerance, but today the spiritual practice of Falun Gong, which celebrates truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance—or, in Chinese, *zhen, shan, ren*—is in great need of intervention and moral support where diplomacy can provide no material comfort, and it is this that falls within the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom.

The mandate is a very simple one. It is to promote freedom of religion as a major Canadian foreign policy. Its activities and projects in its first three years have been focused, as we have heard a couple of times today, on countries such as Iraq, Nigeria, and Ukraine, where there has been abundant evidence of serious violations of citizens' freedom of religion involving hatred, systemic discrimination, violence, and death.

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While the budget of the Office of Religious Freedom is a modest \$5 million annually, its projects abroad have been welcomed by the international community and leaders of the international community as important initiatives. In Iraq, for example, the \$250,000 project with Minority Rights Group International has helped local Iraqi civil society organizations to monitor and report religious persecution.

As well, a \$500,000 project with the Mennonite Central Committee is working to increase interreligious dialogue and shared resources to promote religious co-operation institutionally in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, even at a time of unconventional warfare that has displaced millions and millions of the civilian population.

In Nigeria, the Office of Religious Freedom funded a two-year, \$730,000 project to develop and expand interfaith dialogue and conflict mediation in Plateau State, where conflict between different religious communities has killed thousands of innocents in recent years.

● (1545)

In Ukraine, the religious freedom fund supports two projects: an investment of more than \$1 million with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which are aimed at encouraging democratic process through religious freedom and pluralism.

At a time when the Liberal government, with partisan zeal, is working to reverse many of our Conservative government's foreign policy positions, alliances, and initiatives, we should perhaps look at the non-partisan nature of the external advisory committee, which is an oversight body of 22 prominent independent leaders from across a wide spectrum of Canadian faith and belief communities.

The advisory committee is chaired by Father Raymond de Souza, a Roman Catholic priest and noted newspaper columnist. Serving as vice-chairs are Malik Talib, president of the Aga Khan council for Canada, the social governance body for the Ismaili community in Canada; and Corinne Box, director of government relations for the Bahá'í Community of Canada.

The committee members include Imam Sayed Nabil Abbas, who is the imam of the Lebanese Islamic Centre in Montreal; and Eric Adriaans, who is the national executive director of Centre for Inquiry Canada, a national charity providing education on secular humanism, reason, science and critical thinking. Peter Bhatti, the president and founder of International Christian Voice, is a Canadian of Pakistani birth and works with victimized religious minorities there and around the world. Of course, Rabbi Reuven Bulka is a rabbi activist, writer, and broadcaster right here in Ottawa, and former co-president of the Canadian Jewish Congress. There is also Dr. Aslam Daud, chairman of Humanity First Canada and national vice president of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, who has championed religious freedom, peace, and tolerance for three decades. As well, Colin Singh Dhillon, chair of the Sikh Heritage Museum of Canada, has worked to eliminate social and religious barriers across communities. John Gill is the director of Minority Groups United and president of Canadian Christian Association. Carl Héту is the national director of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, and authority on eastern churches, religious minorities, and interreligious dialogue. We have Pastor Richard Kao, who is the founding pastor of Five Stones Church in Vancouver, and has been deeply involved in

leadership training in Asia for more than two decades. Antoine Malek is the chair and president of the Coptic Orthodox Community of Greater Montreal. Jim Marino is the executive director of the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education, and an experienced communications adviser. Dr. Paul Marshall is senior fellow at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom in Washington D.C., and visiting professor at the graduate school of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta, Indonesia. Phuong Ngo is an active member of Vietnamese community organizations, and an advocate for human rights and democracy in Vietnam. Dr. Mario Silva is a former distinguished member of the House as a member of the Liberal Party, an international legal scholar, a prolific author of papers on human rights and security, and former chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. He is also a valued and worthy member of the Office of Religious Freedom advisory committee.

I have made a point of referencing almost every member today. There are more, but time prevents me from mentioning the last few members of this advisory committee. I believe it is important for Canadians to recognize the breadth and depth of the non-partisan activities that offer counsel to the ambassador of the Office of Religious Freedom, Dr. Bennett.

In closing, I would urge all colleagues, on both sides of the House, to recognize the good work that has been done and is being done by Canada's Office of Religious Freedom.

I call on the government to renew the current mandate of the office. Its vital work promoting peace, freedom, tolerance, and communal harmony is needed today more than ever.

● (1550)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe that the promotion and protection of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, is an integral part of Canada's leadership in the world. Our government is committed to reviewing and enhancing the human rights protections at home and abroad. The mandate letters of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development refer to championing the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, and respect for diversity, including human rights for women and refugees.

The hon. member referred to the practice of Falun Gong, which he stated is not a religion but a practice. Would that not be better protected by an expanded mandate to support and promote not only freedom of religion but freedom of expression and association?

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for an informed and worthy question in today's debate. One has to recognize that in the strife, turmoil, and human suffering around the world today, religion is the predominant, if not leading element, in almost all of the persecution and abuse of human rights.

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Falun Gong, as I said in my remarks, and my colleague referred to it, is not a defined religion as such, but it is a spiritual practice based on truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. That, after all, is what all of the world's great religions are based on, and to which the Office of Religious Freedom that we on this side of the House in the official opposition believe the office serves.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, I asked a Conservative member a question, but he did not seem to know the answer. I will therefore ask my colleague from Thornhill the same question.

My question is about his government's decision to shut down Rights and Democracy. The following year, it created the Office of Religious Freedom even though Rights and Democracy worked in the areas of freedom, human rights, and democracy. Its mandate was broader than the Office of Religious Freedom's.

Why did they decide to shut down that organization even though it was doing exceptional work, and why did they set up the Office of Religious Freedom in its stead? I did not get an answer to my question, so I hope that my colleague will be able to provide an explanation for the closure of what was an excellent organization.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I am familiar with the reasons that we closed that office because I was a member of the cabinet of our government in that day.

While the office for rights and democracy had been originally set up for all of the valuable purposes and advocacy that one would associate with rights and democracy, in its latter years, unfortunately, it fell into internecine battles within its board. We can go to any number of historical references to see why that organization went off the rails. There was mismanagement of budget. There was confusion and misapplication of its mandate by some of its leaders.

The decision taken by the government was that it no longer served its original mandate and deserved to be closed down. We were proud that we did it.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to be here today. I wish the message we are hearing from the members of the government was different than it is. I hear them talk about the need to broaden the scope and to focus on all rights rather than one specifically, focusing on pluralism, international organizations, and civil societies. All of that is fine, but it has very little to do with the specific issue of religious freedom.

I heard one of my colleagues on the other side talk about how she wanted freedom for everything. The reality is that the religious freedom issue works very well when it is dealt with specifically. A few minutes ago, my colleague pointed out that most of the conflict we are seeing around the world right now is of a religious nature, and we need to consider that when we are talking generally about conflict in this world.

The Office of Religious Freedom was established in 2013, as a division of Foreign Affairs. It was fulfilment of a promise that we made in the campaign in 2011. It had a very small budget of \$5 million. From looking around, I think that \$5 million has probably been used as well as any \$5 million from this government.

The mandate was straightforward. In a presentation given by the ambassador at the foreign affairs committee, he talked about it having a mandate to defend religious communities and monitor religious freedom, promote religious freedom as a key objective of Canada's foreign policy, and advance policies and programs that support religious freedom and promote pluralism. It is unfortunate to see the government opposite basically turning its back on those things by blending them into a whole bunch of other things. I believe the effectiveness of the office will be hampered by the fact that government does not want to deal with this as a specific issue.

It was not established as a generic rights organization for a reason. It would have been completely ineffective. It would not have had the focus that it had, and it would have been of little use to anyone. It was set up as non-partisan, and to work co-operatively with faith communities, NGOs, and other countries. That is what has happened.

Obviously, the choice of ambassador was a good one. Ambassador Bennett has become internationally respected for what he has done. He was wise enough to appoint an advisory committee covering faith groups and non-faith groups. He found a great variety of people there, and did a good job of putting that together. As one of my colleagues pointed out earlier today, that included those who believe they have the right not to believe in any specific faith at all. The ambassador was wise enough to include them in his advisory committee as well.

Once the office got rolling, there were a number of projects that were brought forward. I was excited when I looked through the list of things that the office contributed to over the last few years, including some very practical things. This is not an organization that has been operating in the sky; it is one that has been operating right at ground level, trying to make a difference.

There were a lot of smaller projects, and I think the government will regret the day when it shuts down this office and shuts down the projects. It has had the opportunity to do things, such as training the media in other countries about hate speech and how they might deal with it in their countries. We have done work on monitoring religious freedom in various countries. Obviously, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom does its annual monitor about religious freedom around the world. However, we have been able to help local communities monitor religious freedom and how it has been achieved in their communities.

There has been a documentation of violations as well, so that people are held accountable for what they are doing. The office has provided leadership courses for people in their communities to come together. One of the places was in Nigeria. We brought together interreligious communities so they could sit and talk to each other, to try to create peace in areas where organizations such as Boko Haram were trying to disrupt communities and destroy social fabric. One of the things we tried to do was promote dialogue and peace between the communities there.

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Sharing best practices was another important aspect of the work of the office. Certainly things like children's educational materials does not seem like much, but there was money put into ensuring that textbooks and those kinds of things were not promoting religious hatred. It worked with countries to ensure that their educational materials were solid as well.

Awareness activities, research and academic studies, facilitating seminars and leadership, legal support, and supporting legislation, are all very practical things that the office provided. I have not heard anything today from members on the other side as to how they will continue to provide that on that micro level, right down at the community level, saying to people and to smaller countries that we will work together.

• (1555)

We need to ask if this is a relevant issue right now. I will give the House a present example.

The Liberal government is going to be absent on an important issue and that issue is what is happening in Nepal right now. Nepal is putting together a new constitution and some legislation is going to come forward around religious belief. We should be there helping Nepal. It appears as if there is now some manipulation going on now. Both of these documents are going to be pre-designed and they are going to end up suppressing minority believers. That does not need to happen. They are talking about prohibiting things such as conversion. One of the main aspects of article 18 of the United Nations human rights declaration is that people should be free to choose their belief. They talk about prohibiting apostolization. They talk about impacting the opportunity of people to speak freely about what they believe in, then moving to protect some religious communities while restricting others.

Not all of the people in Nepal have the opportunity to fully understand or discuss what these values and issues mean. We could be providing them with some help and assistance. This is just one example of where we could help.

Nepal signed on to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Included in their articles are the notions that people have the right to be free to believe, the right to be free to practise their belief, and the right to change their beliefs. These things happen at a practical level, and our government should be there. The Liberal government, in its rush to broaden its scope and focus on everything, is not going to be there on these specific issues where people in some of these countries are going to need help.

There is one other thing that the ambassador has headed up, and that is an international contact group on freedom of religion. This is a critical and important group and it is going to be lost when the government shuts down the Office of Religious Freedom. This group was spearheaded by Ambassador Bennett, who chaired the inaugural meeting. The group is called the International Contact Group for Freedom of Religion or Belief. It has brought together government representatives from over 20 countries in a multilateral and diverse effort to collaborate together to address the challenges that are caused by international religious persecution. My colleague who spoke just before noted that most of the tensions and pressures that are coming out of religious belief, this international contact group is

an excellent way at the administrative and government level for people to talk about these issues.

The ambassador was central to the launch of that group. It included all kinds of members from places like Cameroon, Chile, Morocco, Canada, the European nations. It is an important initiative and I fear it is going to be lost by the way the Liberal government is going. Even the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and others have praised this initiative. They saw it as important. They wanted their countries to participate in it. It is a critical tool to underline the freedom of religion or belief.

We are going to lose a lot if the Liberal government decides to shut down the Office of Religious Freedom. The government has a choice. It could renew the office's mandate with enthusiasm, as I said earlier today, so it can continue to maintain the momentum it has already created, or I fear the government is going to dilute it probably by defunding it, gutting it behind the scenes, or making it some sort of generic rights organization so this right will be lost in the midst of a lot of other things.

The reason this has been successful is because it has been very specific. It has a narrow focus and that has allowed the ambassador and the office to create the kind of initiatives they have.

The government does not seem to understand this, and that is unfortunate. Persecution because of religious belief is targeted and specific. It needs to be dealt with in those ways. One example, the right to convert, whether people have the right to change their beliefs or not, cannot be dealt with by some generic human rights approach. It has to be dealt with specifically. We must give people the freedom to believe what they choose and then the right to change that.

The Pew Foundation has said that three-quarters of the people on this earth live with the fear of religious pressure and that violations are perpetrated by state and non-state actors and sometimes in conjunction with each other.

• (1600)

A lot of people in this world need the protection that was provided by countries paying attention to this issue. It is unfortunate that Canada has taken such a large step back on defending religious freedom. Certainly, we want to continue to protect them and we will do what we can on this side of the House to ensure that happens.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I certainly share the hon. member's conviction that we need to stand forefront for religious liberties across the world.

I heard him say that the biggest struggles in the world today were solely religious liberties. I would like him to look at Cuba where, just yesterday, women were arrested for exercising their freedom of speech to protest against the Castro government, or at countries in Africa and in the Middle East where gays and lesbians are subject to capital punishment for something we consider a fundamental freedom here, and to recognize that there are many rights throughout the world that are deserving of our protection.

There are so many things in the House that we generally agree upon. We fight back and forth about nuances.

Business of Supply

Had this motion been worded to say that the government recognize everything that is in (a), the good work that is being done, and (b), that the existing work of the office be continued in the same or a different broader format, I think there would have been unanimous agreement in the House and we could have all gone forward, talking about how we all agree with religious freedom.

Why was it necessary to write the motion to ask that the government continue the existing mandate without saying that we simply agree that we want to continue the valuable work the office has been doing in the same or a different mandate, where it would have had support from the government?

• (1605)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, first, we do not continue the same work with a different mandate, clearly.

I take objection to the way he tried to characterize what I said. I did not say that all repression and persecution around the world was solely of a religious nature. What I said was that 75% of the global population lived in countries where they were restricted in terms of their freedom of religion or belief.

The examples he has mentioned are examples of places where people are not free to believe as they choose, and so therefore, the government feels that it has the right to interfere with that freedom of belief. Whether people actually believe it and have a religious faith or people have chosen not to, if we do not have the freedom to believe and to choose those beliefs, we do not have any other freedoms.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think many of us in this place have grown up in a very secular society. Canada's pluralism is one that affords the opportunity of religious freedom, but under the umbrella of a set of rules that we live by that support our pluralism: freedom of religion, freedom of equality. There are so many things I could talk about.

