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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, June 9, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 9, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

COMMISSIONER OF LOBBYING

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table, pursuant to section 11 of the Lobbying Act, the 2015-16 annual report of the Commissioner of Lobbying for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

* * *

[*English*]

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: Pursuant to paragraph 90(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House the annual report of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner in relation to the Conflict of Interest Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2016.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NUNAVUT IMPLEMENTATION PANEL

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2011-12 annual report of the Nunavut Implementation Panel.

* * *

[*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 24 petitions.

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-18, An Act to amend the Rouge National Urban Park Act, the Parks Canada Agency Act and the Canada National Parks Act.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Special Committee on Pay Equity, entitled "It's Time to Act".

[*Translation*]

INDUSTRY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in relation to the supplementary estimates 2016-17.

* * *

•(1005)

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-288, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (special benefits).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that would amend the Employment Insurance Act, to extend the maximum period for which special benefits for catastrophic illness, injury, or quarantine may be paid from 15 to 50 weeks.

This bill was inspired by Natalie Thomas, a cancer survivor from Coquitlam, whose story inspired this legislation and highlighted the changes needed to the Employment Insurance Act. Natalie was recovering from breast cancer surgery and was forced to return to work because her EI sick benefits ran out.

Canadians like Natalie who have suffered a serious illness should not be forced to go back to work too early. They should be able to focus on getting well and not having their health compromised by—

Routine Proceedings

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

The Speaker: I would remind hon. members that first reading is the time to explain the gist of what the bill is about and not to make arguments for the bill. I thank the hon. member for presenting his bill.

* * *

[*Translation*]

**CANADIAN OPTIMIST MOVEMENT AWARENESS DAY
ACT**

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-289, An Act to establish Canadian Optimist Movement Awareness Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to stand today to ask the House to establish Canadian Optimist movement awareness day, which would be the first Thursday in February. The movement began in 1924 and now has nearly 600 clubs across Canada, each of which helps about 80 young people. This movement helps our young people flourish, nurtures their talents, and recognizes their progress. I hope that many Canadians will join the movement and that this day will be established.

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

* * *

[*English*]

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, commencing on Monday, June 13, 2016, and concluding on Thursday, June 23, 2016, at any time a Minister of the Crown proposes without notice a motion “That the hour of adjournment for the current sitting day shall be midnight”, it be deemed adopted, provided that: a) the motion is neither moved after 4:30 p.m., nor on a Friday; and b) the Order of the Day called for the period of time beyond the ordinary hour of adjournment only be a motion for the consideration of Senate amendments under Government Orders.

The Speaker: Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today.

The first petition is from residents of Saskatchewan and Ontario. The second is from nearly 400 residents from Ontario and British Columbia.

The petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to draft legislation that will include adequate safeguards for vulnerable Canadians, especially those with mental health challenges, to provide clear conscience protection for health care workers and institutions, and to protect children and those under age 18 from physician-assisted suicide.

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by residents from the town of Slave Lake in my riding.

In previous Parliaments, members of this House strongly rejected assisted suicide and supported better palliative care.

As such these petitioners call on the Parliament of Canada to adopt the strongest possible legislation against legalization of assisted suicide and euthanasia, and instead establish a national strategy on palliative care.

● (1010)

SECURITY CERTIFICATES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise this morning to present two petitions.

The first one deals with an ongoing issue of human rights and civil liberties in this country, and that is the use of security certificates.

The petitioners ask the Parliament to abolish the security certificate process, and for those currently detained under security certificates, the petitioners request the certificates be removed and that they be allowed to defend themselves in open, fair, and independent trials, and that they not be deported.

CBC/RADIO-CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the issue, which I believe the new government is committed to improving, of the lack of adequate funding to our national public broadcaster.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present two petitions focused on fair electoral representation. Approximately 140 residents in my riding and the Waterloo region have signed these petitions. They call on the House of Commons to immediately undertake public consultations across Canada to amend the Canada Elections Act. I am pleased to be working alongside the Minister of Democratic Institutions in her leadership to ensure that Canadians from coast to coast to coast are being consulted.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ISIS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC) moved:

That the House agree that ISIS is responsible for: (a) crimes against humanity aimed at groups such as Christians, Yazidis, and Shia Muslims, as well as other religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq; (b) utilizing rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving women and girls; and (c) targeting gays and lesbians who have been tortured and murdered; and, as a consequence, that the House strongly condemn these atrocities and declare that these crimes constitute genocide.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to the Conservative motion calling on this House to recognize the actions of ISIS as genocide.

[English]

I will be splitting my time with the member for Thornhill, who has for many years been an advocate for human rights.

As we all know, this past Monday marked the 72nd anniversary of D-Day and the allied landing at Normandy. Every year on June 6, we take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices of the Canadian troops, generations past, all in the name of stopping a tyrannical and bloodthirsty regime.

World War II saw the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism across much of the western world. Our troops fought valiantly for Canada, but they also fought to put an end to the horrors that were being inflicted across Europe by the Nazi regime through the Holocaust.

It was a campaign of genocide and is rightly recognized as such. Since that time, Canada and our allies have made a solemn commitment to never forget, and we recommit ourselves to that promise every year.

[Translation]

A commitment to remember also requires a commitment to act. Let there be no mistake: there is a need to act once more now. The terrorist group ISIS continues to leave a trail of destruction across an already unstable Middle East, and thousands of innocent lives have paid the price.

[English]

It is sometimes easy to forget how real the ISIS threat is, protected as we are here in Canada where we enjoy relative peace and prosperity.

Yet as we speak, the brutal, jihadist terrorist regime known as ISIS is systematically exterminating Christians, Assyrians, Yazidis, Shia Muslims, and countless other religious minorities in Syria and Iraq. They have tortured and beheaded children. They have raped women and sold them into sexual slavery.

There is a word for this kind of deliberate slaughter of specific groups of innocent people. It is genocide.

This campaign of genocide is waged against some of the most ancient and most venerable peoples of the world, many of whom can trace their heritage well into antiquity.

They have for many years lived as small, defenceless minorities; in fact, for centuries. They have faced prejudice and persecution before, but the strength of their faiths and communities kept them together in their historic homelands. Against the vicious onslaught of ISIS, however, they must leave or face enslavement and certain death.

Stories coming out of Iraq are chilling. ISIS has set up so-called sex-slave markets where girls literally have their teeth checked before being sold on the market. We just heard this week about another 19 Yazidi girls who were burned alive because they refused to become sex slaves.

● (1015)

[Translation]

The girls are regularly beaten, whipped, burned, and raped. This is both disturbing and heartbreaking. In 2016, it cannot be tolerated.

[English]

Not only is ISIS committing unspeakable crimes against humanity, it has deliberately destroyed dozens of ancient churches, mosques, temples, and monasteries, looting the artifacts within them for sale on the black market.

Irina Bokova, director-general of UNESCO, has called this despicable vandalism “cultural cleansing”. It is an attempt to erase these communities from history by demolishing the most cherished symbols of their past.

ISIS has a simple goal: to create a new reality in its image across the Middle East and to wage war against the west, including Canada. Yet, under the current government, Canada has only been committed to half-measures.

The previous Conservative government was part of an allied effort to bring the fight to ISIS through an effective and forceful air strike campaign, halting its progress and severely depleting its resources. Sadly, under the current government, that effort was withdrawn. Canadians are still looking for an explanation as to why.

[Translation]

We can strengthen Canada’s response to this terrible threat being visited upon innocent men, women and children by calling ISIS’ actions what they truly are: an act of genocide.

[English]

Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs has avoided calling these actions genocide. He has said in the House of Commons that he wants to investigate whether a genocide has taken place. I do not know what more he needs to see.

While the minister stalls, our allies are moving forward.

In the U.S., the Secretary of State John Kerry has said, clearly, that ISIS is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control. In fact, on March 15, the United States House of Representatives unanimously declared that genocide was taking place in Iraq and Syria by ISIS.

Business of Supply

The House of Commons in the United Kingdom also has followed suit and voted unanimously to recognize that Christians, Yazidis, and other ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria were suffering genocide at the hands of ISIS.

The European Union has also declared this a genocide.

Even the United Nations has made its voice heard. UN investigators have accused ISIS of committing genocide. Their evidence clearly suggests that ISIS intends to destroy the Yazidi as a group.

In just one example, the UN found that ISIS fighters rounded up hundreds of Yazidi men over age the age of 14 and summarily executed them.

[Translation]

The previous Conservative government also recognized the actions of ISIS as genocide.

[English]

Let us be absolutely clear. It is a dark spot on Canada's record that the Prime Minister and his government cannot gather the moral courage to name the threat that has driven families from their homes, seen women and girls sold into sexual slavery, or murdered outright, and forced thousands of innocent people into refugee camps.

Yet, the other side of the House remains silent on this issue. It remains silent, in particular, on the case of the persecution of young Yazidi girls who have been subjected to horrifying campaigns of sexual abuse and slavery. Despite all the government's photo ops and press conferences, it forgets to mention that only nine cases of Yazidi families have been processed since Canada's refugee plan was put in place. Only those few Yazidis have found safe haven in Canada, while many thousands more remain at risk of ISIS brutality. Its silence is just as bewildering to Canadians and as insulting to our allies as the Prime Minister's unjustified decision to withdraw Canada's fighter jets from the air campaign.