However, now that I have had the opportunity to travel the world a little in my role as a parliamentarian, what strikes me is that a large portion of the conflict we see in the world has its roots in religious practices. To divorce religious freedoms from foreign policy, especially given that rooting, is somewhat short-sighted. My colleague talked about freedom of religion and women.

Given this particular fact, would he talk about how the Office of Religious Freedom and its focus upon dealing with Internet generational change in terms of religious freedom actually helps reduce these conflicts given the fact that we cannot ignore that religion is a basis for many of them?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. We look around the world and we see that some of the best freedoms come out of religious expression and religious belief. Some of the worst repression comes out of religious belief and faith.

The place we find ourselves is that we believe those three articles of article 18 are critical; that is that people should have the freedom to believe. They have the freedom to believe as they chose, they have the right to practise that belief as long as it is not violating someone else's space and their rights, and they have the right to change that belief. If people can exist with that, I think we will see

that those types of repressive attitudes are not capable of being carried forward in the society.

Basically, if we have religious repression, it typically breeds instability in a country. It breeds further extremism, and we can look around the world and see that. It generates refugee flows, and we see that is a massive issue right now around the world. It threatens other fundamental rights, including things like freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly.

Out of that freedom of belief comes a lot of the other freedoms, but we need to understand that religion could be used as much as anything else to repress people as well.

[Translation]

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for London North Centre.

As we come together on this opposition day, we must recognize that this act in itself illustrates the strength of Canada's system of governance and the lessons we have learned by creating an inclusive and responsible society. We, the members of Parliament, reflect Canada's diversity, and we were chosen, through free and fair elections, to represent Canadians' values including dignity, freedom, equality, and honesty.

This is not something that happens everywhere around the world. Poor governance, the inability to provide essential services, high levels of corruption, and lack of transparency often lead to serious problems with development and security. Vulnerable populations are the ones who suffer the most from these problems, which can increase poverty levels, exacerbate inequalities, promote impunity, and hurt the economy.

According to the United Nations Development Programme, or UNDP:

Corruption, bribery, theft and tax evasion cost some US\$1.26 trillion for developing countries per year; this amount of money could be used to lift those who are living on less than \$1.25 a day above \$1.25 for at least six years.

It is obvious that we must take action. In countries where the government can provide services to its citizens, where it is accountable for its decisions, and where power is transferred through regular peaceful elections, the benefits are clear. There is a better chance of achieving economic stability, it is more likely that there will be respect for human rights, governments can better meet the needs of their citizens, and communities are more resilient and capable of taking steps to combat radicalism and other social pressures.

Corruption erodes governance, which in turn results in poor health outcomes, unsatisfactory education systems, and fewer services across government. In simple terms, inclusive and responsible governance is necessary to achieve lasting results in all sectors of international development, whether we are talking about an agricultural project or training that makes it possible for people to acquire the skills needed to find a suitable job.

Business of Supply

Our government is proud to focus its international aid once again on the poorest and the most vulnerable. We live in a world of abundance. Huge progress continues to be made because of innovation. However, there are still too many people on this planet who have next to nothing. We must improve the lives of these girls, boys, women, and men who live in conditions of abject poverty and extreme inequality.

Our government is committed to promoting inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights. That is the priority of the mandate of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie.

We are proud of Canada's contributions around the world to promoting inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism, respect for diversity, and human rights. Although we must always work to improve our own governance and diversity, many countries look at Canada and admire the type of country we have created. They recognize the strength of our experience and ask us to help them in their own development.

In September 2015, the world acknowledged that these qualities are integral to sustainable development. Goal 16 of the United Nations sustainable development goals recognizes the importance of inclusive societies, access to justice, and building inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels. It also recognizes that fighting corruption is central to creating a better world. Canada is determined to collaborate with its development partners in order to help countries achieve this goal.

Canada is working with Tanzania on fighting corruption by ensuring that information gathered on income, tax payments, royalties, assets, and export expenses for mining companies are accurate, complete, and more transparent.

● (1610)

Our development aid also makes it possible to strengthen the institutions and make them more accountable and transparent. These accountable and transparent institutions ensure that people have a say in their government's decisions and that they have access to timely and reliable information. That means that the authorities to whom the power has been given use that power legitimately and are held accountable for their decisions and use of funds.

That is why Canada is offering its support to enhance Bangladesh's capacity to plan and implement its national budget, strengthen internal and external auditing, and improve legislative oversight. The creation of efficient and effective governance models involving the rule of law, sound public policy, strong civic institutions, and inclusiveness, also makes it possible to establish pluralistic societies. Pluralistic societies respect and value human diversity. A commitment to pluralism benefits everyone and allows everyone to participate.

As part of its international assistance, Canada encourages pluralism in order to allow people and groups to express their cultural, religious, and linguistic identities in a context of shared citizenship. For example, we have a project in Sri Lanka to promote respect for diversity and language rights within the public service and the population in general.

However, pluralism is more than just linguistic diversity. We must also encourage a dynamic civil society that allows for an exchange of views, and respects freedom of association, assembly, and peaceful expression. A dynamic and diverse civil society must include religious groups, the media, think tanks, universities, businesses, and unions. It gives women, young people, indigenous people, and marginalized groups the opportunity to participate in political, social, and economic life.

As an example, Canada is helping Mali enhance the capacity of civil society organizations to ensure that Mali's national policies take into account the interests of the poor and focus on poverty reduction. Respect for the rule of law is central to establishing inclusive and accountable governance. Canada is helping to strengthen the rule of law in developing countries in order to ensure it is effectively and predictably enforced.

Improving justice can also help women become equal partners when it comes to decision-making and development. For example, we are working in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to ensure that women and young girls are protected from violence, exploitation, and abuse.

Respect for and protection of human rights are the principles that guide all accountable, transparent, and effective institutions and allow people to live in dignity and be protected against all forms of abuse. These principles are at the heart of our development efforts. We recognize that there is a greater likelihood of human rights being upheld when these principles are present.

What is more, we know that when we are helping countries achieve more inclusive and more accountable governance, we need to get every segment of society involved, including governments, the private sector, and particularly the public, in order to make this sort of progress.

Canada is a bilingual, ethnically diverse, multi-party federal democracy that is open and transparent, and it can share that experience with the entire world. We can help countries give people more freedom and set up institutions and procedures that allow everyone to participate equally in the society and benefit from it. That is what we are doing.

● (1615)

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague certainly had a huge laundry list of human rights initiatives that I think we should all be supporting. I do not argue with that for a minute.

Business of Supply

However, my concern is that by removing the Office of Religious Freedom and some of the great work done by Ambassador Bennett both internationally and here in Canada, referred to many times in the House, we are losing our focus on this very key aspect of human rights protection. I think most of us in the House would agree that religious freedom is often the very foundation of many of the other freedoms around the world. However, there is one particular aspect of religious freedom that I think is often missed, and that is for those of us of faith, it is a very personal aspect, and for those who choose to change their faith or religion, depending on how one wants to define it, I believe it is very important that that particular freedom be protected.

Could my colleague comment on that, because I am concerned that we have lost focus? We are talking about all of the other human rights freedoms that we should continue, but I do not want us to lose focus on this one very important part, namely, religious freedom.

•(1620)

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question because, as a practising Catholic I am only too aware of how difficult it is to practise one's faith, particularly in a secular society.

That being said, we do not have a hierarchy of rights. I will quote—and I am sure the hon. member could say this along with me—article 2 of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states:

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication;
- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association.

These are all included within that so important second article of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We hold them to be interdependent, and they must be taken together.

[*Translation*]

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

The NDP is going to oppose the Conservative motion. First of all, we have concerns about the work that has been done by the office, which seems to be rather blatantly biased.

A study done by the Osgoode Hall Law School shows that Christian minorities garnered twice as much attention from the office in question, whose mandate expires in March, as compared to Muslim and Jewish minorities. The NDP thinks it would be better to have an office that focuses on democracy and human rights. Religious freedom is a human right and it is protected here in Canada under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, elsewhere in the world, religious freedom could be included in a broader vision that would require the defence of all human rights and not just that one aspect.

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

We believe that there is no hierarchy when it comes to human rights. That is why we are reviewing the work of the Office of Religious Freedoms. We believe that promoting and protecting

human rights, especially freedom of religion or belief, are an integral part of Canada's leadership role around the globe, and that is exactly what we plan to do.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on her excellent speech on freedom of religion, its relationship to poverty, and our global commitment as a nation regarding these issues.

The Conservatives want us to continue with their program exactly as it is, without considering the question of freedom of religion as part of a broader human rights issue.

Can the member elaborate a little on why we need to look at freedom of religion through the broader lens of global human rights?

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

Our government is determined to renew and strengthen human rights protection in Canada and abroad. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie received mandate letters instructing them to champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and human rights including the rights of women and refugees.

We believe that all human rights are universal, indivisible, and interdependent. To broaden the scope of the Office of Religious Freedom's initial mandate, we are looking at the best way to situate freedom of religion and belief within the larger framework of human rights.

•(1625)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate, 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 Regina—Qu'Appelle, Natural Resources; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Social Development.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this government's commitment to human rights. The promotion and protection of human rights is central to our government's foreign policy. Canada's fundamental approach to human rights is that all human rights are interdependent, universal, and indivisible.

The universality of human rights means that it is the duty of states, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The indivisibility of human rights means that all rights are considered equal and, as such, there is no hierarchy of rights. Not only is each one important, but they are also equally important. The interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights means that the enjoyment of one right depends on the ability to freely exercise other human rights.

Business of Supply

Nowhere is this truer than in regard to the freedom of religion and belief. Freedom of religion and belief is a unique right, but it is also deeply connected to other rights. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, along with article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that everyone has the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This includes the right to manifest one's religion or belief in public, as well as in private and individually or in a community with others.

How meaningful will this freedom be if one does not also enjoy the freedom of association and the freedom of peaceful assembly? Freedom of religion and belief also includes observance, practice, and teaching. Without the freedom of expression, without the ability to speak about and share one's belief with others, can we talk about freedom of religion? I do not think we can.

It is important to remember that Canada played a central role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1947 and 1948. John Humphrey, a Canadian lawyer and noted scholar, was one of the key drafters of the declaration. In turn, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the fundamental instruments that has served as a basis for drafting the Canadian federal, provincial, and territorial laws that provide human rights protections.

Canada has remained involved in the development of international mechanisms that help to protect these rights, including our work with other UN member states in creating the UN Human Rights Council in 2006. Canada was elected as one of the founding members of the council and served as one of the original members of the council.

Canada played a key role in setting up the universal periodic review mechanism within the UN Human Rights Council. The universal periodic review allows all countries to be evaluated by their peers. This review ensures that the human rights situation in all 193 UN member states is assessed every four to five years. Canada participates by providing recommendations and observations to each and every country. Our comments are constructive, clear, and principled.

Thanks in large part to international efforts spearheaded by the UN since 1948, more people can exercise their rights today than at any other time in history. Human rights are now increasingly mainstreamed into the work of the UN, including in its sustainable development goals and in the work of the Security Council. These developments serve as further evidence of the understanding that human rights are not only universal, indivisible, and interdependent, but that their respect is instrumental for sustainable development, peace, and security.

The expansion of human rights has stalled somewhat of late. The 2016 survey by Freedom House of freedom in the world, released just recently on January 27, reported a tenth consecutive year of declines in global respect for civil and political rights.

As the Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in the United Nations Human Rights Council, we face many challenges. Violent extremism is rising. Human rights defenders are harassed for daring to speak out against human rights abuses and violations.

Sexual minorities are a target of extreme violence and hate. Sexual and gender-based violence is committed against some women and girls at alarmingly increasing rates.

• (1630)

Fifteen million young girls around the world every year are forced into marriage, which keeps them from reaching their full potential, interrupts their education, jeopardizes their health, and makes them vulnerable to violence.

Children are abused, exploited and neglected, turned into instruments of war, trafficked or made to labour in inhumane conditions, deprived of an education and adequate health care, and denied an opportunity to just be kids.

Above all, what we see today is the proliferation of the misguided belief that diversity—cultural, religious, ethnic, political, social, and other forms of diversity—is a threat.

Our government says the exact opposite. Our government says that Canada is strong not in spite of its diversity but precisely because of its diversity. When universal human rights are respected, pluralism is an opportunity, not a danger.

It is also important to remember that the international human rights system is based on universality as a fundamental and underlying principle of the system. To ensure the credibility and impartiality of the UN, all member states are regularly subject to scrutiny in the universal periodic review. This scrutiny strengthens the overall system by ensuring that all states are systematically engaged in protecting the human rights of their own people.

Put another way, human rights are not simply an international issue but a domestic one as well. When we work to strengthen the international human rights system, we are also working to strengthen human rights here at home in Canada.

Canada not only calls for the scrutiny of other countries with respect to human rights situations, but we also welcome and appreciate the scrutiny of the international system. This is why Canada has a standing invitation to all UN special rapporteurs when we engage in good faith in the universal periodic review mechanism and when we provide regular reports to the UN on our record with regard to specific human rights treaties.

However, no country's record is perfect, and that needs to be said. If it is not obvious, then it should be. In order for Canada to be effective in the struggle for human rights, we must recognize that we have our own set of human rights issues, historically and certainly at present. We must be ready to work toward addressing these issues openly and transparently, and that is precisely what this government is doing. I would also submit that our diversity gives us a privileged position to do so. Our diversity is not only a strength; it also allows us to have a voice on this issue on the wider international stage.

One area where Canada has to face up to the reality of a difficult past and build a better future is Canada's relationship with its indigenous peoples. The Right Hon. Prime Minister has been unequivocal about our commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples built on a foundation of recognition, rights, co-operation, and partnership based on the spirit of reconciliation.

Business of Supply

In closing, I will refer to the mandate letters given to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie.

These ministers are tasked to work together to champion the values of an inclusive and accountable government, peaceful pluralism, and respect for diversity and human rights, including the rights of women and of refugees. While still imperfect, in Canada we have managed to engender an environment in which diverse communities have the freedom to live and grow.

It is because Canadians believe that diversity makes us stronger that we have welcomed 25,000 Syrian refugees over the past few months, and we have promised to do more. Canada strongly believes that these individuals will contribute to the Canadian fabric to help build a pluralistic, diverse, and inclusive society.

This is the vision of human rights that Canada is striving for here at home and the vision we are promoting in the world at large.

• (1635)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for his speech and congratulate him on his election.

I found a rather obvious logical incoherence in the member's remarks. He began by asserting that there is no such thing as a hierarchy of rights and that rights are indivisible, and then he went on to prioritize particular sets of rights, particular themes under the heading of rights, including, quite understandably and appropriately, the rights of women and aboriginal rights.

Is it the position of the member that, because of the alleged indivisibility of rights, we cannot emphasize any sets of rights except those the Liberal government chooses to prioritize? Is not the real question here that the government is now seeking to de-prioritize an emphasis on the growing wave of violent attacks on religious minorities around the world? Is that not what this is really about?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I think the point about hierarchy has been misunderstood by the hon. member. I simply raise it as a way to point him to the logical conclusion of where the motion would lead.

Certainly the promotion of religious freedom is important. I do not think there is a member on this side of the House who would disagree with that. However, the logical conclusion of the motion would suggest that we need an office to promote not only religious freedom but also freedom of the press, freedom against racism, arbitrary arrests, and all these other important human rights that matter. These are all human rights. Do we need a specific office to promote each of these fundamental human rights and values? I do not think we do.

That is what I would respond with. I think it is a misunderstanding on the part of the member.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the hierarchy, we talk about how there is no hierarchy, but then why do we have a department for status of women if their rights are the same as everyone else's? Why then, having a department of status of women, do we create a special committee on pay equity? The reality is that it is about priority and focus.

We just heard today that 75% of the world's population live with some kind of restriction on their religious freedom, so it is a huge issue. How, then, are we going to prioritize when there is a limited amount of funds? I am very concerned that if we eliminate the Office of Religious Freedom, how would we prioritize? My question for the member is, how will he prioritize?

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, there is an interesting editorial piece in one of the national papers today. It is written by Bruce Ryder and Luka Ryder-Bunting. Bruce Ryder is an associate professor at Osgoode Hall Law School. He is a noted authority on such issues. Let me point to what he says. His comments are quite instructive. While not discounting at all the importance of promoting religious rights, Mr. Ryder said:

...women and children may be denied basic rights across an entire society, whether or not they are members of religious minorities. States may imprison individuals solely on the basis of their beliefs, religious or otherwise. Viewing complex and interwoven issues through the lens of a single human right will not produce adequate responses. Canada should take an expansive view and advocate for the protection of all human rights.

This is a noted authority on such issues. This is why I say that focusing on one human right—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

I do apologize. The hon. member was sort of midway and started a pause of sorts. I thought he was finished, and then he continued on. Perhaps he will be able to finish his thought. We will give him enough time to do that.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Mount Royal.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton mentioned, we do in Canada have a department on the status of women. However, we do not have an office of women's freedom for women's human rights abroad. I am sure the hon. member would agree that women's rights are also very important internationally, as are religious freedoms.

Would the hon. member tell us whether he believes that religious freedom can be adequately protected in the broader context, as part of a broader office, without losing anything we have now in the Office of Religious Freedom?

• (1640)

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that very good question. It allows me to articulate a policy that would do a great deal in terms of human rights promotion.

Certainly our government has spoken about the need to advocate for human rights on the international stage. Promoting women's human rights is central to that. Therefore, as a country, let alone a government, we can talk about the need for promoting human rights on the international stage and also talk about those other fundamental initiatives that need to be taken, such as promoting women's rights, talking about the need to make sure that reproductive and sexual health of women is protected and maintained, and recognizing that women are affected disproportionately by things like climate change. All of this needs to be recognized.

Business of Supply

These are very important issues that cannot be obscured, and I worry that the motion put forward by the opposition does so.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to talk about this motion. I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan on this initiative.

[*English*]

One of my proudest accomplishments in this place was having played a role during the previous government in the creation of the Office of Religious Freedom. I would like, therefore, first to address the reason in principle that this office is necessary; second, to describe why it is particularly urgent at this time that Canada and like-minded democracies emphasize the protection of vulnerable religious minorities; and third, to offer some practical reflections on why I believe this is necessary to the Department of Foreign Affairs, now Global Affairs. Fourth, I hope to have time to say a word about the reality of the genocide being inflicted against vulnerable religious minorities in the world today.

First, I reject the assertion of the members opposite that there is no such thing as a hierarchy of rights. Of course there is. We can see it right in the charter. Certain rights are categorized as fundamental rights and others as democratic or procedural rights. There are administrative rights. There are political preferences that our friends on the left in particular like to conflate into rights. However, to suggest that all of these have the same legal or moral weight as, for example, the right to life is illogical.

By the way, I will be splitting my time with the member for Peace River—Westlock.

If we say that the right to obtain a driver's licence has the same moral and legal weight as the right to life, we are clearly misunderstanding the very perception of rights.

Second, this notion that all rights are indivisible and equal and that we therefore cannot prioritize any is manifestly false, as the members opposite have demonstrated. Each of them, in their speeches, emphasized particular sets of rights that they think the Government of Canada ought to prioritize both domestically and internationally, and they are right to do so. However, to suggest that to prioritize the protection of people who are facing genocide because of their faith convictions or their conscience is somehow to diminish other rights is offensive and illogical.

Why ought we, then, to prioritize freedom of conscience and freedom of religion?

One of the great former prime ministers of this place, the Right Hon. John Diefenbaker, when he introduced the Bill of Rights here, spoke about the sacred character of man. In that speech he was reflecting a long tradition in liberal democracy since the Enlightenment, the view that there is something special in the character of humankind in the possession of inalienable rights, the source of which is not the state or an electoral majority or judiciary or talking. Rather, there is a sacred character in the human person from which flow inalienable rights. The preamble to our own Charter of Rights from 1982 echoes John Diefenbaker's sentiment, which echoes all of the great documents of liberal democracy when it says in the

preamble, "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law:..."

Why does it say that? Was it just some sort of accident that former prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau effectively wrote that into the preamble of the Charter of Rights? No, because he understood what Diefenbaker meant by the sacred character of man. He understands what the founders of the American republic, for example, meant when they said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..."

If we reflect on this notion of the sacred character of man, man not being some animal but possessed with a unique and inviolable dignity, it is from this that flows religious conviction or its absence. That is why this is such a priority.

● (1645)

That is why a great man who lived through the 20th century, what he called the "century of tears", a man who lived through the twin totalitarianisms of Nazism and communism, St. John Paul II, said that the first and primordial right is the right to freedom of conscience and religion, because it is through these rights that we define our deepest commitments of who we are as human persons. That, I submit, is why it is appropriate to understand the central nature of the theme of conscience and religion in the broader spectrum of rights.

Second, why is it particularly urgent at this time? It is because we are facing, as all of the data demonstrates and as colleagues of mine have introduced into debate, perhaps an unprecedented wave of violent persecution against members of religious and confessional minorities around the world.

Every day, without exaggeration, there are massed acts of violence purposely targeting people because of their religious confession or lack of it, whether it is the arrest of Uyghur Muslim dissidents in the Xinjiang region of China or the self-immolation of Buddhist Tibetans on the Tibetan Plateau to protest the illegality of their practising their ancient faith.

Whether it is religious minorities in Sri Lanka who face harassment and persecution because they are Muslim, or Hindu, or Christian; whether it is the Catholic schoolgirls who were beheaded last year in Mindanao on their way to school for the crime of being Christian; whether it is the bombs that go off in Ahmadiyya Mosques in Pakistan, or Ismailis or Shia who are targeted for violence in Pakistan, in Yemen, and in so many other places; whether it is peaceful Sunni Muslims who are targeted daily for bombing by violent Salafis and Wahhabis because their form of Islam is considered insufficiently extreme, right across the world we see these waves. Indeed even in the liberal democratic west, we see a growing sense that the freedoms of religion and conscience need to be impinged by the state.

Business of Supply

I submit that now it is more urgent than ever. Indeed, one of the reasons that instigated the former government's creation of the Office of Religious Freedom was the visit to this place in February 2011 of a dear friend of mine named Shahbaz Bhatti, the Minister for Minority Affairs in Pakistan, the first and only non-Muslim minister ever in the Pakistani cabinet. He talked to us about the persecution of Hindus; Sufis; Ahmadiyyas; Shia; Christians, both protestant and catholic; of Parsi Zoroastrians; and all of the minorities without proper state protection in his country. He talked to us about how he was facing a fatwa, because of his defence of those who had been brought up on false charges of blasphemy, including the young peasant Christian girl, Asia Beebi, who continues to swelter in a Pakistani jail under the threat of death.

He was a living witness to us, a sign of contradiction against this wave of hatred based on religion. He went back to Pakistan, and 12 days later was shot 21 times when he left his home that morning. His witness in this place helped to inspire parliamentarians of all parties to support the creation of an Office of Religious Freedom to say that Canada will not stand by passively in the face of such a wave of violence and persecution.

This country has always been a voice for the voiceless, a defence for the persecuted; and before this office was created, I, as a minister in the previous government, sought to have members of our foreign service prioritize these issues. I was always told not to do so publicly because we did not want to embarrass other countries or detract from bilateral relations.

Then when I would go to meet foreign leaders privately, like Prime Minister Gillani in Islamabad, our senior diplomats told me not to raise these issues privately lest we upset bilateral relations.

• (1650)

That is my last point, the functional problem that needed to be addressed, where these issues, for whatever reason, were not being addressed frankly and forthrightly by our foreign service.

Now, I am proud to say, thanks to the good work of Ambassador Bennett and his coworkers at the Office of Religious Freedom at our missions around the world, this is being emphasized, not to the exclusion of other rights and concerns, and Canada is now playing a leadership role. Thanks to our leadership, we are now chairing the international contact group on religious freedom.

Let us continue this relatively modest but still powerfully important initiative for the defenceless.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the wonders of freedom is that the member for Calgary Midnapore can challenge our logic with his own logic, and we can have a completely civilized conversation based on fundamental and sometimes irreconcilable philosophical disagreements.

One wonders, then, why that same member has not spent his political capital on the promotion of an office of political freedom. Freedom of the press, of scientific research, and otherwise of personal choices has never been a particular forte for the hon. member or his recent government.

Religious freedom is an important freedom, indeed, a very important freedom, but it is only one freedom in a suite of freedoms that allow a society to define itself as free.

My wife is from the province of Sultan Kudarat on the Island of Mindanao, a place the member referred to. When I was there a few years ago, there was a major bombing only a few cities from where I was staying. The civil war that has existed there for more than a generation is not something that would be addressed by the Office of Religious Freedom either way. It is a red herring in this debate.

Freedom of association and assembly are necessary for the freedom of religion, as well as the freedom of thought, of being political, of reading, of writing, and of communicating on topics of our own interest, of having freedom of debate.

The Office of Religious Freedom is only one piece of the puzzle in defending basic human rights and liberties, but it is a large puzzle with many pieces. Does restricting our protection of human rights internationally to only—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We only have five minutes for our questions and comments. I think we will go, at this point, to the hon. member for Calgary Midnapore.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member clearly does not understand my track record in this place and falsely asserts that I have never expressed concern about general political freedoms.

I was one of the founding co-chairs of the parliamentary friends of Tibet. I do not need to go through my record and defend myself to that member, but I will say that I do think there are other sets of rights that we ought to prioritize. For example, one of my disappointments with the record of the previous Conservative government is that we did not implement a 2008 platform commitment to create a program for democratic development. I thought we ought to have done that. The government felt that funds were scarce. However, that is a good example of how other sets of rights and concerns can be prioritized and addressed.

The member said I have never really spoken in favour of freedom of the press. I proudly stood in this place and voted for the repeal of section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, a motion that the members of the Liberal Party voted against, and in so doing helped to enhance freedom of speech and freedom of the press in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to hear his thoughts on a statement made by his Conservative colleagues. When they were talking about prioritizing certain rights, they said that if the mandate of Canada's Office of Religious Freedom were expanded, certain rights that this government or any government deems a priority would not be addressed.

Business of Supply

The argument was that if these rights are not addressed, freedom of religion will no longer be a priority. They were essentially implying that the government would have to create an office for other freedoms, give priority to certain freedoms, and perhaps create other offices for the freedoms deemed more important by the government.

Did I understand the member's colleagues correctly when earlier they implied that some rights are more important and should be prioritized and that the government should perhaps have several offices for the freedoms deemed more important?

• (1655)

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is already done.

As the other members pointed out, we have a number of projects focused on women's rights, for example, which absolutely makes sense. Everything we are doing, we are doing with \$5 million.

The millions of members of denominational and religious minorities who are subject to persecution as a result of their religion need an approach adapted to the challenges they face. That requires a certain level of expertise and dialogue with the different religions leaders.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs will have to examine these issues. This is not a controversial issue. That is why representatives from nearly all denominations in Canada have supported keeping the Office of Religious Freedom.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and speak to the motion tabled by my colleague the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, which calls for this House to recognize the good work being done by Canada's Office of Religious Freedom and calls for the federal government to renew the current mandate of this office.

I also want to thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his significant work on this critical issue, over the years, to ensure that this remains a priority for the government and this House.

Religious freedom is one of the most fundamental freedoms we possess as human beings. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, under Article 18, upholds religious freedom as a universal human right, stating:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

It is important to distinguish that this universal human right to religious freedom differs from the civil right to religious freedom. It is clear that, while all possess the universal right to religious freedom, few are able to experience it, with many countries around the world lacking the civil right to religious freedom. That is why, as a Canadian, I am extremely proud and grateful to enjoy freedom of religion, because it is enshrined as a civil right in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I believe that this is part of what makes Canada a great country.

The government has spoken today about how it wants to promote all human rights and freedoms. I would argue that religious freedom

not only is one of many important human rights; it in fact creates the very foundation for other inherent human rights to prosper. Religious freedom is an essential partner of democracy and other civil liberties. This is why, in Canada's own Charter of Rights and Freedoms, religious freedom not only is one of the five fundamental freedoms; it is in fact the first of the five fundamental freedoms.

Unfortunately, in western societies, poll after poll reveals that the role of organized religion and faith in our lives is decreasing. It stands to reason that as the role of religion decreases in the west, so does the value we place on the right to religious freedom. This is an alarming trend.