With no explanation coming, we are only left to conclude that the Prime Minister's inaction is in fact a political manoeuvre, not one of principle.

There are times when we must call things as they are. Today, we are witnessing an ongoing campaign to wipe these ancient nations from the face of the Earth. There is no more fitting description for these terrible acts than to declare them genocide.

Having made this declaration, I invite all members of the House to reflect on what must be done to stop this genocide and whether Canada is doing its utmost to this end.

• (1020)

[Translation]

Now is the time for all 338 members of the House of Commons to stand up and be counted on, including the members opposite.

[English]

I ask them to do the right thing and vote in favour of this motion, and declare this a genocide.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that excellent depiction of the horror going on right now at the hands of ISIL. What responsibility does she feel to the International Criminal Court?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, it is not surprising that Canada is now one of the only countries in the western world that has not declared this a genocide, and the member stands and starts talking about legalese. This is an issue of morality, it is an issue of moral courage, and this is the Liberals' answer to us? It is unbelievable.

The member has an opportunity to stand with all the members of the U.S. House of Representatives, all the members of the U.K. House of Commons, and members of the E.U. Parliament. What is stopping the government from calling this a genocide? What more do the Liberals possibly need to see?

The sad part is that ISIS does not do this stuff in secret. It does not do it in stealth. It is on YouTube. The whole world can see what is happening, and the government is turning a blind eye to it.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised to hear the member brush this off as legalese, as though it were not important.

Hon. members will recall that the former prime minister said that we need not concern ourselves with international law because ISIL did not have lawyers. However, international law is our best guarantee for security.

Accordingly, I would like to ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who mentioned the British Parliament's motion, among other things, whether she agrees that they should have also included in their motion a reference to the Security Council, or the International Criminal Court. Would that not have improved the motion?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the Yazidi girls cannot file a petition and they cannot hire a lawyer to defend them.

Here is the opportunity for people who are elected representatives to stand and take a moral position in parliaments of western democracies, just like the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.K., and the E.U. Canada was always a country that would step up first. People are asking why Canada is almost the last country in the western world to declare this a genocide.

Yes, there will be debates about what obligations Canada will have if we call this a genocide, but what is stopping the government from taking the moral decision? Where is the Liberals' moral clarity on this issue? What are they waiting to find out? What more do they need to know before they call this a genocide?

• (1025)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have withdrawn our CF-18s. We prefer to leave the heavy lifting to our allies. I want to hear our leader talk about the way we have withdrawn our CF-18s.

Business of Supply

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has crossed my mind is that the government is uncomfortable with calling this a genocide because it would have to explain why it has not done more. The Liberals are not doing more. In fact, they are now doing less. They withdrew our CF-18s. They are not part of the bombing combat mission to degrade and destroy ISIS, which is this genocidal cult, murdering thousands of people, beheading children, enslaving women and girls. We just heard last week about 19 girls being burned alive because they refused to be sex slaves. I do not know what more the Liberals need.

If the House declares this a genocide, yes, there may be consequences and, yes, Canada may have to do more. However, what is wrong with that? Is that not what we want to do?

Let us all support the motion, and then let us have a debate about what Canada does next. What do we do next to make a difference?

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to support the motion by the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland.

It is tragically incredible that in 2016 any minister in any country that considers itself a democracy, committed to the rule of law and recognizing the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide refuses to speak the word that specifically and powerfully defines what has been happening in full sight, and has been horrifically documented in Syria and Iraq for years now. It is the brutal persecution of any and all who refuse to convert to the Islamic state's perverse interpretation of Islam, kidnapping, sexual enslavement, rape, torture, mass murder, in other words, genocide.

Today we have heard, and I suspect will hear many more times, convoluted attempts from the government side to excuse Liberal ministers from uttering that word. More than seven decades after the word was created from Greek and Latin roots, the Greek word *genos* for race or tribe and the Latin word *cide* for killing, lexicologists, diplomats, politicians and ordinary people have quibbled and quarrelled over a precise meaning and when it should be applied.

The House passed a motion unanimously just last year, put by the former Conservative member of Parliament Brad Butt, that reaffirmed recognition of four genocides of the 20th century: the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the Ukrainian Holodomor and the Rwandan genocide. However, many of us felt that motion fell short of recognizing all of the 20th century genocides, such as the Great Chinese Famine, Cambodia's Khmer Rouge killing fields, Srebrenica, and Darfur, to reference several yet unrecognized genocides. Now we have Syria and Iraq and the so-called self-proclaimed Islamic state.

The evidence is overwhelming. The most clearly defined instance is the massive atrocities committed on the minority communities of Nineveh province in northern Iraq. Before June 2014, Nineveh was Iraq's most diverse province. The ethnic and religious minorities included the Yazidis, the Assyrian Chaldean Christians, the Sabaeo-Mandaeans, the Shia Shabak, Turkmen, and the Kaka'i. More than 800,000 men, women and children were forced from their homes and communities. Shrines, temples and churches were systematically destroyed. Many thousands were killed in barely three months, and the slaughter has continued since.

In September last year, during the Canadian election campaign, the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide conducted a bearing witness expedition to Iraq. The group documented the brutal forcible displacement, forced religious conversion, rape, torture, kidnapping and murder. Just to explain for the House what the Simon-Skjoldt Center is, it conducts work on genocide and related crimes against humanity for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Simon-Skjoldt Center is dedicated to stimulating timely global action to prevent genocide where possible and to, as it states, "catalyze an international response when it occurs."

In August 2014, the report found that more than 200,000 Yazidis were surrounded on Mount Sinjar without food and water. Another 50,000 were isolated and captured by Islamic state terrorists. Only have U.S. humanitarian food drops and bombing raids created a safe corridor for escape was the siege of Mount Sinjar ended.

● (1030)

Detailed testimony, recorded by the genocide expedition, was given by refugees in Iraq's internally displaced persons camps and those at large in the area.

One man's quoted testimony in the expedition's report characterizes, I believe, the Islamic State's campaign of forced exile and actual extinction. "We have no future", he said, "Our generation has gone".

The Simon-Skjoldt genocide report, and it is a report I would suggest all members of this House read for its well-documented detail of what has happened under Islamic State's brutality, concludes with the statement:

...our belief is that [Islamic State] perpetrated genocide against the Yezidi people.

The next sentence is one that will be debated, I know, throughout the day today, but the next sentence is the sentence the Liberal government has been hiding behind. The sentence says:

Any formal determination of whether genocide was perpetrated needs to be made by a court based on careful consideration of the evidence.

That is exactly what has not happened. It has not happened as Islamic State has continued to perpetrate genocide and crimes against humanity ever since, and still today.

The International Criminal Court will not, on its own, initiate proceedings to consider and declare Islamic State guilty of genocide. The ICC must first be directed by the United Nations Security Council to act. Because of veto dysfunction on the Security Council, and the blockage of such genocide and crimes against humanity resolutions by Russia and China, repeatedly, none of the democracies on the Security Council have bothered to put such a motion regarding Islamic State.

Business of Supply

As a bit of an aside, this is just another powerful reason to shake up, to renovate, to recreate the United Nations to be the international institution it was originally created to be and is so often not today.

However, and this is a point we will argue through the day today, the inability of the United Nations to direct the International Court to act should not be used by sovereign democracies like Canada to not meet our individual responsibility to speak the g-word out loud and to take the necessary action with like-minded countries.

We know well, and we heard from the Leader of the Opposition, the list of those who have spoken out. Our mother Parliament, the British House of Commons, voted unanimously to define Islamic State action as genocide. So too the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the Vatican, the U.S. House of Representatives, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, the U.S. Secretary of State, the council of bishops in Europe, and others, and there are more, almost by the month, have dared to speak the word the Liberal government refuses to say.

In conclusion, I would urge all colleagues, across parties, to stand today and support the motion put by the member for Sturgeon River—Parkland to declare that this House strongly condemns the atrocities and declares these crimes to be genocide.

• (1035)

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is incumbent upon all of us in this House to recognize that we all recognize the horrible atrocities being committed by Daesh in the region. All of us understand this and take this to heart. Canada stands by the people who are suffering and the people who have been innocently victimized horrifically by Daesh.

However, it is also important to remember that Canada does not operate within a vacuum. We operate within an international community. There is the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court, institutions that were put in place precisely because of a genocide in 1939 to 1945.

As responsible members of the international community, Canada has, indeed, through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, written to the President of the UN Security Council to ask for this investigation. I believe that the other side should take this very seriously and understand that Canada is doing its part and that we are working together to best—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Thornhill.

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, we expected this argument to be raised today, and I am sure we will hear it repeatedly through the day.

The reality is that the United Nations Security Council is dysfunctional and impotent when it comes to responding to today's crisis. These laws were written in the middle of the last century, and it is a system that should be respected. However, as we have seen, the United Nations has fallen into dysfunction, as has the UN Security Council when it comes to the vetoes from Russia and China.

The leader of the official opposition made the point that the young Yazidi girls who are suffering today cannot write letters to the United Nations Secretary-General.

Writing letters, consulting, and not speaking a word is simply unacceptable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier, my hon. colleague said that the International Criminal Court could not investigate this because of the United Nations Security Council veto.