Let me be clear. When religious freedom is diminished or reduced, other freedoms soon follow.

Former United States president Franklin Delano Roosevelt noted this important connection between religious freedom and democracy, stating:

Where freedom of religion has been attacked, the attack has come from sources opposed to democracy. Where democracy has been overthrown, the spirit of free worship has disappeared. And where religion and democracy have vanished, good faith and reason in international affairs have given way to strident ambition and brute force.

That is why the work of Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is so important.

If the government truly wants to promote and advance all basic human rights, it should not only renew the mandate for the Office of Religious Freedom, but strengthen its mandate with an increased budget.

Hon. members, religious freedom ought to be one of Canada's greatest exports.

Part of the mandate of Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is to promote Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad.

One of the practical ways in which the office has accomplished this is by spearheading the development of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, last June. This group brings together government representatives of more than 20 countries in a diverse and multilateral effort to facilitate networking, co-operation, and collaboration to address the challenge posed by international religious persecution.

Another critical part of Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is to protect and advocate on behalf of religious minorities under threat. This is accomplished through the religious freedom fund. The \$4.25-million fund supports projects, including awareness-raising activities that provide education on religious freedom and research on religious freedom to support government engagement in the areas of tolerance and pluralism.

I want to highlight Nigeria, where the religious freedom fund supported a two-year, \$730,000 project that allowed for the promotion of intercommunity dialogue and conflict mediation in Nigeria's Plateau State.

Business of Supply

• (1700)

In Nigeria, Christians regularly experience horrific violence as part of their faith. The Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram, an al Qaeda ally, has committed to ridding the north half of Nigeria of all non-Muslim influence, including Christians. I want to share a recent example of religious violence in the Plateau State of Nigeria, reported by *The Voice of the Martyrs Canada*.

Three months ago, Fulani herdsmen, who are linked to Boko Haram, attacked a predominantly Christian village of Hwak Kwata-Zawan, and the total number of fatalities resulting from these raids reached 15, leaving many more in the community grief stricken and emotionally wounded. In one of the village homes, 57-year-old Rose Monday was killed while trying to protect her three young grandchildren from the gunmen. Two of the three children, unfortunately, succumbed to their injuries. Their eldest sister, five-year-old Anna, who miraculously survived, is receiving treatment in the hospital for gunshot wounds.

I want to note that this horrific religious violence took place in Plateau State, the same state that was a recipient of the religious freedom fund project. Clearly, there is a continued role that Canada's Office of Religious Freedom must have in places like Nigeria's Plateau State to support projects that mobilize local capacity to respond to local challenges.

Canada must continue to help protect other members of religious minorities like Rose Monday who are at risk of experiencing violence and death merely as a result of their religion. It is also important to note that Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is committed to promoting religious freedoms around the world for people of all faiths. Ambassador Bennett has actively spoken out against violence and discrimination toward people of many different faiths.

Religious freedom is not a Liberal or Conservative value; it is a Canadian value. Former Conservative prime minister John Diefenbaker championed human rights both in Canada and around the world. On the day he introduced the Canadian Bill of Rights in Parliament in 1960, he spoke these words:

I am Canadian, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship God in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind.

Under prime minister Pierre Trudeau, religious freedom was enshrined as a civil right within Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney also aggressively promoted religious freedom as part of Canada's foreign policy, especially within the former communist countries of eastern Europe. In 1998, former Liberal foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy announced that addressing religious intolerance would be a key priority for the then department of foreign affairs and international development.

Then in 2004, a bipartisan parliamentary subcommittee on human rights and international development adopted a resolution that urged the Government of Canada "to make the protection and promotion of the right to freedom of religion and belief a central element of its efforts to defend human rights internationally". This resolution was made a reality in 2013 when the former Conservative government

established the current Office of Religious Freedom, dedicated to promoting freedom of religion or belief as a key Canadian foreign policy priority.

I fully support this motion to renew the mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom, not because I am a Conservative but because I am Canadian. I urge all members of the House to support this motion. It is a Canadian value that I am proud of and cherish. As I noted earlier, Canada should make religious freedom one of our greatest exports.

• (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to a great deal of the debate today and what comes to my mind is that, when we think in terms of religious freedom, I concur with the member that it is a very strong and passionate Canadian value. It is close to our hearts, and we want to demonstrate strong leadership as much as possible, not only here in Canada but outside of Canada's borders.

Where I really disagree with the Conservatives' approach to this debate today is that they seem to be of the opinion that the only way we can protect religious freedom, something I often refer to as freedom of thought or human rights issues, is to have that office. There is no doubt that Dr. Bennett has been able to accomplish some good things, but I would ask the member this. Does he not recognize that at times there is a need to look at ways in which we could possibly do an even better job, that there could be something in the budget tomorrow that might deal with this particular issue, and that, in fact, the real issue is human rights and ensuring that religious freedom is part of a proactive government dealing with individual freedoms and the freedoms of all?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I believe the question was whether I see the need for perhaps a different focus. I would agree that we could perhaps do more things other than just the Office of Religious Freedom, but that in no way requires us to shut down the Office of Religious Freedom. If we want to do more things, let us do more things, for sure. If the member opposite is hinting that we have to look in the budget to see more things, for sure we will, and I hope he is also hinting that the Liberals are going to keep the Office of Religious Freedom.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last two speakers have really put their fingers on the central point, that the government wants to make this about process. However, it is not about process, but it is about priorities.

We have seen from the current government that it is going to kill the Office of Religious Freedom. There is no mention of religious freedom in the mandate letters. There is no consideration for religious minorities in the refugee program, and the Liberals are refusing to recognize the genocide of Yazidis and Christians, even though it has been recognized by the United States and the European Parliament.

Could the member expand on the point that it is not about process but about priorities, and religious freedom clearly is not a priority for the government?

Business of Supply

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague entirely that this sends a signal to all Canadians that religious freedom is not a priority. The government is going to shut this office down without even taking a second look at it, despite the repeated calls from this side of the House to say that we should see what work it has been doing, see what kind of an influence we have been in the world, and see how we are leading the world in terms of religious freedom. It pains me to see the lack of vision when it comes to the Office of Religious Freedom.

• (1710)

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I share my hon. colleague's passion for religious freedom, as do many people on this side of the House.

I am not quite sure how the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan can presume to determine that the government is not committed to religious freedom. However, I think that the vast majority of people on all sides of the House are committed to religious freedoms, which is why I would ask him the same thing I asked his colleague.

In the event that the Conservatives really wanted to have unanimity on something upon which I think we almost all agree, that religious freedom is important, they could have put forward a motion asking that the work of the current office continue in this or a different format; meaning the current format or an expanded format. I think they would have had all the people on this side voting for their motion.

My question is this. Why would the member not have put forward a motion to which all of us could have agreed, as opposed to this specific motion insisting on the exact specific existing mandate, which the minister is supposed to look at reviewing, according to the mandate letter, as we have already heard?

Mr. Arnold Viersen: Mr. Speaker, when we were coming up with the motion, it was my colleague who brought it up, and so I cannot talk to the specifics of what the motion was. However, I do think we were calling out to the government to say that this is a priority, that this was a priority in the past, and it should be a priority into the future.

Religious freedom is something about which we all care deeply. I would agree with my colleague on that. Therefore, given that, we were concerned that the funding would end for this office. If this is broadly supported all around the House, the Office of Religious Freedom should also be broadly supported.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Beloit—Chambly.

It will likely surprise no one to hear that I, and I think most if not all of my colleagues, will be voting against this motion. It comes as no surprise because when the Conservative government created Canada's Office of Religious Freedom, we were already against it, and not because we are against freedom of religion. Freedom of religion is extremely important, but we had some serious problems with this initiative. Part of the problem had to do with the context in

which this office was created, but a bigger part of the problem was based on an important matter of principle.

Let us talk briefly about the context. What we need to keep in mind is that the government that created Canada's Office of Religious Freedom is the same government that literally killed Rights and Democracy, which had been around for 25 years and did absolutely extraordinary work to defend all rights and promote democracy around the world. The government killed Rights and Democracy and then created something that focused exclusively on freedom of religion.

It was the same government that also broke its promise to create an institute for democratic development with the pretext that it did not have the funds to do so, and that it was not worthwhile investing in democratic development.

It was a government that always gave the impression that it was making very deliberate choices and giving priority to religious rights over other rights, even though we know that all rights are equal. I would also like to say in passing, I cannot help it, that it was the same government that readily agreed to sign trade agreements, free trade agreements with countries that were known to have serious human rights issues. It was the same government that said yes to arms sales without being able to show that studies had been done to ensure that Canadian arms would not be used to commit human rights abuses.

It is the same government that mounted a very weak defence of people like Raif Badawi, who was convicted simply because he wanted to assert his right to freedom of opinion and expression. It is the same government that literally harassed civil society organizations, here in Canada, that dared to even remotely criticize their policies.

• (1715)

[*English*]

Religious freedom is important. The government that prioritized religious freedom over other rights was the same government that refused to honour its promise to create an office for democratic development. Let us remember this. Democratic institutions and democratic development are the best guarantees of all human rights, including freedom of religion. It was the same government that basically killed Rights & Democracy, a great Canadian institution that had 25 years of experience, and was protecting all the rights of everyone around the world.

Rather than work to defend rights across the board, the government decided to give priority, as I said, to one right over the others. It is an important one but one right should not be above the others. When we talk about human rights, we have to remember one fundamental principle, and that is that all rights are equal, that there is no hierarchy in matters of rights, and that all rights are interdependent. We cannot defend one without defending all.

[*Translation*]

That is the crux of the problem, the problem of principle. All rights are equal. There is no hierarchy of rights. In order to promote rights effectively, we must bear in mind that they are all interrelated and interdependent instead of making one set of rights more important than another.

Of course, I said, I repeat, and I cannot say enough that freedom of religion is important, but all human rights are important and we must work on them all.

I wish to inform my colleagues opposite that we are here to push the new government to entrench human rights in all of its policies, including its policies on foreign affairs, international development, and trade.

It is also essential to work on developing and promoting democratic institutions in the world, because they are the best guarantee of human rights.

That is the problem of principle. I talked a little bit about the context and the fundamental principle, but we also need to have a closer look at the work that has been done in recent years. Yes, some good work has been done; no one is denying that. However, I would like to point out that certain questions have been raised about the scope of the Office of Religious Freedoms.

For example, a doctoral candidate at Osgoode Hall Law School pointed out that Christian minorities have received almost twice as much attention from that office as Muslim and Jewish minorities. This could be attributed to a number of factors, but nevertheless, it does raise some questions. What raises even more questions is the fact that the office, specifically in Iran, focused mainly on the Baha'i community. I have absolutely no problem with defending that community. I have met with representatives of Baha'i groups. I think it is extremely important. They are in a very difficult situation in Iran, which is one of the worst countries when it comes to human rights abuses in general. However, Sunni Muslims, Jews, and Zoroastrians also face oppression in Iran, so why did that office not work on their behalf, too?

Moreover, in more general terms, the office never examined traditional or aboriginal religions. We know that these files are raising more and more concerns and that acts of repression against traditional and aboriginal religions are on the rise around the world.

We hope that the office's approach was not biased, but we do note some rather significant shortcomings. Nevertheless, even if this was not the case for the office, focusing on and giving priority to one type of human right is problematic because all rights should be considered as a whole.

In fact, Canada must speak out and defend all rights and the rights of all.

• (1720)

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member cites this tired talking point about allegedly more of the money going to one religious group or the other. For clarification for the hon. member, many of the projects of the office are not public because it is working in very sensitive countries or it cannot release details of the project. Therefore, it does not really make sense to try and do an analysis of who is getting more of the money when a lot of the projects are not public. That is totally the wrong way to go about this anyway, to try to pit groups against each other in this way. The office puts out calls for proposals, does important work and it engages on the proposals that it receives.

Business of Supply

Further, is the member aware that Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim leaders have been among the most vocal about the need to renew the mandate of the office? Clearly there is not a bias only toward Christians if we have Sikh, Jewish and Muslim leaders being so vocal in support of the office. Why won't the NDP and the government won't listen to these groups and renew the mandate of this office?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, some religious groups supported creating the Office of Religious Freedom as well as keeping it open. Many people pointed out, just as we did, that there was a fundamental problem with having one set of rights take precedence over another.

As members are aware, I worked for foreign affairs for 15 years. I worked mainly on thematic issues, and I worked very closely with the people in the department who deal with human rights.

The people working on this file know the issues and take a holistic approach by addressing all rights. I always wondered whether, instead of giving so much money to the Office of Religious Freedom, the government should have given more support and additional resources to the existing resources within the department, which were already doing extraordinary work.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the member, but throughout the day I have talked a great deal about the importance of human rights and the idea of religious freedom as a great Canadian value. I believe all members, on either side of the chamber, believe in the importance of religious freedom.

Does the member want to provide some additional comment in regard to how important it is that when we talk about religious freedom, we talk about human rights in general? Would she agree that good governance would have us show leadership on the wide spectrum of human rights?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. That is absolutely essential. Earlier on in today's debate, I heard someone mention a puzzle. Freedom of religion is a very important piece of the puzzle.

If we really want human rights to be respected, we cannot start looking at rights individually. We need to look at the problem as a whole and we must ensure strong, well-established governance and democratic development, because those are the best ways to guarantee that human rights will be upheld within a society.

We need to work on the whole issue. Although religious freedom is very important, it should not be given precedence over other rights.

Business of Supply

•(1725)

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her remarks. I have a brief question for her about the risks involved in having a government give priority to some rights over others and about the possibility of political or ideological interference. For example, some rights related to access to medical care were not part of the previous government's strategy.

Does my colleague think that there is a potential risk when a government gives some rights priority over others? Could ideology also sometimes interfere in the promotion or protection of certain rights abroad?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which I feel touches on an essential point.

One of the basic principles of human rights is that all human beings are equal. Since we are all equal, we all have equal rights. Human rights encompass women's rights, the right to health, the rights of LGBT communities, and so many more. All of those rights are equal because all humans should be equal in the eyes of the law. That is why we have the basic principle that no particular right takes precedence over others.

Many consider the Office of Religious Freedom to be more an outgrowth of ideology than anything else, but I think that we will leave it to Canadians to decide. They already have, in a way.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie for sharing her time with me.

I am glad to speak after her because I would like to elaborate on several points she mentioned. We can debate Canada's institutional tools and how public funds are used to achieve diplomatic objectives abroad even if there is some disagreement about how to achieve those objectives and what our offices and institutions should look like. Nevertheless, we recognize the tremendous importance of religious freedom.

This debate reminds me of something one of my professors at McGill University often used to say: human rights apply horizontally, not vertically. In other words, no single right is more important than another. Human rights exist side by side. Some countries are grappling with extremely complex situations that result in certain rights clashing with other rights. Here in Canada and in countries with strong democracies, we recognize that different rights can create more nuanced situations. In those cases, the Supreme Court of Canada sometimes has to adjudicate.

We have judicial, political and legislative institutions here to tackle those problems, but in countries where conflict exists and countries that do not have democratic institutions, the situation can become even more complex.

That is one of the main reasons why we need to have a strategy as well as an office that deals with all human rights, not just rights related to freedom of religion. At the risk of repeating myself, as my colleague did and we will continue to do, the right to freedom of religion is extremely important.

Let us come back to the situations in various countries. It is important to look at the long-term solutions that Canada can provide through our diplomatic action and the work done by the Department of Foreign Affairs. It is not about focusing on human rights alone, but looking at every situation. For example, we could say that this also applies to the fight against ISIL. It is not about photo-ops and sound bites. It is about long-term solutions in order to set up real democratic institutions in these countries and ensure that they are capable of enforcing these rights.

Since the beginning of the debate, Conservative members have named several countries where there is terrorism or violence. Not so long ago, I heard a member talking about Boko Haram. Even though there is an office to protect religious freedom, what long-term solutions can we envision other than a comprehensive solution for protecting all rights, real democratic reform in those countries, and the implementation of real democratic and judicial institutions? That is the key. That is what Canada should be working on.

Let me get back to why we oppose the motion. As the old saying goes, we should not put all of our eggs in one basket, but that is what happened here. The Department of Foreign Affairs and our diplomats should not be functioning on an ad hoc, case-by-case basis. They should try to resolve the conflicts that lead to persecution in those countries by putting forward a long-term democratic solution. That is part of the solution.

It really bothers me that today's motion was moved by the government. My colleague from Mount Royal asked one of our Conservative colleagues why the motion was not worded differently.

•(1730)

This is yet another us-against-them motion, a divisive motion that says, "these were our policies when we were the Conservative government; take it or leave it" instead of trying to work together to find a real solution that will really tackle these terrible situations in which people are persecuted. That is not something we can tolerate. That kind of violence is unacceptable and appalling.

That is why this motion is so hard to swallow. Rather than look for constructive solutions by adopting a more comprehensive outlook, they are pushing a "my way or the highway" agenda. Unfortunately, that is how things were handled for the past 10 years almost. That is the approach today's Conservative motion argues for.

Business of Supply

That mentality and that idea are troubling considering that there were already groups in place doing the work. There has been a lot of talk about Rights and Democracy. Members of the House would be surprised at how much Canadians cared about that organization. When the Conservatives announced the cuts that led to the closure of Rights and Democracy, people were furious and very disappointed. I should not even say that they were furious. They were disappointed because that group had been doing the work for a very long time. Rights and Democracy had built relationships and had known for a long time what the best practices were. That was the case in my riding and I think it was also the case in the ridings of many of my colleagues. Some of them even mentioned it in this debate.

I heard one of my Conservative colleagues, a former minister at that, say that public servants had advised them against getting involved in some files that they should have gotten involved in. The Conservatives used that as an argument to say that the Office of Religious Freedom was a good thing because it allowed the government to intervene in files that public servants did not want it to get involved in. That shows exactly what the problem was with the Conservative approach. When the Conservatives found that something was not working or that an approach needed to be changed, their solution was to do away with it completely and start fresh with something completely ideological in their own image.

That is why we take issue with this Office. It is not because we oppose protecting freedom of religion but, on the contrary, because we had the tools in place to solve and address these problems. Instead, we should have perhaps taken a modified approach taking into account the international reality that changes from one minute to the next and that can be very complex. We should have worked instead within the existing framework and with groups that already had the expertise and a mandate supported by the people, as was mentioned by those who contacted our offices to protest these cuts and, consequently, this closure. We can see the problem there too.

Without repeating what my colleague from Laurier—Sainte-Marie said, this is even more problematic when we consider it together with the problems associated with the Conservatives' approach to other rights. We need only think of the number of countries in the world that have passed homophobic or racist laws that attack other minorities besides religious minorities in their countries. The government seemed to be more reluctant in those cases. My colleague mentioned the example of Raif Badawi. That is another fine example. That is an example of a type of freedom that was violated when a blogger was subjected to the situation he is suffering through now simply for blogging. The government was very reluctant to intervene in that case and even refused to do so. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, we see that instead of being considered and applied horizontally, rights were applied vertically, and that is unfortunate.

We oppose this motion, not because we oppose protecting freedom of religion, but because we recognize that there are many minorities in the world and that many rights are unfortunately violated every day. In Canada, we have the know-how, the resources, and, more importantly, the human resources. Think of the people who work at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. They will be in a position to do this work if we, as parliamentarians, give them a mission or mandate to work on

ensuring all these rights are upheld. However, we will have to focus on finding an institutional solution by establishing legal and democratic systems in these countries. This will enable these countries to uphold human rights and to continue to protect these rights once we discontinue our involvement abroad.

• (1735)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his comments and on being elected.

Frankly, I find the NDP's position on this rather problematic. I have been in the House for 19 years and I have heard very few New Democrat members speak out about the wave of violence and the persecutions against denominational minorities around the world.

For example, according to the European Parliament, all members of the U.S. Congress, the Obama administration, and genocide experts from the International Association of Genocide Scholars, and according to the facts, a genocide is being perpetrated against Yazidis and Christians in Iraq and Syria.

That is one of the reasons why, in 2008, the previous government developed a program to resettle refugees, focusing on these populations.

However, it is not enough to say that there are all kinds of rights, obviously. Some particularly vulnerable communities, which have no military or political power, are facing a genocide.

Does the NDP acknowledge that a genocide is currently being perpetrated against these denominational minorities in the Middle East?

• (1740)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, in response to my colleague's comments, we are certainly disgusted by the violence being committed in these conflict-ridden countries. I do not think any member in the House could see such images and think they were acceptable.

However, with respect to the member's examples, as I said in my speech, yes, certain religious minorities are being attacked, but other minorities are as well, such as members of the LGBT community. Are we also going to create an office to protect the rights of the LGBT community?

We are not saying that we do not want to protect these denominational minorities. What we are saying is that Canada is equipped to take a comprehensive approach, which includes all of these rights.

It is interesting to hear the Conservatives say that the NDP is pitting rights against each other, and I would venture to say that they will say the same about the Liberals. In reality, it is the Conservatives' approach that is pitting rights against each other.

We had institutions and we still have institutions to protect not only the minorities that my colleague mentioned, but also those persecuted by the very groups committing this violence, and that is the approach we want to take.

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If we want to ensure that these groups are protected in the long term and indefinitely, these countries need democratic reform, and this must also be part of the approach. That is not the case right now.

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very interested in the comments on both sides of the argument. However, I want to point out that the idea of religious freedom is nominally accepted in many countries in the world, and I would be interested in the comments of our speaker in that regard.

Amnesty International is in many of those countries trying to resolve problems with respect to the lack of religious freedom of those particular people. The simplest way for me to phrase it would be to look at the Roma people, the gypsies, whose religion takes on wherever they may be. They are Catholic, orthodox, Muslim, Anglican, and so on. Yet we know that this is one of the most repressed groups wherever they go. Therefore, their issue is not so much the freedom of practising their religion, but rather the human rights aspect. I wonder if the speaker would comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's question because it illustrates exactly what we are trying to help our Conservative colleagues understand.

I am not sure whether he will agree with me when I say that, in the example he just gave, freedom of religion is not even the issue. The issue is a group of people experiencing racism and hatred. That is exactly the challenge we are dealing with. Hatred and violence show up in different ways against different groups.

This is the third time I have said this since the beginning of my speech, but at the risk of repeating myself, we have the tools, we have the institutions, and we have the people to help us combat hatred and violence and find long-term solutions.

Let us put the tools in place to do that.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague, the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, for bringing this important motion to the House. I will also be splitting my time with my hon. colleague and geographic neighbour from Durham.

The Office of Religious Freedom was established, as we know, as a division of the Department of Foreign Affairs on February 19, 2013. It was created to address the increasing threat of religious intolerance and extremism around the world. Since its creation, the office has worked across the globe to promote tolerance, pluralism, and communal harmony. It works on an annual budget of \$5 million. With a budget that is forecast to push Canada into \$30 billion of potential debt, I sincerely hope that the current government will continue to fund the Office of Religious Freedom to allow it to continue doing its important work right across the globe.

The office plays an important role as a non-partisan, multi-faceted organization that supports all faiths. Violations of religious freedom can and do touch religious communities from all of the world's major

faith traditions, including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and even those who profess no faith at all. I would therefore ask my colleagues in this House to support the motion to recognize the good work being done by Canada's Office of Religious Freedom, and I call on the government to renew the mandate of that office.

In order to express the importance of the work done by the Office of Religious Freedom, we must first take a look at the office itself. The mandate of the Office of Religious Freedom speaks directly to the importance of the office as a tool for both the Government of Canada and for organizations to protect and promote minority groups: "The Office of Religious Freedom fulfills the Government of Canada's pledge to speak out and to protect and promote religious freedom around the world."

The right to freedom of religion is one of Canada's fundamental founding principles. Canada and Canadians have a duty to help protect those who have this fundamental right restricted or are persecuted because of it.

Another quote from the office's mandate is the following: "The Office will promote freedom of religion or belief as a Canadian foreign policy priority. The Office will be an important vehicle through which Canada can advance fundamental Canadian values, including freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law...."

The office provides important advice and understanding of religious traditions that may not be understood by officials. In their roles specifically dealing with religion, the office is uniquely positioned to provide high-quality, in-depth information. The office also focuses on advocacy, analysis, policy development and programming relating to protecting and advocating on behalf of religious minorities under threat, opposing religious hatred and intolerance, and promoting pluralism abroad.

It works specifically in countries that violate the right to freedom of religion, which, according to the Office of Religious Freedom, represent nearly 77% of the world's population. In addition, with approximately 84% of the world's population in 2010 affiliated with religious tradition, the impact the Office of Religious Freedom can have in the policy-making field is yet another asset to the government.

The religious freedom fund is the vehicle that the government uses to fund projects outside Canada to help religious communities facing intolerance or persecution in their country. The fund supports projects according to the following criteria: raising awareness about issues related to freedom of religion or belief, conducting research on freedom of religion or belief that provides governments and decision-makers around the world with relevant information and analysis, supporting dialogue among different religious groups, and providing legal and legislative or related forms of support on issues of freedom of religion or belief. The wide range of support of these programs allows the fund to support a wide variety of programs across the globe. These projects are located in Bangladesh, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Indonesia. That is only naming a few.

Just as in the case of our embassies abroad, the ambassador plays a crucial role in representing Canada. Dr. Andrew Bennett was appointed Canada's first Ambassador for Religious Freedom on February 19, 2013. Ambassador Bennett has a significant amount of experience both here in Canada and abroad. He is a public servant and an academic with an extensive educational background in history, political science, and theology. He received a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Edinburgh in 2002 and is in the process of completing a degree in theology in eastern Christian studies.

● (1745)

Since March 2014, he has also served as Canada's head of delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The ambassador is a sub-deacon and a cantor with Holy Cross Eastern Catholic Chaplaincy and St. John the Baptist Ukrainian-Catholic Shrine.

The Office of Religious Freedom has placed a high degree of importance on transparency and accountability. It has an external advisory committee composed of 23 prominent religious leaders from a wide variety of Canadian faith and belief communities. The first meeting of the advisory committee was held in June 2015, and it meets regularly to advise the office on the exercise of its mandate.

In Canada, we enjoy many fundamental rights and freedoms. They are part of what makes Canada so great. However, in many areas of the world people are not as blessed as we are. It is, therefore, that much more important that the Office of Religious Freedom be recognized for the great work it is doing and to have its mandate renewed.

To quote the Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:
(a) freedom of conscience and religion;

The belief that everyone has the right to freedom of religion is what is needed to guide us as we move forward to promote and protect people abroad.

While other nations are not subject to the charter, there is no reason to de-fund an organization that promotes the exact beliefs and values that Canadians hold strongly. These are some of the founding principles of Canada and of democratic governance. These are the same rights and freedoms that Canadians have fought and died to protect.

It is not only Canada that has recognized the increasing importance of promoting religious freedom abroad. The United States Department of State also has an Office of International Religious Freedom. It has also been recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in many other documents as well, and by organizations across the world.

The office works collaboratively with other nations to support projects that mobilize capacity to respond to local challenges. The work done by the office has earned it great esteem internationally and within communities across Canada.

I could speak at length about all the important work being done by the office, but I will limit myself to just three examples as time runs out. These include both bilateral and multilateral work.

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The work of the office spans the globe, and there is a range of support in terms of size and dollar value. In the first example, on June 15, 2015, Ambassador Bennett hosted the inaugural meeting of the International Contact Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, a group that was initiated by Canada. This contact group brings together government representatives of over 20 countries in a diverse and multilateral effort to facilitate networking, co-operation, and collaboration to address the challenge posed by international religious persecution.

It includes, and this is very interesting, non-traditional members, such as Cameroon, Chile, and Morocco. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and many others have praised Canada's initiative to convene the contact group.

Some of the work done in Europe includes working in Ukraine to facilitate leadership courses and exchange programs that bring together Ukrainian youth from various backgrounds to promote tolerance and deepen intercultural awareness.

Some of the work done in Southeast Asia supports sustainable monitoring and reporting on freedom of religion or belief in Indonesia, increasing understanding by religious minorities of their constitutional rights and building their capacity to advocate for tolerance and pluralism.

The Office of Religious Freedom was created to address a growing problem that affects countries and people all across the globe. Canada needs to continue to speak out on discrimination against those who simply wish to practise their faith in safety and security.

The office not only has a humanitarian importance, but has also shown, because of its unique mandate, that it has insight into nations and religious traditions that can be used by Global Affairs to strengthen our diplomatic ties and relationships with other nations.