Does my colleague realize that this does not necessarily need to go through the Security Council? A country can simply refer the matter to the International Criminal Court and the court can take it from there. One of the possible avenues would be not only to call to action the International Criminal Court, which is already addressing the matter, but also to ensure that Canada offers its assistance to investigate crimes committed on the ground.

• (1040)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Kent: Mr. Speaker, I respect my colleague's insight and her expertise in this area, but the reality is that the ICC will simply not initiate a complete investigation and definition of what we know is happening and what we see graphically in many forms on YouTube, on social media, which the Islamic State boasts about on a regular basis. We will not see the ICC act meaningfully without direction from the United Nations Security Council. That simply will not happen.

Canada should be doing more.

The Simon-Skjodt report is a worthy and meaningful report. That report by itself provides more than enough evidence for ministers on that side of the House to stand and say, as ministers in democracies around the world have said, that what the Islamic State has been perpetrating and continues to perpetrate is genocide.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as members of the House are aware, Canada has responded to the current situation in Syria and Iraq and the horrific acts of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL, by putting into action a comprehensive strategy.

The people of Syria and Iraq, who do not believe in ISIL's warped methods, are targeted and have suffered horrible losses. Individuals belonging to minority communities, including religious and ethnic groups, have been especially affected by the conflict in the region and by ISIL's barbarism.

Our strategy focuses on degrading and defeating ISIL, and most importantly, on preventing its return.

[*Translation*]

The instability resulting from the crises in Iraq and Syria caused by ISIL, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, is affecting the entire region. Religious, ethnic, and other minorities are among the most vulnerable groups and have already suffered greatly.

Business of Supply

We condemn the terrorist acts committed by ISIL, and we actively support efforts to determine whether some of the acts committed by ISIL constitute genocide.

[*English*]

No one is disputing that ISIL has committed many abuses of international human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. The motion put before the House, however, fails to reflect the need to complete an independent investigation of the facts being gathered about ISIL's crimes and to then present these facts to a competent court or tribunal.

No one uses the word genocide lightly. That is why Canada has supported the efforts of the United Nations and civil society organizations to document and investigate crimes committed in ISIL-affected areas. Canada and our partners must continue to work at this on multiple fronts, assembling evidence and supporting judicial processes, while we work toward reducing suffering and stifling this horrendous conflict. This is the right way to go about holding ISIL accountable.

Our strategy is designed to put an end to ISIL's brutality, to address the terrible humanitarian crisis, and to contribute to political solutions and stability in the region.

Canada is investing \$1.6 billion over three years to respond to the crises in Iraq and Syria and to address their effects on Lebanon, Jordan, and the wider region. Implementation of the strategy is under way in Canada and abroad. We are going far beyond that of the former government.

We believe that this strategy provides strong support, as well, for the brave men and women engaged in the fight against ISIL. Our efforts in the region strengthen the resilience of local populations, institutions, and legitimate governance actors because it is they who confront and manage the challenges associated with extremism and conflict. This is how our efforts will succeed.

Conflict prevention and resolution depend on many factors. Chief among them are the promotion and protection of human rights. On May 17, we announced the creation of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. The new office expands on the work undertaken by the former office of religious freedom. It is yet another example of how proactive our government is in including all human rights. The integration of freedom of religion or belief within a broader human rights framework provides Canada with additional ways to advocate for all rights and freedoms.

Extremism flourishes in non-inclusive environments that lack respect for diversity and difference, that lack respect for human rights. Under our new international human rights framework, we are continuing our policy, advocacy, and programming work to promote freedom of religion or belief in Iraq, Syria, and around the world.

The budget dedicated to the promotion of human rights is \$15 million. That is three times the amount originally committed for the former office of religious freedom.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

Canada has taken concrete action to stop ISIL and the scourge of extremism. With respect to the military, Canada's refuelling and surveillance aircraft continue to provide air support and intelligence gathering capabilities, which are invaluable to the coalition's military operations.

Canada and other coalition members are also providing strategic training for Iraqi security forces in order to help them plan and conduct their own operations against ISIL.

Canada is tripling the number of personnel assigned to its train, advise, and assist mission to help Kurdish security forces in northern Iraq. Efforts to strengthen the capacity of local security forces will improve their effectiveness against ISIL and provide long-term security for the Iraqi people.

It should also be noted that Canada is one of a few members of the coalition contributing to all the goals, namely stemming the flow of foreign fighters, cutting off funding for ISIS, countering the organization's propaganda, and contributing to security and stabilization in the region.

[*English*]

Canada supports a full judicial investigation into ISIL's crimes and endorses calls for the UN Security Council to refer these crimes to the International Criminal Court. This is why Canada has requested that the UN Security Council establish a mechanism to investigate violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria to determine whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes, to identify the perpetrators of such crimes, and to identify measures to ensure accountability, including a referral to the International Criminal Court.

One week ago, on May 30, our Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote a letter to the president of the UN Security Council that states:

In March 2015, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released a report, which concluded that there is evidence to suggest that ISIL may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Iraq. The report called for an independent investigation and for the Security Council to consider referring the situation to the International Criminal Court. The Government of Canada agrees with the recommendations made in the report.... We, therefore, ask the Security Council to act pursuant to its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security by establishing a mechanism to investigate reports of violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria...

Canada is also deploying additional diplomatic resources in the region. We have made strong statements in February before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on the situation of conflict-affected populations in Syria, especially including the situation of women. We have given our support to ensure that the voices of women are properly reflected in Syrian peace talks and high-level engagement with the Syrian opposition. We have been present for the last three rounds of UN-led intra-Syrian peace talks in Geneva.

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It is important to correct the record as stated by the opposition. The vote in the U.S. was by Congress and has not gone any further. The vote in the U.K. did not have any members of cabinet there. The vote in the EU was a motion, and the governments are not acting. We are following through, as reflected in the letter by our Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Civilians are the first victims of these conflicts and of the ISIL scourge. Canada is among the major contributors of humanitarian aid in the Middle East region, and we continue to respond immediately to the essential needs of civilian populations affected by ISIL.

On September 12, 2015, the Government of Canada also launched the Syria emergency relief fund to support humanitarian relief efforts. Since then, we have matched that and more. Those who are most affected by the crisis, notably women and children, are the greatest beneficiaries.

Nor should we forget the incredible efforts that Canada and Canadians have dedicated toward the resettlement of Syrian refugees in this country. The Government of Canada, working with Canadians, private sponsors, non-governmental organizations, and provincial, territorial, and municipal governments have welcomed more than 25,000 Syrian refugees since November 2015.

Given that the original initiative included privately sponsored refugees, more government-supported refugees will be settled to meet a specific target of 25,000 government-supported Syrian refugees.

Our development assistance is helping governments, communities, and families hosting those affected by the conflict by providing them with adequate services and helping to rebuild infrastructure. It is helping to create jobs for parents and ensuring that children go to school. We are identifying the children who are not going to school, and supporting them every step of the way.

We cannot meet the essential short-term needs of those affected by conflict, particularly the most vulnerable minority groups, unless we also build and maintain the resilience of communities hosting refugees and displaced persons. Over 600,000 Syrians have fled to Jordan, and over 1.2 million to Lebanon in the past three years. We know that Jordan and Lebanon are suffering under this huge burden, and so are their infrastructures and services. We must help to avoid a situation in which host populations and displaced persons are competing for resources.

• (1050)

Among those who have been targeted, of course, are women, girls, and gender minorities. There is growing recognition of the need to involve women and gender perspectives in responses to this immediate threat. The inclusion of women in all stages of conflict and peace-building processes proves to be an underutilized but immensely effective method of reducing radicalism and violent extremism.

The inclusion of women must be a part of our own comprehensive strategy, recognizing that women and girls are particularly vulnerable and suffering from the atrocities at the hands of ISIL. We know women are bearing an increasing burden of the conflict.

In Jordan, for example, our development assistance will build the capacities of vulnerable women and youth, empowering them to care for themselves and their families, and to work. Just last month while I was at the Women in Parliaments Global Summit in Amman, Jordan, I announced, on behalf of the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, a \$16-million project to support the empowerment of women in decision-making in the Middle East. Canada is recognized for its leadership in that regard.

The evidence is clear, the inclusion of women leads to more sustainable peace and enhanced prevention efforts. When proper funding, committed and viable leadership, inclusive rights-based and gender-equal processes and plans are in place, tangible results for security and stability are achieved.

We know that sexual violence plays a prominent role in the insecurity that ISIL inflicts. The UN Secretary General's April 2016 report on conflict-related sexual violence provides ample evidence of the ways in which ISIL uses sexual violence, notably against Yazidi women in the areas it controls. We have witness accounts from survivors of rape, sexual torture, and sexual harassment.

As territory is retaken from ISIL, evidence of these horrible crimes continues to emerge. The UN Secretary General's special representative for Iraq told the Security Council last week that more than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq. It is precisely for this reason that Canada has supported organizations that are investigating and documenting sexual violence crimes and other abuses by ISIL.

These efforts are invaluable. It is these organizations that will assist all of us in holding those responsible to account.

[*Translation*]

In a response to a request from its coalition partners, Canada is also coordinating stabilization efforts connected to gender equality matters. We are working with our coalition partners, including the government of Iraq and the United Nations Development Programme, to ensure that the coalition's stabilization efforts consider input from women and gender equality considerations.

To that end, Canada supports the removal of explosive remnants of war so that communities can get on with their lives. Furthermore, Canada provides technical support to local authorities to help restore the rule of law. To help reduce the risk that ISIL and other extremist groups acquire and use chemical and biological weapons, Canada is helping Iraq improve its methods of combatting this type of weapon.

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•(1055)

[English]

Our assistance to Jordan will help it to counter terrorist groups like ISIL while integrating human rights and rule of law standards into its investigation and enforcement activities. Working in co-operation with Jordanian officials, we are building resilience against radicalization.

As part of our strategy, on May 5 our government announced the signature of a new memorandum of co-operation with Jordan on security and stabilization. The memorandum of understanding lays out our framework for co-operation in which the two countries agree to collaborate in addressing the challenges faced by Jordan. This is doing more.

With respect to Syria, Canada seizes every opportunity to find a political solution to the conflict, including support for efforts to counter ISIL's narrative in ISIL-controlled territories. Canada, through the global partnership program, has recently contributed over \$6 million to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons towards investigating chemical weapons use as well as the verification, monitoring, and destruction of chemical weapons.

By helping those responsible for local governance in Iraq and Syria provide essential services, our strategy helps civilians return to areas that have been liberated by ISIL. We help to prevent violent extremist organizations from exploiting the political vacuum created when local authorities are unable to provide citizens with essential services.

[Translation]

Canada's strategic programming greatly contributes to the coalition's efforts to weaken ISIL, restore stability, and promote regional security.

[English]

Canada is acting as a reliable, responsible contributor to security in the region. Canada is acting as a reliable and responsible contributor to holding ISIL accountable for crimes against humanity. This is comprehensive. We are following through. We are not using terms lightly. We are confident that ISIL will be held responsible by the world.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of visiting Juno Beach about seven years ago, and I have also visited Armenia a number of times. I know my colleague from Cambridge recently came back from Armenia, where we have seen first-hand the effects of a genocide. Unfortunately, the current Parliament and government took too long to identify what happened in Armenia as a genocide.

We have heard today comments about strong statements that were made and letters that were written. However, my question is this. Will we wait for 50 years to identify what is happening in Iraq and Syria? Or, will we take action to name it what it is, a genocide, and then, because we are naming it what it is, take action to stand beside innocent civilians who are being raped and killed and actually having these pictures portrayed on YouTube? How can we stand by as Canadians and not do more?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, other governments have not recognized that genocide has occurred, as the Conservative motion holds, against Christians and Shia Muslims. I would like to know why the previous government did not recognize that genocide has occurred, as the Conservatives today hold, against Christians and Shia Muslims.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is very disturbing today in the debate, both from the Conservatives and the Liberals, if we are talking about the brutal crimes that are being conducted, is this fiction that in Syria local authorities are unable to provide safety, as the minister said something about. We have seen no mention of the murderous regime of Bashar al-Assad: the torture and killing of thousands under his watch, the fact that the regime has used barrel-bomb attacks against civilians. They talk about chemical weapons only in the context of ISIL, which is a brutal barbaric gang, when Bashar al-Assad has already been found to use them.

I want to ask the member this. Both Russia and China, on the Security Council, have blocked attempts to have international investigation of crimes by the regime of Bashar al-Assad so that all participants in the brutality that is happening in Syria will be held accountable. What will the current government do to stand up and say that all those who commit crimes against humanity will be held accountable, including the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria today?

•(1100)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague is not listening. Canada is funding the very groups on the ground who are documenting this, so that we can hold those who perpetuate these atrocities accountable.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the presentations from the side opposite, particularly from the Conservative Party, and there is this sense that simply uttering a word is going to save a life; that simply uttering a word is going to suddenly transform action on the ground; that simply uttering a word, instead of taking direct action of landing more refugees, of providing more supplies on the ground to confront ISIL, of putting more action in place in terms of pursuing this legally through the appropriate international channels, is good enough. In the same way that simply saying that the CF-18s will stop something by flying overhead, it is absurd.

Why does the member think the other side prefers a single word to concrete action that is actually effective and being requested by the partners who are confronting this terrible situation?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I was listening, because I thought that was a very apt description of how complicated and complex the problem is and, by turn, how complicated and complex the Government of Canada's plan for responding is. I am at a loss to understand why the previous government did not just call this genocide. It is pretending that it did, but it did not. Do members know why? It is because the Conservatives could not attack the problem in the way we are. We are there. We are supporting the intelligence. We are supporting communities. That is partly how we gather what we need to hold ISIL accountable.

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Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing worse than using legalese to mask moral cowardice is using bad and misinformed legalese to mask moral cowardice.

The member has talked about the International Criminal Court. She well knows that every single member of the European Union is also a signatory to the Rome Statute with respect to the international court. The member knows that. These are transparent efforts to construct non-existent legal norms. We have every right to do it. We have a moral responsibility to identify this as genocide and all of the evidence is clear.

Will the member at least, if she wants to oppose the motion, give her real reasons, instead of hiding behind this nonsense, which does not at all resemble a realistic description of her international legal obligations?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, it is an outrageous statement to call this nonsense. Canada is viewed and recognized and respected for the leadership role it is playing with regard to the fight against ISIL; with regard to supporting local communities, women, and children; with regard to resettling Syrian refugees; and particularly, with regard to going through the proper steps to ensure that ISIL is held accountable for its crimes against humanity.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in May 2015, the government announced that Canada would provide \$1.2 million over one year to support accountability and transitional justice activities.

Since that one-year period is almost up, what kind of funding will the Government of Canada offer to investigate what is going on in Syria and Iraq and to collect evidence?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, we have put several million dollars toward that effort. It matters. As we find these graves, and more and more come to light every day, the fact that we are there matters. We are not shying away from this responsibility. In fact, if anything, we are holding ourselves to a high standard, one that Canadians can be proud of and that the member opposite can be proud of. I know that she will be helpful in that regard.

• (1105)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the words that the parliamentary secretary has put on the record regarding where the Government of Canada is on this issue.

One thing I found interesting in her comments was the type of support that is actually behind the motion the Conservatives put forward today. The Conservatives tend to want to give the impression, for example, that the United States is behind declaring this a genocide. To the best of my knowledge, I do not believe President Obama has called it genocide.

The Conservatives were in government not that long ago. I am wondering why they did not bring forward a resolution to call it genocide when they were in government.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, the opposition throws around decisions made by states as though they are fact. I would like to correct the record.

In the U.K., the vote was taken without a single member of cabinet and the government's response has been to call for an investigation. Canada is acting in concert with its ally. In the U.S., Congress voted but the U.S. government has not recognized it. In the EU, there was a motion but governments have not recognized it. The UN special adviser on the prevention of genocide has said it is very important to have an investigation.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record. I certainly would not put forward facts that cannot be backed up.

I have here one day, in particular, when the former prime minister, the current member for Calgary Heritage, said, “we deployed forces to northern Iraq to help minorities withstand genocide.” He went on to say, “not just genocide against large populations in the region but planning attacks against this country”. He used “genocide” three times. That is just in one question period. I could probably go back and find more. The thing is that he called it a genocide. He did not wait for the House to force it upon him to call it a genocide; he called it a genocide.

Let us look at the United States. It is not just the House of Representatives. It is Secretary of State John Kerry, speaking for the president, who called this a genocide. The only people who are afraid of calling this a genocide are the Liberals in the House.

I will ask the parliamentary secretary this. If these are just symbolic words that do not mean anything, she should vote for the motion. What is wrong with voting for the motion if the words are purely symbolic? On the other hand, as I suspect to be the case, if there are actually consequences from labelling this a genocide, what are the consequences that she is afraid of?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to talk about consequences. That is why we do not throw words around loosely.

Five genocides have previously been recognized by our Parliament and referred to as genocides by ministers: first, Armenian genocide recognition resolution, April 2004; second, Rwandan genocide resolution, April 2008; third, Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day Act; fourth, the Holocaust; and fifth, Srebrenica.

We are going through a process. We think it is an important process. It is in concert with our allies and that is quite different from using words loosely.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all agree that what ISIS is doing in Syria and Iraq is absolutely atrocious.

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Here are some figures. The violence of ISIS has led to the displacement of 2.5 million civilians in Iraq alone and left 5.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Over 5,000 people have been killed by ISIS. In May, 50 mass graves containing the bodies of civilians who were murdered by ISIS were discovered in Iraq.

The UN has reported gross human rights abuses, including attacks directly targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, executions and other targeted killings of civilians, abductions, rape, and other forms of sexual and physical violence.

A March 2015 report issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated that the following atrocities were being committed against the Yazidi community: the brutal and targeted killings of hundreds of men and boys in Nineveh province, northwest of Baghdad in August 2014; the rape of girls as young as six years old; the abduction of women as the spoils of war; and the forced separation of families, where boys as young as eight years old were taken and forced to become child soldiers. These are just a few examples of the horrors committed by ISIS.

In light of these facts, we have no problem joining our voices with those of the U.S. Congress, the Obama administration through the Secretary of State, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and the British Parliament, which we have talked a lot about, to say that the evidence is quite clear that in all probability there was a genocide, particularly against the Yazidi community.

However, simply saying that in the House has very little impact. Obviously, the motion of Parliament carries moral weight, but it does not involve any obligation on the part of the government.