Given all the discussion from the members opposite about inclusion, diversity, and tolerance, I sincerely hope that they will support this important motion and continue to fund this non-partisan office that is protecting and promoting one of the values that Canadians hold most important.

● (1750)

[*Translation*]

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock on his excellent speech. The freedom to have this debate is a freedom that is dear to us all.

Do human rights begin and end with religious freedom? Not to me. I agree that the Office of Religious Freedom is inadequate on its own and that the motion therefore does not deserve our support.

Freedom is a puzzle with many pieces in addition to religion. Many kinds of freedoms make up the basic rights that, together, create a truly free society. The Conservatives' motion is not worded in a way that promotes religious freedom, so this is yet another missed opportunity for the opposition.

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In my Conservative colleague's opinion, what leadership role might Canada play in the world to ensure equal protection for all freedoms? Are there any freedoms that my colleague would choose not to protect on the international stage?

[English]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I work on the procedure and House affairs committee with the member opposite. It is nice to hear him speaking again in the House.

In my previous life I was fortunate enough to go to a conference in Azerbaijan. The conference brought both developed and developing nations together to exchange best practices on how we could live in harmony and peace regardless of religion or faith. People of different backgrounds and different faiths were at the conference, all working together for the common goal, but I found that Canada was far ahead of many countries in how we live in peace and harmony regardless of religion or faith. Having the Office of Religious Freedom is a perfect example of how we as Canadians can give our best practices to other countries across the world. We are leaders in this area.

• (1755)

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his detailed account of what the Office of Religious Freedom has achieved both nationally and internationally.

Let me tell the House a personal story that I was told when I was taking a cab here in Ottawa. As soon as the driver knew that I was a member of Parliament, he told me this sad story about his parents. They were shot when they opened their door because they were Copts in their country. The cab driver has pleaded with us as parliamentarians to do something about it because it affects not only people overseas but our own Canadians here as well.

The City of Richmond has a street called Highway to Heaven, where all our religious groups live in harmony. Unfortunately, this does not happen overseas.

How does my colleague see this important office not only being beneficial to religious groups all across the nation but being beneficial to those different faith groups in our communities as well?

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Richmond for all the hard work she is doing in her riding on this file and beyond.

We need to look at the work that has been done already on a \$5 million budget and the leadership that the office has taken on projects all across the world in promoting the Canadian values that we hold dear. Many countries are trying to figure out ways to live in harmony with different religions.

We should be proud of the office when we look at the projects that have already been worked on and the progress it is making in different communities and different countries. We all need to continue to show our values. We need to continue to show to countries around the world the progress that we have made in Canada.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate my neighbour from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock for his remarks today, and my colleagues for bringing this important debate to the floor of the House of Commons.

Here we are within 140 or so days of a new government, and we are already fearing the elimination of something that should be a unifier, not just for Parliament but for Canadians. Yet, we brought this debate to the floor of the House of Commons because we feel that the Office of Religious Freedom and Ambassador Bennett are at risk of cancellation or at least dilution of their mandate, which is clear from some of the remarks of the government today in this debate.

Why should it be something that unifies the House? I will share with my colleagues a quote from a prominent Canadian upon news of the creation of this office. He said at the time in relation to this office, "We think an initiative like this is the kind of thing that ought to have the support of all sides in politics." He went on to add that "The defence of religious freedom is unconditional. It applies to all religious groups... So I think a stout and courageous defence of religious freedom overseas is a good thing for Canada."

Do members know who said that? It was the previous leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Michael Ignatieff. That was his comment with respect to the then Conservative proposal about the creation of this important office. I agree with him.

Now, I have found in these short 140 days of the current Parliament that I am quoting a lot of Liberal leaders. In relation to the withdrawal of the ISIL mission, I quoted King, Pearson, John Manley, and Lloyd Axworthy.

I am fearing that my friends, particularly my friend from Calgary Midnapore, may be questioning my bona fides as a Conservative, especially today in quoting Michael Ignatieff. However, I do that for a reason. It is because the current Liberal government under the Prime Minister is changing the Liberal Party of Canada. I do not think enough Canadians see how quickly he is doing that. The comments from Michael Ignatieff on the creation of this office demonstrate that in spades. The previous leader of the Liberals defended the creation of this important office, this important position, and the fight for religious freedom and tolerance around the world. The current leader would eliminate the position or fundamentally change it within 150 days. That should concern Canadians. That should concern people who voted for this new government.

In fact, in Mr. Ignatieff's remarks in response to his support for the creation of this office, he mentioned, and many of my friends have mentioned, that these groups have been persecuted abroad, for years and in some cases centuries. He mentioned the Coptic Christians in Egypt. He mentioned members of the Bahá'í faith in Iran, Jews, and Christians. He mentioned China, where the rights of religious freedom are heavily restricted. Therefore, the previous Liberal leader supported the creation of this office, and it is sad that we have to bring a debate to the floor today. After just a few years, but in an exceptional mandate, Ambassador Bennett has received international recognition for his thoughtful and important interventions on this fundamental freedom.

I am going to use the next few minutes of my remarks to remind my colleagues how, as Canadians, we have this important office and an ambassador promoting religious freedom and tolerance around the world. It is a natural extension of Canadian values. What sunnier ways could there be than to preserve the freedom of worship for millions around the world? That is an essential Canadian value.

It brought to mind John Diefenbaker's speech on the night before he reconvened a special session of Parliament in 1960 on Canada Day, which was then Dominion Day.

• (1800)

On June 30, 1960, John Diefenbaker addressed Canadians because he intended the following day, in a special session, to introduce the Bill of Rights. In respect to religious freedom and rights to be protected and enshrined in the Bill of Rights, he said:

The experiences of many countries whose citizens have flocked to our shores in recent years...make it clear that we cannot take for granted the continuance and maintenance of those rights and freedoms.

The next day the Bill of Rights was introduced to the Parliament of the time. It was subsequently passed, and the Canadian Bill of Rights, subsection 1(c), protected the freedom of religion. It was then later enshrined in the Constitution Act of 1982, our Charter, as a fundamental freedom under subsection 2(a).

The Conservative's Bill of Rights from the Diefenbaker government, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms under the Trudeau government, secured religious freedom as a fundamental pillar of the rights and freedoms that we enjoy here, and the values we therefore promote and protect abroad.

However, this office, and the position that Ambassador Bennett fills, is not a new extension of this position internationally. We had the Bill of Rights and the Charter, but in 1981, we were a signatory to the UN declaration on the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance. In fact, that UN section said that religious freedom must be fully respected and guaranteed around the world.

We were a 1951 signatory to the convention on the status of refugees. This is where I feel the hypocrisy of the new government is no more evident than by its successful integration of a Syrian refugee effort. We have complimented the government on doing it on a revised timeline to ensure the success of these new members of our family. Why are they in Canada? I would suggest, because it is hard to get data from the government, that almost all of them were fleeing religious persecution, or certainly a vast majority were. The government was good to extend the welcome and protection of religious freedom here, but it wants to eliminate our agent who is trying to promote that value abroad. I cannot square that circle.

It is a bit like its position on ISIL: We know the dislocation and threats of violence to so many people and we will help them if they come here, but we do not want to address the issues on the ground, whether it is a direct threat to life and security or it is the promotion of religious tolerance, which is usually at the root of this strife and out-migration.

It is important for us to recognize, again, that this is an area where in the past there has not been much white space between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. Despite some of the rhetoric at

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times, our record as Conservatives was actually better at helping the vulnerable.

Let us look at refugees on the government-assisted side. In the last two years of the Chrétien-Martin government, there were 7,400 refugees in each of 2004 and 2005. In the last two years of the Conservative government, there were 7,600 and 9,400 government-assisted refugees. The story is the same with private sponsorship, with about 3,000 in the previous years of the last Liberal administration. There were 5,000 and almost 10,000 private sponsorships in the last years of the Conservative government.

I am illustrating that, because one of the persecutions we allow refugees to find refuge in Canada from is religious intolerance. This is a circumstance where the work of Ambassador Bennett's committee that he helped spearhead on an international basis, with over 20 countries involved, promoting religious tolerance, understanding, and the ability for people to practise their faith in their country, is about protecting them where they live.

• (1805)

Why would we not both offer refuge for those who come here but promote refuge in their country? I hope they will stand up for this important office.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Durham for his fine defence of religious liberties.

I want to congratulate him as well, for having congratulated the government on how we handled the Syrian refugees, and pointing out that many, if not most, of the people who came from Syria are fleeing religious persecution. That is opposite to what one of his colleagues said earlier, who criticized the government for not protecting Christian or Yazidi refugees who were fleeing religious persecution.

I think all of us in this House care about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, particularly in ISIL and ISIS-occupied territory in Syria. I think we all care about religious liberties. We are having almost a false debate. That side of the House is trying to put forward a motion to get us to vote against it because we are saying we want to broaden the office, and they are saying we did not support an Office of Religious Freedom. We want to support an Office of Religious Freedom within a broader context, because all fundamental freedoms are important.

I would ask the hon. member for Durham why the motion put forward is insisting on supporting the office with its current mandate, as opposed to putting forward a motion that would have said, "supported all of the work of the Office of Religious Freedom in either its current form or an enhanced form". In that case, both sides of this House would have supported it.

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Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my friend, the member for Mount Royal for his interjection. Certainly it seems that he respects the work being done by Ambassador Bennett. What he does not realize is that the comments from his colleagues show a willingness to dilute the mandate, if not eliminate it entirely. When we are talking of a modest \$5-million budget and a focus on religious intolerance, which is at the centre of the migration crisis around the world, this should be a focused mandate. It is only on its third or so year of operation.

In the quote I gave from Michael Ignatieff at the beginning, the previous leader of their party supported this office, and at the same time that the then member and current member for Ottawa South says it was not needed because Canada has a charter.

We do have a charter, and I showed how religious freedom and respect for tolerance is part of our charter. However, our charter does not have application around the world. Yet, the fight for religious rights and freedoms associated with faith and the practice of it is fundamental, which is why Ambassador Bennett and his team's mandate cannot be diluted. It should be supported. If the government wants to do more through trade or international development on institution building and other things, it can do that concurrently.

• (1810)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. friend for reminding this place that the Liberal Party actually supported the creation of the Office of Religious Freedom. It did not just support it; it campaigned on that basis. I recall attending events at Coptic churches and elsewhere, where Liberal candidates who are now members of this place, and their former leader, stood up, saying they strongly supported the creation of the Office of Religious Freedom. What a canard to say one thing to those voters then and now to say another because it opposes their ideology.

The member raised a very important point about emphasizing the resettlement of refugees who are victims of persecution on the grounds of their religious convictions. When the previous government announced the creation of the Office of Religious Freedom, it also said that it would be seeking to prioritize the resettlement of vulnerable religious minorities who are refugees. The Prime Minister said that doing so is "disgusting".

Would the member care to comment on his view that people who have been bombed out of their homes, who cannot return because of their religion, who cannot go to the UN camps because they would be vulnerable minorities in those camps, ought to be considered as priority cases for the purposes of refugee resettlement?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Durham has 52 seconds.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Madam Speaker, I will use those seconds judiciously by first thanking the member for Calgary Midnapore. There has probably been no greater champion in the last decade-plus in this Parliament for freedoms of all kinds, and it is appreciated.

I think he has nailed it. The Prime Minister does not seem to understand that at the basic level the refugee and migrant crisis has a fundamental religious intolerance motif. If we do not promote a long-term strategy to address that, we are only going to see more dislocation, more violence.

While I have quoted former Liberal leaders in the House, I do not do that because I have joined the party; it is because they are moving the party. I think a lot of their own members who campaigned, as he said, in favour of this office, are now embarrassed that they are going to eliminate or dilute it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, when we talk about the Office of Religious Freedom, let me make it very clear that the Government of Canada is very much a very strong advocate and understands the importance of freedom of religion, of freedom of speech, of the many different freedoms that we as Canadians assign so much value and hold so close to our hearts.

It was the Liberal Party of Canada and Pierre Elliott Trudeau who brought in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We are a party of the charter of rights, so we do not need to be lectured by Conservatives about lacking faith in freedoms. It is the Liberal Party of Canada that understands the importance of religious freedom.

Earlier today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that we are committed to fighting for religious freedoms well into the future along with many other human rights.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 6:15 p.m. and this being the final supply day in the period ending March 26, 2016, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1835)

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on the motion.

Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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[Chair read text of motion to House]

• (1845)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 22)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeschen
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poillievre	Raït
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Wagh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 90

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)

Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardcastle
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendes
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Pauzé	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petipas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Schieffe	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Shanahan	Sheehan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms

Business of Supply

Sohi
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 225

Sorbara
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Christopherson
Cullen
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Gerretsen
Goodale
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Socurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Qualtrough
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara

Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Choquette
Cormier
Cuzner
Damoff
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Fuhr
Garrison
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Joly
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saarich—Gulf Islands)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Quach
Ramsey
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Schiefke
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Stetski

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2015-16

CONCURRENCE IN VOTE 1C—FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND REPORTS
ANALYSIS CENTRE OF CANADA

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.)
moved:

That Vote 1c, in the amount of \$127,996, under Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada—Program expenditures, in the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

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:

• (1855)

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

(Division No. 23)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arseneault
Ashton
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Benson
Bittle
Blair
Boissonnault
Boulerice
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes
Caron

Alghabra
Amos
Angus
Arya
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Bossio
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Cannings
Carr

Business of Supply

Stewart
Tan
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 216

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Barsalou-Duval
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Boudrias
Brown
Chong
Cooper
Diotte
Dreeshen
Falk
Finley
Gallant
Genius
Gladu
Gourde
Harper
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kitchen
Lake
Lebel
Liepert
Lukiwski
Maguire
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Rayes
Rempel
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Yurdiga

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bernier
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brassard
Carrie
Clarke
Deltell
Doherty
Egliniski
Fast
Fortin
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Hoback
Kelly
Kent
Kmiec
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Leitch
Lobb
MacKenzie
Marcil
McColeman
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Raiitt
Reid
Richards
Scheer
Shields
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer— 100

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.) moved:

That the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, except any vote disposed earlier today, be concurred in.

The Speaker: 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:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it you will find agreement to apply the result from the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting yea.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote with Conservative Party members voting no.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, but votes no.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees and votes no.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party also agrees and votes no.