An analysis was done in order to determine what would happen if the government ever said that genocide was taking place in a particular location, generally speaking. The conclusion was that this would open the door to restrictions on imports and exports, the reduction or withdrawal of international development assistance, the expulsion of diplomats, and the suspension of diplomatic relations. That is the list.

Obviously, this would have no impact on a non-state actor. In order to have a discernible impact, it has to go through the United Nations and the International Criminal Court. Many of our global partners have adopted this kind of motion. I hope these motions will help maintain the pressure on institutions like the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court, so that we can get to the bottom of this.

As I said a little earlier, I am a little surprised that the motion does not suggest referring the issue to those international bodies and continuing to work with them to move forward with the investigations.

• (1110)

The motion has a moral impact, more than anything else, but unfortunately, words are not enough, as one of my colleagues said. Very specific action needs to be taken.

First and foremost we need to investigate the war crimes and crimes against humanity that are being committed in Syria and Iraq. Of course ISIS is committing war crimes and crimes against

humanity, but we must not forget those being committed by the Bashar al-Assad regime. I am not sure why we do not talk about that more. There are also those committed by armed groups like the ones fighting the Bashar al-Assad regime, which are not lily-white themselves, by any means. We have to admit, this is another flaw in the motion.

If we had drafted the motion, I think it probably would have been written better, but, well, that is life.

We absolutely have to investigate what is happening on the ground. Naomi Kikoler, deputy director of the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, said:

There's been virtually no effort to systematically document the crimes that have been perpetrated, to preserve evidence, to secure and preserve forensic evidence, to ensure that mass graves are being protected so we can actually have successful prosecutions in the future. This is one area where Canada can play a crucial role in supporting financially, but also sending experts to areas that have been liberated from the Islamic State.

That is absolutely essential. Canada has tremendous expertise in this area. We have been calling for the government to get involved for years. The little bit of funding voted last year has run out. We would like some solid details about what the Government of Canada intends to do about this.

These crimes must be investigated so that they can be prosecuted in the future, but we must also act now. That means helping people on the ground, helping refugees, providing humanitarian aid in the camps, continuing to welcome refugees to Canada, giving them enough help when they get here, ensuring that they can integrate into society, and ensuring that they have opportunities to learn English or French. We also have to help neighbouring countries a great deal. I commend the government for doing that. Helping Jordan and Lebanon is critical to preventing the instability from spreading.

We also need to ensure that all regions of Syria receive humanitarian aid. There is an enormous amount of diplomatic work to be done in that regard, and Canada needs to put a lot of effort into that. Clearly, that work alone is not enough. We need to attack ISIS itself. We have always said that the first thing that needs to be done is to cut off ISIS's funding. We need to cut off ISIS's access to money.

We know that in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is funded in part through extortion. However, the group also continues to engage in trade, oil trafficking, and other activities. The international community really needs to focus on that. Everyone is familiar with the expression "money is the sinews of war". If we can cut off ISIS's funding, then we will have made a significant amount of progress. We also need to cut ISIS off from its weapon supply.

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•(1115)

I want to reiterate and stress that the Canadian government needs to quickly accede to the arms trade treaty. That is absolutely essential and it will help us to convince other countries to work toward that goal. The global movement of weapons is one of our biggest threats. We obviously also have to prevent ISIS from recruiting more members. I will not get into the details because we have talked about it often enough, but there is a problem here, because some of the measures being taken by various countries seem to be providing ISIS with more opportunities to attract supporters.

These things are also part of the mandate that we were given by the United Nations. It is essential that we focus on them. It is also essential to work on deradicalization here in Canada. We need to remember that radicalization is not just an Islamist phenomenon. Right-wing radicalization and other radicalization movements also exist. We need to do more in that regard.

Finally, above all, we need to find a peaceful solution in the region. I was pleased to see that Canada is now being invited to the major international meetings to try to find a sustainable diplomatic solution and, we hope, to start to think about rebuilding and the future.

General Dallaire, for whom I am sure everyone here in the House has the utmost respect, said recently in an interview that what is happening in Syria is the Rwandan genocide all over again. We have to reach an agreement. We have to find a solution.

I would add that we must also work on prevention. As one of my colleagues whom I admire greatly said, these terrorist groups these days are like the Hydra from Greek mythology. When we cut off its head, two heads grow back in its place. A few years ago, we were dealing with al-Qaeda. Then it was al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, followed by the Islamic State. We must focus on prevention. Prevention is not simple. It is not easy and it takes time, but it is essential. Prevention takes good governance. To prevent conflicts, we must ensure that justice is served in every country. This also means ensuring that justice is served when crimes against humanity are committed.

•(1120)

[English]

We all agree that the atrocities committed by ISIS in Syria and Iraq are pretty awful. I will not go into all the details, but we are talking about 5,000 people killed by ISIS, for example. We are also talking about using rape as a weapon of war. We are talking about young children being taken from their families and becoming child soldiers. We have all seen the images, such as the beheadings, which are awful, but it is the day in day out atrocities that are committed.

In that respect, we have no problem with adding our voices to those of the American Congress, the Obama administration, through the Secretary of State, the European Parliament, the European Council, or the British Parliament to say that with regard to the Yazidis, the evidence is quite clear that in all probability there was genocide.

However, words are not enough. Today's motion has no legal consequences on the government. Even if the government were to

say it were genocide, no legal consequences would apply in this because it is a non-state actor. If it were about a country, then we could cut diplomatic links, or recall our diplomats or things like that. That does not apply in this case.

We have to act, and Canada could act through many avenues. We could investigate the war crimes of not only ISIS, but the war crimes of the Bashar al-Assad regime, which has done terrible things, and the war crimes of some opposition groups that also have committed atrocities and crimes against humanity. Canada can play a key role in that respect. We can provide money and expertise to gather evidence and treat it properly.

A little over a year ago, the previous government announced \$1.2 million. I would be interested in getting more details about what the current government is planning and whether it will go full steam ahead in investing both atrocities and those war crimes. This is absolutely essential.

We also need to continue our fight against ISIS. We need to starve it of money. We need to work together with the international community to ensure ISIS cannot sell any more artifacts or petroleum, all of the sources of its money, or as we say in French, *l'argent est le nerf de la guerre*. We have to starve ISIS of arms. In that respect I trust the government again to accede to the arms trade treaty as soon as possible so we do our share. We need to encourage other countries to control the flow of arms.

We have to deprive ISIS of militants, of jihadists. We can do that by preventing people from going abroad and by having finely tuned policies in place, policies that place a lot of emphasis on humanitarian assistance so the people of the region see we are with them, not against them. That would help to prevent ISIS from recruiting more militants.

We need to help on the ground and provide humanitarian assistance. We need to help countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey that are dealing with a difficult situation. We need to receive refugees here.

We also have to work on the peace process. I am happy that Canada is now a part of the process. This is good news. Retired lieutenant-general Roméo Dallaire has said that the genocide in Rwanda has repeated itself now in Syria. That can be resolved, but key to that is finding a political solution.

We have to work at prevention. We have to work around the world to avoid new groups. It is like the Hydra. We cut off one head and two new one take its place. We have to work on human rights and good governance. We need a good justice system around the world for conflict prevention.

•(1125)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a number of ways my colleague has captured what the parliamentary secretary said earlier in her speech.

There are couple of things I would like to mention.

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The first is that the minister, as we know, has written to the appropriate authorities, around May 30 I believe, to take this to the proper international venue to have a discussion and, eventually, reach a conclusion. One of the terms that my hon. colleague used was “in all probability” this is genocide. That is really important. I do not think, as a government, as a Parliament, we should be making decisions about “in all probability”. There is an appropriate place for that discussion to happen. It was asked by the minister of that appropriate authority to have that discussion.

Further to that, one of the other items in my colleague's speech was about the work on the ground, in the communities, in the countries. Could she elaborate on how important it is for us to continue that work and do so in co-operation with our allies?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, in many cases the evidence is irrefutable. In my opinion, we must collectively continue to pressure the appropriate authorities to keep investigating these crimes against humanity. Major reports on this subject have been filed. However, there is work to be done on the ground.

Personally, I would like to hear more about what the government is currently doing to investigate these crimes. We need to work with our partners to get all the details in order to help identify specific individuals. Obviously, these are things we cannot do here.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to hear the hon. member say that this is genocide. There used to be 1.5 million Christians in Iraq in 2003 and now there are less than 200,000. More than a million people have been killed. Certainly, that is a genocide on any scale. Similar stories could be told about the Yazidis as well.

I am disappointed with the government in bringing refugees here. We heard during the leader of the official opposition's speech that not many Yazidis and Christians had been brought to Canada as refugees. Does the member share my disappointment with that?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We must not kid ourselves. ISIL is also killing Muslims. There is no end to its horrors. The LGBT community is particularly affected by ISIL. The needs are great.

The normal process, with which I agree, is to bring people to work, based on needs. There are special circumstances there. Normally, as a result of the Yazidis' special circumstances, this community would have some very significant needs, which should have an impact on how we welcome them. The key is to always look at the needs and to work for the people who have the greatest need.

[*English*]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important debate, and it brings to the House and all members here the important concepts of discussing foreign policy and human rights and the intersection between those, as this chamber makes policy in foreign relations around the world.

I notice that this resolution speaks specifically about targeting gays and lesbians, who have been tortured and murdered, and speaks about the House strongly condemning these atrocities. I think everybody in the House would regard targeting gays and lesbians and calling for their death as an atrocity. I do not think it is a stretch to say that an official policy in any country that would seek to put gays and lesbians to death because of their identification could constitute in some way an atrocity, at the very least, and perhaps even genocide at most.

Yet, the House here includes Brunei in the trans-Pacific partnership, which has official government policy to stone gays and lesbians to death. Yet, the House, both the Conservatives and Liberals, are considering a trade policy that would actually provide economic benefits to the country of Brunei.

I would ask my colleague to comment on that, and ask if there is not some contradiction between, on the one hand, the House condemning one country that is targeting gays and lesbians and murdering them and, at the same time, sitting at a table and giving economic benefits to another country that has official state policy of putting people to death simply because of their sexual orientation.

• (1135)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is a huge issue. It shows a lack of coherence, which is striking, because my colleague mentioned Brunei, to which we would give economic benefits despite its atrocious policies regarding the LGBT community.

There is another example that springs to mind, Saudi Arabia, which has similar policies. In fact, Saudi Arabia beheads people. If we look at the list of crimes under ISIS and its punishment and look at what is happening in Saudi Arabia, we see it is the same. Yet, we are selling arms to Saudi Arabia.

I am sorry, but I fail to understand.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member opposite in her professional career as a diplomat. I know that her interest is in bringing parties together to tackle this tricky question.

I wonder about the member's comment with regard to the genocide convention, which contains an important obligation for states to take steps to punish genocide. It is important that any motion include language on accountability for serious crimes. She alluded to that in her speech, and I would like to hear more.

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Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Speaker, I hope I was clear that this motion is moral persuasion. I think we all agree that there is no automatic legal implication, as there would be under the convention on genocide, if an international body would say that it is genocide, and even then the consequences could be diverse. It is not automatically a military intervention, as some of my colleagues on this other side would like, I presume. There is a range of possible responses.

I have no problem with agreeing to the motion and joining our voice to so many Parliaments around the world. However, my point is beyond that, beyond words, which are not enough. I think on that point we are on the same side. We need to act with sending humanitarian assistance; starving ISIS of money, arms, militants, and jihadists; and investigating the crimes committed on the ground, not only by ISIS but also by the Assad regime and other groups in the region.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

I rise in the House today to speak to and support a motion that calls on the Liberal government to agree that ISIS is responsible for crimes against humanity aimed at groups such as the Yazidis, Shia Muslims, Christians, and other religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq; utilizing rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving young girls and women; targeting gays and lesbians, who have been tortured and murdered; and, as a consequence, the House strongly condemns these atrocities and declares these crimes as genocide.

This is a motion that I believe all sides of the House should support. The Liberal government cannot and must not turn a blind eye to this situation.

Just within the past few days, and we heard this earlier today, 19 Yazidi girls who refused to have sex with their captors, were put into iron cages and burned alive. Ján Kubiš, UN Special Representative for Iraq, told the UN Security Council that “More than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq” and that ISIS continues the atrocities against women and children.

A United Nations report stated that Yazidi boys between the ages of eight and 15 are being trained as child soldiers and forced to watch beheadings.

As well, the UN estimates that over 3,500 Yazidi women and girls are being held, with many used as sex slaves, while others are sold. In fact, not only have they set up slave auctions in the marketplace, but they have turned to social media and created digital auction blocks. The unfortunate fate of an 11-year-old girl was widely reported just last week when she sold for \$9,000.

It is also reported that more than 5,300 Yazidi have been abducted and more than 3,000 men have been murdered. The UN estimated that another 5,000 Yazidi were killed by ISIS in northern Iraq.

The systematic rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war against women and girls, some as young as the age of six, is an atrocity beyond anyone's comprehension. As well, ISIS uses this as a recruitment tool, letting men know that women and sex are available for the taking at will.

The European Parliament agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The British members of Parliament agree that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The Vatican agrees that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The U.S. House of Representatives voted unanimously that the atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. The UN Special Representative for Iraq said that violent acts by ISIS—killing, kidnapping, rape, torture—constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes, and even genocide.

Canada is a signatory on an international agreement, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, and it states that all participating countries are required “to prevent and punish” acts of genocide, whether carried out in war or in peacetime.

● (1140)

Article II of the convention defines genocide as:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Every single point of this definition has been violated. It escapes me as to why the Liberal government cannot see what everyone else sees. How many more mass graves need to be discovered? How many more young girls need to be sold and raped? How many people need to be burned alive or beheaded? How many people need to be tortured and murdered? How many families need to be destroyed?

There are 10 million people right now in immediate need of humanitarian aid. Canada has a responsibility to show leadership and to act in a meaningful way. We have the opportunity to ensure that the people who have committed these horrendous acts of violence are held to account. We need to be there for the people who continue to suffer, the women, the young girls, the boys, and the men who have lost their wives and daughters. For all of those who are buried in more than 50 mass graves, we need to show we care. We need to show that they matter and that Canada has not forgotten them. The very first thing we need to do is to bring Yazidi women and children to Canada. It is shameful that only nine families have been brought here and that the Liberal government has cancelled the Iraqi program.

The UN does not recognize the Yazidi people as refugees. They are internally displaced persons. This is the very first step we can take to effect change. It is a concrete action that we should undertake and that the current government should rectify immediately.

Business of Supply

● (1145)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Pope is quite measured in his words. The Vatican has asked world governments to do more to prevent a possible new genocide in Syria and Iraq.

The first step has been taken in the form of the letter our foreign affairs minister wrote just last week. Therefore, I would ask the member opposite if she would like to comment on what the Vatican actually said.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely thrilled that the government has sent a letter as a first step. That is great.

If all that comes out of everything I said, with respect to the atrocities that have been committed and Canada's obligation as a signatory on the genocide convention, is for me to clarify a word and wordsmith what the Vatican said, I am deeply offended. I think there are serious issues here that need to be addressed. We need to make sure we are taking care of those people and that no more girls are raped and used as weapons of war. It is abominable.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. I think it is the role of this House to be discussing these issues. The atrocities that have been committed in Syria and Iraq are a disgrace to the entire world with respect to the lack of action.

My concern is not with respect to the word play on either side, but it is about dealing with the overall failure of international law and dealing with what is happening, particularly right now. It is not just about ISIS and its brutal and disgraceful activities, but also about what we have seen with the Bashar al-Assad regime and the photos of 11,000 victims of torture and murder, the attacks in Ghouta, the use of chemical weapons that has gone on without any sanction, the deliberate targeting of civilians through barrel bomb attacks and attacks on hospitals. We are dealing with a huge breach of international law that needs to be addressed. I think it is within the role of this Parliament to discuss this.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the need to look at the larger frame, where ISIS is playing a very destructive role among a number of players, including a supposedly legitimate government that has been supported by various western allies.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I would agree 100% with my colleague. The atrocities that are going on right now with ISIS absolutely have to be addressed. We need to get out there. We need to do whatever we can, but there are also other things that are going on as the member well pointed out.

There are governments that are perpetrating barrel-bombing on their residents. That is unacceptable. Look at Libya and what is happening with Boko Haram. There is a larger picture here that absolutely needs to be addressed and we need to have a concrete plan in place in terms of how we are going to deal with it, in terms of who we can pull in from an international perspective, and how we are going to address it. It is a broader picture and right now we are dealing with what is going on with the Yazidi people and what is going on in Iraq, but that should absolutely be on the table and we should be dealing with that as well.

● (1150)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really liked hearing the definition of genocide. I thought that was very helpful in making it clear. I wonder if my colleague could reflect on that and provide some examples to show that it has really occurred.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that there is any doubt in anyone's mind. The UN special representatives in Iraq are there on the ground. They have uncovered up to 50 mass graves. They are doing due diligence on the ground. They have seen and photographed and documented a lot of the atrocities that have occurred. There are pictures of the 19 young girls in a cage who were burned alive. There are pictures. ISIS has no problem posting these all over social media. As I said, they are on the ground as well.

I cannot stress enough that we are a signatory and every single piece has been violated. We have a responsibility and we need to do our job.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock.

I want to start by commending my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka and the House Leader of the Official Opposition for the excellent work they are doing on this issue.

It is important to note what we are talking about here. We are talking about recognizing a genocide. One of my colleagues asked for the definition. Genocide can be defined as follows:

A crime against humanity committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. Acts of genocide include deliberately endangering life or causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting conditions of life calculated to endanger the life of the group, imposing measures intended to prevent births, and forcibly transferring children.

This is a serious topic, but it is an important one that has marked our collective psyche for bad reasons. Everyone is familiar with the so-called final solution, which took six million lives; the Rwandan genocide, which took between 500,000 and one million lives; the Armenian genocide, which took 1.8 million lives; and the Srebrenica genocide, which took more than 7,000 lives.

This is a human tragedy on a massive scale. We are talking about systematically eliminating a segment of the population. This shows just how evil human beings can be.

This is particularly relevant here because of the Canadian mosaic. People from all over the world, of all religions and beliefs, have come to Canada. When ethnic cleansing takes place in another part of the world, it often affects the distant family of a neighbour, colleague, or friend, who is devastated. The concern is also palpable in Canada.

It is partly for that reason that I am pleased to speak to such an important issue. However, I am also extremely disappointed to have to do so. If the government had had the courage to call a spade a spade, we would not be here today debating this motion.