● (1900)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 24*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brison
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry

Business of Supply

Fuhr	Garneau	Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones	Dusseault	Duvall
Goodale	Graham	Eglinski	Falk
Grewal	Hajdu	Fast	Finley
Hardie	Harvey	Fortin	Gallant
Hehr	Holland	Garrison	Généreux
Housefather	Hussen	Genuis	Gill
Hutchings	Iacono	Gladu	Godin
Joly	Jordan	Gourde	Hardcastle
Jowhari	Kang	Harder	Harper
Khalid	Khera	Hoback	Hughes
Lametti	Lamoureux	Jeneroux	Johns
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Julian	Kelly
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier	Kenney	Kent
Lefebvre	Lemieux	Kitchen	Kmiec
Leslie	Lightbound	Kwan	Lake
Lockhart	Long	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Longfield	Ludwig	Lebel	Leitch
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Liepert	Lobb
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	Lukiwski	MacGregor
May (Cambridge)	McCallum	MacKenzie	Maguire
McCrimmon	McDonald	Malcolmson	Marcil
McGuinty	McKay	Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès	McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendicino	Mihychuk	Moore	Mulcair
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)		Nantel	Nater
Monsef		Nicholson	Nuttall
Morneau	Morrissey	O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Murray	Nassif	Paupé	Plamondon
Nault	O'Connell	Poilievre	Quach
Oliphant	Oliver	Raitt	Ramsey
O'Regan	Ouellette	Rayes	Reid
Paradis	Peschisolido	Rempel	Richards
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor	Saganash	Sansoucy
Philpott	Picard	Saroya	Scheer
Poissant	Qualtrough	Schmale	Shields
Ratansi	Rioux	Sopuck	Stanton
Robillard	Rodriguez	Ste-Marie	Stetski
Romanado	Rota	Stewart	Strahl
Rudd	Ruimy	Stubbs	Sweet
Rusnak	Sahota	Thériault	Tilson
Saini	Sajjan	Trost	Trudel
Samson	Sangha	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Sarai	Schiefke	Vecchio	Viersen
Schulte	Serré	Wagantall	Warawa
Sgro	Shanahan	Warkentin	Watts
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Waugh	Webber
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand	Weir	Wong
Simms	Sohi	Yurdiga	Zimmer — 142
Sorbara	Tabbara		
Tan	Tassi		
Tootoo	Trudeau		
Vandal	Vandenbeld		
Vaughan	Virani		
Whalen	Wilkinson		
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj		
Young	Zahid — 174		

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion adopted.

Hon. Scott Brison moved that Bill C-8, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

[Translation]

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

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:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to apply the result from the previous vote to this vote.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 25)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey

Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Business of Supply

Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 174

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bemier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseauil	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieciak
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukivski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus

Business of Supply

Pauzé	Plamondon
Poilievre	Quach
Raitt	Ramsey
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

(On Clause 2)

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, the last time the President of the Treasury Board introduced a spending bill, he forgot the numbers, and were it not for the tender mercies of the compassionate official opposition that allowed the mistake to be overlooked, whole sections of the Government of Canada would have shut down and many public servants would have gone without a paycheque.

In light of that history, I wonder if the President of the Treasury Board can confirm this time if he has in fact read the bill and if it is in its normal form.

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want the House and the hon. member to know how much I appreciate his tenderness.

The form of this bill is the same as that passed in the previous supply period.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, I wonder if the House would forgive me if I am less tender this time.

The hon. member said that the form of the bill is the same as the last time. That is exactly what we were trying to avoid. I wonder if he would rise and correct himself.

• (1905)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, the bill is in the correct form. Again, I want to thank the hon. member for his understanding and kindness.

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 2 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall Schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill reported)

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it you will find agreement to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed

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

(Division No. 26)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion

Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block

Business of Supply

Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieciak
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poillievre	Quach
Raitt	Ramsey
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: 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:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to this vote.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, we agree. However, I ask that you withdraw the vote of the hon. NDP member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

● (1910)

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

(Division No. 27)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cornier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound

Business of Supply

Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Murray
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tan
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Morrissey
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Pescholido
 Petipas Taylor
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Rioux
 Rodrigue
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trudeau
 Vandenberg
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 174

Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Lebel
 Liepert
 Lukivski
 MacKenzie
 Marcl
 Mathysen
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Mulcair
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Paul-Hus
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Reid
 Richards
 Sansoucy
 Scheer
 Shields
 Stanton
 Stetski
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Wong
 Zimmer— 141

Laverdière
 Leitch
 Lobb
 MacGregor
 Maguire
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
 McColeman
 Moore
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Paupé
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Saganash
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Sopuck
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Stubbs
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Weir
 Yurdiga

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

[English]

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.)
 moved:

That this House do concur in Interim Supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding \$26,423,271,952.24 being composed of:

(1) three twelfths (\$16,107,779,167.50) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Proposed Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, except for those items below:

(2) eleven twelfths of the total of the amount of Treasury Board Secretariat Vote 5 and Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority Vote 1 (Schedule 1.1), of the said Estimates, \$885,490,674.75;

(3) nine twelfths of the total of the amount of Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote 5 (Schedule 1.2), of the said Estimates, \$51,517,939.50;

(4) eight twelfths of the total of the amount of Justice Vote 1 (Schedule 1.3), of the said Estimates, \$156,666,532.67;

(5) seven twelfths of the total of the amount of Canada Council for the Arts Vote 1, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Vote 1, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission Vote 1, Employment and Social Development Vote 5 and Public Health Agency of Canada Vote 10 (Schedule 1.4), of the said Estimates, \$1,239,132,300.58;

(6) six twelfths of the total of the amount of Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada Vote 1, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Vote 1, Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Vote 5, Health Vote 10, Security Intelligence Review Committee Vote 1 and Statistics Canada Vote 1 (Schedule 1.5), of the said Estimates, \$1,269,184,660.00;

(7) five twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Space Agency Vote 5, Citizenship and Immigration Vote 10, Industry Vote 10, Library of Parliament Vote 1, National Arts Centre Corporation Vote 1, National Battlefields Commission Vote 1 and Public Health Agency of Canada Vote 1 (Schedule 1.6), of the said Estimates, \$1,052,242,466.25;

NAYS

Members

Abouttaif
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Angus
 Ashton
 Barsalou-Duval
 Benson
 Bernier
 Blaikie
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Boulerice
 Brassard
 Brown
 Caron
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cooper
 Davies
 Diotte
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Eglinski
 Fast
 Fortin
 Garrison
 Genuis
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Harder
 Hoback
 Jeneroux
 Julian
 Kenney
 Kitchen
 Kwan

Albas
 Allison
 Anderson
 Arnold
 Barlow
 Beaulieu
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Block
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carrie
 Choquette
 Clarke
 Cullen
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Dreeschen
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Falk
 Finley
 Gallant
 Gagnéreux
 Gill
 Godin
 Hardcastle
 Harper
 Hughes
 Johns
 Kelly
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Lake

Business of Supply

(8) four twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Vote 1, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Vote 1, Canadian Space Agency Vote 10, Environment Vote 1, Finance Vote 1, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Votes 1 and 10, Industry Vote 1, Natural Resources Vote 1, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Vote 5, Public Service Commission Vote 1, Public Works and Government Services Vote 1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Vote 1, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Vote 5, Transport Vote 1 and Veterans Affairs Vote 1 (Schedule 1.7), of the said Estimates, \$5,661,258,210.99;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

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:

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it you will find agreement to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 28)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCourcey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry

Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskij
Young	Zahid— 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bemier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeschen

Business of Supply

Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseauult	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genuis	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysse	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Moore
Mulcair	Nantel
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Paupé
Plamondon	Poilievre
Quach	Raït
Ramsey	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Sopuck
Stanton	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 141	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Scott Brison moved that Bill C-9, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, be now read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

The Speaker: 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:

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is in agreement, with the addition, this time, of the vote of the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

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

(*Division No. 29*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald

Business of Supply

McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultatif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genois	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardcastle
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieć
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil

Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanic—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Moore	Mulcair
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Pauzé	Plamondon
Poilievre	Quach
Raitt	Ramsey
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saganash	Sansoucy
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Thériault	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Bruce Stanton in the chair)

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Chair, can the President of the Treasury Board confirm that the bill is returned in its usual form?

(On Clause 2)

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Chair, the portions requested in the bill are intended to provide for all necessary requirements of the federal public administration up to the second supply period in the fiscal year 2016-17. In no instance is the total amount of an item being released by the bill. The form of the bill is correct, and it is the same as that eventually passed in the previous supply period.

● (1915)

[Translation]

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

Business of Supply

(Clause 4 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.3 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.5 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1.7 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill reported)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: 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.

Business of Supply

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:

[English]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find agreement to apply the result of the previous vote to this vote.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 30)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bibeau	Bittle
Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chen	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Dion
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Freeland	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Lighbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès

Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Peterson	Petipas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Trudeau
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesniewski
Young	Zahid— 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Angus	Arnold
Ashton	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Beaulieu
Benson	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaikie	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brosseau
Brown	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cooper	Cullen
Davies	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Egliniski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Fortin	Gallant
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gill
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Hardeastle
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Hughes
Jeneroux	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kenney	Kent
Kitchen	Kmieci
Kwan	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Laverdière
Lebel	Leitch
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)

Business of Supply

Moore
Nantel
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Raitt
Rayes
Rempel
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Reid
Richards
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Scott Brison moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: 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:

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote.

[*English*]

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 31*)

YEAS

Members

Aldag

Alghabra

Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Beech
Bibeau
Blair
Bossio
Breton
Caesar-Chavannes
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chen
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
El-Khoury
Eyking
Fergus
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Freeland
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goodale
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hutchings
Joly
Jowhari
Khalid
Lametti
Lapointe
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
May (Cambridge)
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Murray
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tan
Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan

Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bennett
Bittle
Boissonnault
Bratina
Brison
Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyolfson
Fillmore
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garneau
Goldsmith-Jones
Graham
Hajdu
Harvey
Holland
Hussen
Iacono
Jordan
Kang
Khera
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Petipas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudeau
Vandenbeld
Virani

Business of Supply

Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 174

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Angus
Ashton
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Bernier
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Caron
Chong
Christopherson
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Egliniski
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Genius
Gladu
Gourde
Harder
Hoback
Jeneroux
Julian
Kenney
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)
Lebel
Liepert
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Moore
Nantel
Nicholson
O'Toole
Pauzé
Poilievre
Raitt
Rayes
Rempel
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Cannings
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cullen
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk
Finley
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Hardcastle
Harper
Hughes
Johns
Kelly
Kent
Kmieć
Lake
Laverdière
Leitch
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Reid
Richards
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Stanton
Stetski
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer— 142

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from March 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-6, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to another Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-6.

● (1920)

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it, you would find agreement to apply the result from the previous vote to this vote, with Liberal members voting yea.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote, with Conservative Party members voting no.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to applying the vote and votes yes.

Mr. Luc Thériault: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois agrees to applying the vote and votes in favour of the motion.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party agrees and is also voting yes.

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

(Division No. 32)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé

Business of Supply

Dubourg
 Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Garneau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Lebouthillier
 Lemieux
 Lighbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marciel
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 Mathysen
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peschisolido
 Petipas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Ratansi
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schulte
 Sgro
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen

Duclos
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Freeland
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)

May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Pauzé
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Schiefke
 Serré
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudeau
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson

Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid— 226

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Arnold
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Block
 Brassard
 Carrie
 Clarke
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Eglinski
 Fast
 Gallant
 Genuis
 Godin
 Harder
 Hoback
 Kelly
 Kent
 Kmiec
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
 Leitch
 Lobb
 MacKenzie
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Nicholson
 O'Toole
 Poilievre
 Rayes
 Rempel
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Sopuck
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Viersen
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Yurdiga

Albas
 Allison
 Anderson
 Barlow
 Bernier
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Brown
 Chong
 Cooper
 Diotte
 Dreeschen
 Falk
 Finley
 Généreux
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Harper
 Jeneroux
 Kenney
 Kitchen
 Lake
 Lebel
 Liepert
 Lukiwski
 Maguire
 McColeman
 Nater
 Nuttall
 Paul-Hus
 Raitt
 Reid
 Richards
 Scheer
 Shields
 Stanton
 Stubbs
 Tilson
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Wong
 Zimmer— 90

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from March 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, an act to amend the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-2.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent to apply the results from the previous vote to this vote.

Business of Supply

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I hate to interrupt votes for clarification, but I thought we were voting on Bill C-6. However, I heard you call Bill C-2 and I do not want to vote the wrong way. I just want a clarification.

The Speaker: It is Bill C-2 and if I said Bill C-6, I apologize, but I do not think so. The vote is on Bill C-2.

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

(Division No. 33)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	Davies
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Donnelly
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault
Duvall	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Garrison
Gerretsen	Gill
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Harcastle
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Johns
Joly	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield

Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Malcolmson	Maloney
Marcel	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saaneich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Moore
Morneau	Morrissey
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Pauzé
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Plamondon
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Ramsey
Ratansi	Rioux
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Schieffe
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Ste-Marie
Stetski	Stewart
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Tootoo	Trudeau
Trudel	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 226

NAYS

Members

Aboutaif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Carrie	Chong
Clarke	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Eglinski	Falk
Fast	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Harper
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Kmieci	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Leitch	Liepert
Lobb	Lukiwski
MacKenzie	Maguire
McCaughey (Edmonton West)	McColeman

Adjournment Proceedings

McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Raitt
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Sopuck	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 90

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

• (1925)

[*English*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to rise in this House. This is the first time in quite a long time that I have had an adjournment proceeding. Therefore, I will enjoy the opportunity.

I see that the parliamentary secretary is here. I know we will have a vigorous and interesting exchange for the next few minutes.

I will not take up my full four minutes this evening. I just have a few follow-up points that I would like to touch on since my original question a few weeks back.

As members know, in western Canada the issue around the construction of pipelines is still of great importance. We know that the energy sector is still suffering. There are forces that are beyond our control here in Canada with respect to the price of oil, and that is having a negative effect all over Alberta and Saskatchewan.