Business of Supply

This week, to cite one of countless cases, the media reported that 19 Yazidi women were burned alive for refusing to have sex with their ISIL captors. It was reported that they were burned alive in the public square, closed in a cage, in front of several hundred people in Mosul. Young Yazidi women are captured, raped, and sold as sex slaves by the Islamic fundamentalists belonging to ISIL.

The jihadists demand that members of the Yazidi religious minority convert to Islam. After separating the men and women, they strip the villagers of their jewellery, money, and cellphones.

According to accounts in a United Nations report, ISIL rounds up all the men over 10 years old, takes them out of the villages in trucks, and shoots them, as was the case in previous genocides. ISIL militants then drive the Yazidi women to markets in Mosul or in Raqqa, Syria, to sell them. They even put price tags on the women, like items in a store.

I would invite my Liberal colleagues, who love consultations, to ask Canadians across the country if they think that ISIL is committing genocide in the areas they occupy by targeting religious minorities, including Christians, Yazidis, and Shia, and selling people from those groups like slaves.

ISIL's cruelty is not limited only to those whose religious beliefs are different. Homosexuals, gays and lesbians, are also being targeted by ISIL torturers. In ISIL's world, human life no longer has any value. Anyone who is paying the least bit of attention knows this. They know that everyone in ISIL-controlled territory is living in a reign of terror under one of the most archaic, brutal regimes in the history of the human race, a world that makes the Middle Ages look very civilized.

Everything we see on television and all the reports from ISIL-controlled areas indicate that this is indeed a genocide, but those who are tormenting minorities can sleep in peace because our government does not like to bother totalitarian regimes that threaten the lives of thousands of people. Best not to interfere.

That world is light years away from the society we have built here in Canada, an open society where people of any sexual orientation and any religion need not fear for their survival.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his position on the matter on April 28, 2016. Quite frankly, it was a letdown. In response to the Leader of the Opposition, he said:

...the official recognition of genocide is so serious that it should only happen following a proper international investigation. That is what we are pushing, and it is absolutely in line with our allies.

Apparently that is what passes for responsible conviction.

● (1155)

That is not surprising coming from someone who so brilliantly explained that it is hard to set priorities. As a proper academic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would rather wait until it is all over so that he can count the number of bodies before deciding if it really is a genocide or not.

Apparently that is what responsible conviction means: making claims, saying that Canada is back, but not really doing much to help the people targeted by these atrocities. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also says that his position is in line with what our allies are

doing. We must have a different understanding of what an ally is. What we have heard from the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, differs significantly from what our Minister of Foreign Affairs has said. I would like to share a quote from Mr. Kerry:

Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions—in what it says, what it believes, and what it does. Daesh is also responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds, and other minorities....

I want to be clear...Ultimately, the full facts must be brought to light by an independent investigation and through formal legal determination made by a competent court or tribunal. But the United States will strongly support efforts to collect, document, preserve, and analyze the evidence of atrocities, and we will do all we can to see that the perpetrators are held accountable

The fact that those responsible for these crimes admit their own guilt does not seem to be enough for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Really, when the time comes to protect victims, here in Canada and elsewhere, the Liberals are nowhere to be found. The American government, our greatest partner and ally, recognizes that this is a genocide. In the U.S., Congress and the Obama administration have said that Daesh is committing a genocide in the territories it occupies.

The British Parliament voted unanimously in favour of recognizing the atrocities committed by ISIL as genocide. It also asked the government to call on the International Criminal Court to intervene and investigate to ensure that the guilty parties are arrested and tried. I would also like to point out that all those who acknowledge that ISIL is committing genocide in the territories it occupies are doing far more than Canada is doing in the fight to eradicate this terrorist group.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to come back to the definition of genocide. A genocide is a crime against humanity with a view to the total or partial destruction of a national, ethnic, radical, or religious group. That is pretty much what is currently happening in the regions under ISIL's control. Mass executions are common currency.

Genocide is a wilful attack against the life and physical integrity of a group of people, and the deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to endanger the lives of those in the group. When people have no choice, and have to convert or be executed, that is pretty much the definition of genocide. Considering all these facts, we wonder what it will take for the government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, world leader in setting priorities and master of the responsible conviction policy, to apply the word "genocide" to the atrocities committed by ISIL in its occupied territories.

On this side of the House, we would like to see the government do more to fight against ISIL to put an end to the massacre of religious minorities and groups whose views differ from those of the terrorists who are trying to impose their caliphate. Acknowledging that this is a genocide will be a step in the right direction, but much remains to be done to end the genocide currently being committed.

Business of Supply

• (1200)

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech and I thought, by and large, it was quite a good speech. I join with the member for Timmins—James Bay in saying that this is a good place. The House of Commons is the place where these issues should be discussed.

Members will know that what has been entered into the debate is the letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, where he says, "We are alarmed by evidence that suggests ISIL may have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraq and Syria. These atrocities must be investigated". Then he formally calls upon the Security Council "to determine whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes, and to identify the perpetrators".

I have two questions for the hon. member.

The date of this letter is May 30, 2016. Given that the facts have been in existence for something in the order of the last five years, would it not have been better if the date of this letter were somewhere closer to May 30, 2015, or 2014 for that matter, and if his previous government would have called for this formalization of the process?

Second, in light of the fact that the previous government did not call for the formalization of the process, would the member therefore support the minister in his effort to have the UN Security Council make a formal declaration of genocide in a proper and investigative fashion?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

At this time we are not debating what was not done previously. Genocide is an action that begins at a certain point, continues, and must be stopped.

Today's motion simply asks the House to acknowledge that this is genocide. Of course, subsequently, we could support the government's efforts at the UN concerning any future action. However, for the time being, we simply want the House to acknowledge that this is genocide.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my concern, as I have been stating, is that when we look at the brutality of ISIS and its deliberate targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, it is certainly within the context of a genocidal series of actions. However, they are also within the context of a much broader attack on basic international law and in the context of the war crimes of a number of organizations, criminal gangs, and the government of Bashar al-Assad, who has caused much more turmoil in terms of the refugee crisis than all the other ones. Bashar al-Assad is attacking his own people, so it would not necessarily even meet the definition of genocide but would meet the definition of a war crime.

My concern is that we are applying to the Security Council to have the definition and the investigation undertaken. I support the

UN doing it, but the Security Council, we know, will make sure that Bashar al-Assad is not brought to justice, because of his allies in Russia and China.

I would ask my hon. colleague this. How do we ensure that we hold all of them accountable for the overall criminal attacks against civilians throughout the region while making sure that ISIS is certainly held accountable for its deliberate targeting? We need to make sure that we have some form of international law to go after the overall atrocities and human rights crimes that are being committed.

• (1205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my esteemed colleague for his question.

All of humanity's problems must be resolved as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Today, the House is seized with a motion concerning a particular problem, namely ISIL actions against minorities, such as the Yazidis, in Iraq and Syria.

My colleagues in the House can debate other problematic situations occurring around the world on another day. However, today, we are simply asking the House to acknowledge that the Islamic State is committing genocide.

[*English*]

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition and member for Sturgeon River—Parkland for putting forward this motion and today's debate.

I believe that I am not mistaken, as I start, by saying that all members in the House are outraged by the pervasive and unrelenting violence in the conflict in Syria and Iraq. Our government is outraged by the deliberate targeting of health facilities, as we have seen in Aleppo and in Kamounia camp, near the border with Turkey.

Canada deplores the deliberate targeting of civilians and the continued disregard for international humanitarian law. The continued cost in the lives of innocent men, women, and children from such attacks is unacceptable and further demonstrates the need for an urgent de-escalation of violence. The appalling acts of violence perpetrated by Daesh have resulted in the deaths of thousands of people of all faiths in Iraq and in Syria. The atrocities and widespread abuses perpetrated by Daesh against religious and ethnic communities, including Yazidis, Christians, Shiites, and Sunnis, is an affront to human dignity and Canadian values of peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity.

Freedom of religion and belief and the ability to worship in peace and security is a universal human right. Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated and must be enjoyed by all people, without discrimination and without distinctions of any kind. Canada stands in solidarity with those facing oppression as a result of their religious beliefs.

Business of Supply

I am outraged, and Canadians are outraged, by the use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war. Sexual violence as a specific tactic, as well as the enslavement of women and girls, is not unique to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. However, its systematic employment by Daesh in Syria and Iraq needs to be recognized, and its perpetrators will ultimately need to be held to account.

We are equally outraged by acts of violence against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In February, the UN commission of inquiry on Syria reported that Daesh continues to target sexual minorities for execution. The report contains shocking examples of Daesh's intolerance and brutality. This includes a video that shows two men being thrown from a building. Why? It was because they had been accused of committing homosexual acts. Our government deplors this violence and any kind of discrimination or intolerance based on a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Let me reiterate that our government strongly condemns the terrorist acts committed by Daesh, and we firmly support investigations into their crimes and the prosecution of perpetrators. However, while we respect the emotion behind this motion, and what fair-minded person would not, unfortunately, democratic governments cannot only be guided by emotion.

I understand that members opposite disagree with the approach we are following, namely to arrive at a legal determination and not simply a political or emotional one. Why are legal determinations important? It is so we do not risk acting in a manner that undermines our intent.