However, there are a few things that the government could do to help stimulate that sector of the economy, and indeed stimulate the economy as a whole all across the country. One of those things is the energy east pipeline. It is a shovel-ready infrastructure project that would not require a cent of taxpayer dollars but would get thousands of people back to work and provide a better price for western Canadian energy products. Sadly, the Liberals are ideologically opposed to it and have put additional hurdles in the way. In addition, they have also announced their intention to bring in a carbon tax to force every jurisdiction in Canada to comply with the federal government's vision of making Canadians pay more.

In Saskatchewan, Premier Brad Wall has wisely refused to do this. He has resisted the groupthink that has emerged among politicians on the left that this is some kind of a solution to the problem. I am certainly not aware of a jurisdiction in Canada that has seen a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions that can at all be attributed to a carbon tax. It is a revenue source for the government. It is a way for it to fund its agenda, but it does not do anything for the economy.

What I would like to find out from my hon. friend tonight is this: will the Liberals apply their same failed logic to other aspects of the Canadian economy?

We know that pipelines are the safest, most environmentally friendly way to transport oil in our country. However, the Liberals have said in their new NEB program that they will calculate upstream greenhouse gas emissions as part of the overall analysis of any pipeline application. Are they planning to do that with respect to other areas? If there are any investments with respect to ports, will they calculate upstream and perhaps even downstream GHG emissions from port construction? If there are any federal infrastructure investments in rail, will they do that same calculation? Will they calculate the greenhouse gas emissions that may be attributed to those projects to determine if it would have an effect on the overall application?

We know that the Liberals are seriously contemplating a bailout of Bombardier while blocking private sector solutions, such as the expansion of the Toronto island airport or lifting the foreign investment cap in the aerospace sector. Will they also look at the greenhouse gas emissions that would go into the construction of airplanes and jets in our aerospace industry? Fundamentally, will they treat the energy and pipeline sectors fairly? Will they apply those same standards to other federal investments and infrastructure projects around the country?

• (1930)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I share some common background with the hon. member. I grew up in Saskatchewan. I spent my formative years there. Other than my home province, it is a province that I know well and love very much.

Canadians, in particular western Canadians, know that reducing greenhouse gas emissions will make our economy more competitive, not less competitive. Our government knows that growing the economy and protecting our environment go hand in hand. Combatting climate change represents an enormous economic opportunity, one that other countries are already taking advantage of.

The growth rate for the global clean-tech sector over the past several years has been in excess of 10% per year. However, Canada's share of the clean-tech market has fallen considerably due to the decade of inaction and obfuscation on the part of the previous federal government.

Our government is providing national leadership, by working with the provinces and territories to take action on climate change, including putting a price on carbon. We strongly believe in the power of market-based solutions, such as carbon pricing, to deliver meaningful results in reducing our emissions, while growing our economy.

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To create jobs in industries of the future, our government will make investments in green innovation, clean technology, and sustainable infrastructure.

This is an area of the economy I know well, having spent almost 20 years as a senior executive in the clean-tech sector. With the development and implementation of an effective clean-tech strategy, this can be a source of enormous economic opportunity for Canada and Canadians.

Our government intends to leverage carbon pricing, in combination with these investments in green infrastructure and clean technologies, to position Canada as a leader in green technologies.

Carbon pricing policies help to minimize the cost of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They provide a continuous incentive for technological innovation. They achieve significant emission reductions and they provide consumers and industry with certainty and flexibility. This is particularly important in western Canada, where energy producing firms are looking to government to provide them with a clear and consistent framework.

Energy companies in western Canada have already acknowledged this, and many are already utilizing a price on carbon in their investment decisions. For example, Suncor CEO Steve Williams recently said, "We think a broad-based carbon price is the right answer."

Our government is working to ensure that Canada takes effective action on climate change, including carbon pricing. Earlier this month in Vancouver the Prime Minister, the premiers and territorial leaders met and agreed to work together on carbon pricing mechanisms suited to provincial and territorial economies across Canada. I should note that already 80% of Canadians live in jurisdictions that have or will soon have an effective price on carbon.

The momentum behind carbon pricing is now being echoed by many thoughtful leaders across Canada, including many prominent Conservatives. The Leader of the Ontario Conservative Party recently stated, "Climate change is a fact. It is a threat. It is manmade...we have to do something about it, and that something includes putting a price on carbon."

Mark Cameron, a former policy adviser to Prime Minister Harper, also underlined the power of carbon pricing in a free market, saying, "As most free-market economists recognize, the most effective way to reduce emissions is to price them."

It is clear that the failed approach of the previous government, which did its best to ignore climate change, did not work for the Canadian economy or for the environment.

Our government knows that a steady transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy is necessary for our collective prosperity, and economic growth. Taking smart and effective action today is essential to building a sustainable economy in western Canada and in Canada overall.

Implementing an effective climate change strategy, including carbon pricing, will put Canada, and Canadian companies, at the forefront of the global clean growth economy. It will result in new technology innovation, open up access to new markets, reduce

emissions and will generate good paying, long-term jobs for Canadians.

●(1935)

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I have a couple of follow-ups on the member's answer.

He mentioned that he was an executive in the clean-tech sector. Could he tell the House how much money his company got from public subsidies? We know in Ontario that the Kathleen Wynne example is that lots of high-tech executives got very rich off the taxpayers dollars without doing a thing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

He talked about how 80% of Canadians lived in jurisdictions with a carbon tax. That is no reason to make the other 20% do it. When I was a child, if I said that most of my friends were jumping off a bridge, my mom would not tell me to jump off a bridge with them. She would tell me to stay dry, and that is what we are saying over here.

Let us free those 80%. Let us work together to free those people trapped in our country under a provincial government that has a carbon tax. There is no reason to impose on the common sense people of Saskatchewan who have time and time again called on their elected officials to reject this kind of new tax. There is no reason to force them to do it.

It is not a market mechanism. It is not a market solution. Where is the market demanding an extra tax? I do not get phone calls from people in the market asking for more taxes. They want taxes lowered in our country.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Madam Speaker, in response to some of the comments and questions raised by the hon. member, I would simply say that one of the fundamental divides that exist in this House is that there is a party over here that actually believes that climate change is an issue and it needs to be addressed; and on that side of the House we have a party that actually does not believe that climate change is a problem.

This government has developed a comprehensive strategy, one that actually would allow us to grow the economy by addressing our global responsibilities to address climate change in a constructive way.

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to further inquire into the long wait times to process family reunification applications.

First, I would like to ask the government this. When does IRCC start counting processing time for a parent-grandparent sponsorship case?

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Mr. Arif Virani (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question and for her concern about immigration processing times.

IRCC looks at the processing times from the outset of when the application is actually filed. It is important to track that, because this is something that has been identified by the minister as a serious issue that he is devoting his priorities and his time to addressing. He described this in the House in his original response to my friend's question a few months back as a "mess" that was left as the legacy of the previous government, because it basically depleted the resources of the department, allowing waiting times to mushroom and balloon such that we are now in a situation where they have ballooned to the point where families are being unjustly treated. What we are trying to do is bring down those waiting times, and we are doing that in a number of respects.

In the first instance, we have a government that has tabled our immigration levels and we are responding to the levels by beefing up the number of family class applicants that can come in. It used to be at a 5,000-applicant level, and we have increased that to 10,000 applicants per year. That is particularly for parents and grandparents. It goes to some of the concerns that have been expressed by the opposition critic for the NDP, because it relates to the need to address family reunification as an important priority.

In that regard, we understand that families need to be reunified, because it is morally correct but also because it is an economic imperative. That is why we made that commitment during the campaign, and we have upheld that commitment already. We realize that people who come in as part of the family-reunification category both represent caregivers to children who might exist in those families and also represent a means of economic liberation for other people who are within those families. In providing care, a grandparent allows the mother or father in a family unit to, for example, seek work on his or her own. We also recognize that people who come in under family reunification, and come in quickly, are able to participate in the workforce themselves.

We recognize this, as a government. Groups around the country, including people and agencies in the member's riding of Vancouver East, recognize this. People in my riding of Parkdale—High Park recognize this. People like those at the Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, at Kababayan Multicultural Centre, and at the Canadian Ukrainian Immigrant Aid Society on Bloor Street West are all working hard to get people here quicker in terms of family reunification, and to integrate them once they have arrived. It is a very important objective.

On another front, we are addressing the need for family reunification and the processing times, by addressing the need for further work permits. There is a pilot project that has been in place to allow open work permits for all eligible applicants under the spousal category. We have renewed that pilot project, again recognizing that not only do we need spouses to be here, but we need to give them a vehicle for working.

The last point is that we are also working on citizenship applications and the processing times that relate there too. We are committing to new applications. New applications are currently

being processed within a 12-month time frame. That is because our view of citizenship is that we should facilitate it, rather than create obstacles toward citizenship.

It is a complete divergence of views from the previous government, because we believe the ultimate integration and success of newcomers, including the family members of those newcomers, is signalled by their attainment of citizenship. It produces better economic outcomes and better health outcomes, is better for the newcomers, and is better for Canada.

● (1940)

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the processing time for such applications is counted from the time the local embassies receive the transfer application rather than from the time the application is received in Canada at the Mississauga case processing centre. On that basis, it takes, on average, five years from the time the application is submitted to the time the application is transferred to a local embassy. In total, the application actually takes about 10 years for it to be processed.

The Prime Minister said during the campaign that the wait time now to bring parents and grandparents to Canada was almost four years on average. If their family lives in China, Pakistan, the Philippines, or Indian, they can expect to wait five, or six years or more. In actuality, the processing time for such applications is much longer, so it is deceptive.

I wonder if the government will actually correct the processing time so people know the true number to that. As well, for inland spousal applications, will the government commit to reducing the application time to six months for those applications so they do not have to wait for such a long time to be reunited with their family members?

Mr. Arif Virani: Madam Speaker, in response again to my colleague's question, and I appreciate her passion on this issue and her sincerity in trying to address family reunification and the processing times in particular, there are definitely concerns with certain processing posts abroad. Certain parts of the world have slower processing times than others. The minister, the ministry, myself, and the government are working on correcting this. The minister himself will be taking a trip in the latter part of this year to visit places like the processing centres in India, China, and the Philippines to try to address some of those inequities.

In terms of the processing times abroad, they are in the area of approximately four years, and inland, they are in the area of approximately two years. We have committed before, we are committing again to addressing processing times for family reunification. It is vitally important for this government, it is vitally important for Canadians, and it is vitally important for the families of newcomers. Spouses should be reunited, and parents and grandparents should be reunited with their children and grandchildren. That is what we are working toward. With the member opposite's help, that is what we will achieve.

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[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rose in the House on February 2, 2016, in order to ask the minister what he planned to do to fix the internal errors made by the Social Security Tribunal of Canada. I asked my question in response to the Auditor General's report, which was released that same day. Although the minister said that he was going to do whatever it took to fix the problem, the Auditor General's report indicates that there are numerous internal deficiencies.

Nevertheless, there is one problem that really stands out, and that is the mismanagement of the Social Security Tribunal. According to the Auditor General's report, wait times at the tribunal have reached 900 days. That is nearly three years. That is twice as long as the wait times identified in the Auditor General's 2015 report. I would like to remind members that the Social Security Tribunal was created to make the appeal process faster and more efficient. How ironic. The reality is quite the opposite with wait times of three years.

The tribunal is making things more complicated and difficult for people. I hear the same comments every week in my riding. Since the Social Security Tribunal was created, unemployed workers in my region have been forced to jump through many hoops. It is not uncommon for people to have to wait several months before their case is heard before the general division of the Social Security Tribunal. If the tribunal does not rule in their favour, the process begins again. Unemployed workers have to file an appeal before the tribunal's appeal division, and we are once again talking about a wait time of several months before their case is heard, and that is the best-case scenario.

The wait times are long, much too long. Meanwhile, unemployed workers are not getting any employment insurance benefits. None. How can people in my riding and other ridings across the country feed their families under such circumstances? It is impossible and even unthinkable.

However, the Social Security Tribunal is not the only one at fault. The department is to blame too. The bureaucracy within the tribunal is massive. Applications are needlessly complex and can take months to complete. As a result, people keep waiting and waiting. People who are disabled or seriously ill and in urgent need of financial help are kept waiting while their files are processed. Once again, administrative and management problems are having a negative impact on society's most vulnerable people.

This is an alarming crisis for the federal government. Many Quebeckers and Canadians suffer every day because of this. People are tired and fed up, and they simply no longer trust the federal government. The government must find a solution to regain the trust of Quebeckers and Canadians. The Social Security Tribunal is a major fiasco.

Although the Prime Minister announced a new approach for appointments, for the time being, we have no guarantee that service standards will be met in the future. I remind members that during the election campaign, the current Prime Minister promised to expand access and lower premiums if he was elected, and he said that workers would pay more than they did under the previous

government but would receive more services in return. That is not what we are seeing. We are calling on this government to quickly process Canadians' applications.

● (1945)

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot regarding her concern for Canadians appealing decisions through the Social Security Tribunal, especially those waiting for disability benefits. I share her concern.

The recent report from the Auditor General highlighted some challenges with the Social Security Tribunal and the appeals process for some of our most vulnerable Canadians. Let me be clear. We are extremely concerned with the findings and we are working hard to improve the process, both for those currently appealing decisions and for future appellants.

My colleague the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development has already stated that we are working closely with the Social Security Tribunal to do so. He has already asked his department to implement an action plan that would address all of the recommendations of the AG's report. It is critical that we get this right for the people who need it most. It is our responsibility as Canadians to offer support when it is most needed.

The Canada pension plan disability program and employment insurance were created to support Canadians facing a difficult time in life. We need to make sure they can get the benefits they are entitled to when they need them.

● (1950)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear that the minister wants to implement all of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report, but we are talking about vulnerable people who are currently waiting for months.

How can these people be helped now? I am rather sick of hearing that the government will help them. That is what the government keeps telling me, but what I want to know is how these people who are waiting will be helped tomorrow.

[English]

Mr. Terry Duguid: Madam Speaker, let there be no doubt that we on this side of the House share the hon. member's concern. We know we have work to do to improve the process for appealing benefit decisions.

No Canadian should be left hanging without a decision about the benefits to which they are entitled. That is why we are working closely with the Social Security Tribunal to implement changes to the system to make it easier for both current and future appellants.

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We take the Auditor General's findings very seriously. We have already begun the work to simplify and improve the way benefit decisions are made. Canadians should be able to get the support they need, and we will ensure that they do.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:52 p.m.)

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