As part of our broader engagement in the Middle East region, Canada is taking substantial and concrete actions that contribute to preventing and halting war crimes, and possibly genocide, by Daesh.

Our participation in the international coalition, our provision of humanitarian, development, and security and stabilization assistance, and our diplomatic engagement all support the protection of vulnerable populations.

To this effect, on February 8, the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie shared Canada's commitment to deliver a multi-faceted response to the crises in Syria and Iraq and their impact on the surrounding region. This commitment includes \$1.1 billion in much-needed humanitarian and development assistance over three years.

From this funding, \$840 million will help provide much-needed humanitarian assistance, such as food, urgent health services, water, shelter, education, and protection, including from sexual violence, for the most vulnerable people affected by conflicts in the Middle East.

On April 13, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie took the first step in delivering on this commitment by announcing \$100 million in humanitarian assistance funding to support the responses to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

• (1210)

This announcement included \$31.8 million to UNICEF to match the generous donations of Canadians to charitable organizations

responding to the crisis. This funding will increase education opportunities, provide child protection services in Syria and Jordan, and support immunization efforts for children in Syria, responding to critical needs and building the resilience of conflict-affected communities.

The funding announced is also supporting our humanitarian partners to provide emergency physical and functional rehabilitation services to people injured by the violence in Syria and Iraq, psychosocial support to people traumatized by violence, and clean water, food, shelter, and primary health care to people who have fled the violence in Syria.

In addition, this government is supporting the provision of confidential medical assistance, case management, and referral services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Canada's humanitarian partners work in some of the most dangerous and challenging environments. Every day, humanitarian staff, many of them Canadians, put their lives on the line to make sure that vulnerable civilians affected by conflict around the world, including in Syria and Iraq, get the assistance they need. The price they continue to pay for their dedication to their mission is tragic. Since the conflict began in Syria, over 87 humanitarian personnel have been killed.

One need not travel far from the House of Commons to appreciate the dedication of Canada's humanitarian community.

Given the inherent challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance, Canada's long-standing practice is that Canadian humanitarian funding is provided to experienced humanitarian partners to meet the life-saving needs of civilians caught in the middle of conflict.

With decades of experience, our humanitarian partners have developed practices and processes to ensure the integrity of the assistance they deliver. Canada's humanitarian partners adhere to the principle of humanity, meaning that all victims of conflict or civilians affected by conflict deserve protection and assistance, no matter where they are found.

In order to fulfill this goal, our partners also adhere to the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence so that they can work wherever those in need are located. This is an essential point. The ability of humanitarian workers to have access to people in need is predicated on their actions being neutral. This means providing assistance with no military or political objective, only the objective of saving lives and alleviating suffering.

In many contexts, the safety and security of aid workers depends on their ability to demonstrate that they have no other motive than providing assistance to those in need. Humanitarian principles remain the foundation of this trust, and we must be careful to protect their integrity.

Canada is committed to promoting and enhancing respect for humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law, and the protection of civilians.

Business of Supply

We must uphold the spirit and the letter of the law, improve compliance, and hold violators to account. For this reason, our humanitarian partners and the Government of Canada are extremely careful that humanitarian assistance is provided in full respect of humanitarian principles and in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.

Last month, I participated in the World Humanitarian Summit, in Istanbul, Turkey. I represented Canada at an event entitled “A Call to Action for Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies”, because we continue to be concerned about the fact that there is an increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence during a humanitarian crisis. Women and girls, in particular, continue to face increased protection risks, such as sexual violence, trafficking, and child, early, and forced marriage during crises.

I wish to reiterate this government's commitment to helping the most vulnerable and this government's commitment to do so in a manner consistent with humanitarian principles.

I understand that members opposite disagree with the approach we are following, namely that we be guided by principles, principles that have served Canada for decades, under governments of all stripes, and not by emotion or politics.

We all abhor what Daesh is doing. We all want it to stop and to hold the perpetrators to account. To do this, we must work with our allies through the international legal process. To not do so both elevates the structure of Daesh to something it is not, a government, and risks having Canada condemn it in a manner not consistent with how our country approaches addressing such acts. This is the appropriate process, and we are following in line with our allies and the international bodies responsible in that assessment.

This government stands with the United Nations and its international partners in calling for a judicial investigation and an end to impunity for the perpetrators of serious international crimes.

• (1215)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member is simple.

Can she provide a fact- and evidence-based argument as to why the murder of more than a million Christians in Syria and Iraq does not constitute a genocide?

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite's question, however, that is precisely what our government is demanding at the moment, a fact- and evidence-based decision in making this call and defining what is going on in Syria and Iraq.

That is exactly why we have the position that we do, because as our government has stated from the beginning, we base our decisions on fact and evidence.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, again, I would have more solidarity with the government's position if we were actually seeing something from the government about a willingness to talk about the atrocities committed by Bashar al-Assad that are monumental.

We can talk about ISIS because the brutality is so vivid and it is so brazen about it, but we are seeing similar acts of brutality by a regime that has strong allies on the UN Security Council. We will be

looking to the UN Security Council to launch an investigation, but it will not be launching an investigation against one of its key allies, which is the Bashar al-Assad Syrian regime.

I want to ask this member a question. Where are we going to see Canada in terms of standing up on the overall issue of human rights crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide that is being conducted throughout that region, and not just against the death cult of ISIS but against a government that is getting backing by some of our allies?

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member to look at the calls that the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have made, precisely with regard to incorrigible acts that have been committed against innocent civilians within the region, the appeals to the United Nations Security Council, the appeals for respecting and upholding humanitarian principles, and the urge to respect international humanitarian law.

This is something that our Minister of Foreign Affairs and our Minister of International Development and La Francophonie have done consistently. When the minister and I were at the World Humanitarian Summit, we were very clear that it is so important in these international crises that all parties respect humanitarian principles, respect international humanitarian law, and that we are committed to ensuring these principles are upheld.

Mr. Peter Fragiskatos (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the importance of applying reason to this argument, this debate. I wonder if she could expand on that, reason over emotion. I would love to hear her thoughts on that.

Ms. Karina Gould: Mr. Speaker, it is times like these where it is compelling, when we see the videos, when we see the images, to want to name what is happening.

However, what we do know is that these are mass atrocities, and we also know that there is an important legal history and an important jurisprudence that is founded on these terms, and that we have an obligation, as Canada, to be part of that international community and that international legal process.

It is up to us in this House to make sure that we are coming to this debate and coming to this issue with cool heads, regardless of how emotional and how horrific these acts are.

• (1220)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to engage in this debate.

As I said earlier, I think the member for Timmins—James Bay said it best when he said that these are important things and they need to be debated here in the House of Commons.

Business of Supply

The government and people of Canada stand together in solidarity with the victims of ISIS atrocities. The Minister of National Defence and I share the Minister of Foreign Affairs' determination to eradicate the threat. Our government is taking substantial and concrete actions to degrade ISIL and to ultimately help Iraq security forces to defeat this villainous plague themselves.

Every member of the House surely feels that the carnage and slaughter committed against minority groups and communities by ISIL demonstrates an undeniable evil intent. On that point, I think the phrasing of most of the motion is actually quite accurate.

All Canadians are appalled by ISIL's murderous acts, and they fill our news feeds almost daily. No matter what we label them, no words are strong enough to reflect our opposition to ISIL's actions.

All members of this House debated Canada's response to the crisis in Iraq and Syria back in February. Indeed, over 98 members of this House took part in the debate, which I consider to be an outstanding participation. We voted on the motion on March 8, and our collective view of ISIL is unequivocal that it must be stopped.

For all the opposition's good intentions with the motion, finding the right words to express our outrage and condemn ISIL will not get the job done. ISIL is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that demands a complex and comprehensive response. It has thousands of fighters, a sophisticated social media strategy, and the support of pervasive criminal networks that are adaptable and unhindered by geography.

While coalition forces have achieved remarkable success in degrading ISIL's strength, it still retains enough power to cause damage. The challenges associated with defeating ISIL were evident when the Chief of Defence Staff visited northern Iraq. In late April, General Jonathan Vance visited our special operations for our training, advising, and assisting forces in the fight against ISIL. He saw first-hand the crucial role that our Canadian Armed Forces will play in supporting the Iraq security forces who will battle in Mosul, Fallujah, with Mosul being the critical Iraqi city that remains in the extremists' stronghold.

What General Vance witnessed aligned strongly with what the Minister of National Defence saw and heard as he travelled in the region. It is clear from their experiences that our new three-year strategy to address the ongoing crisis in Iraq, Syria, and the wider region is the right approach.

As members know, following consultation with our coalition allies and partners, and a comprehensive review with Canadian Armed Forces here at home, Canada has refocused its role in the global coalition to counter ISIL. Our efforts are directed at the countries most affected in the crisis: Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. Our revised engagement reflects the needs and requests expressed to Canada, while at the same time leveraging Canadian capabilities and value-added expertise.

It is a whole-of-government approach to enhance security and stability, provide humanitarian assistance, and help our partners to deliver social services, rebuild infrastructure, and ensure good governance. In line with this new strategy, Canada has extended our military mission in Iraq and Syria until March 31, 2017.

● (1225)

Canada is increasing its total complement of military personnel to approximately 830 as well as its support for coalition members and Iraqi security forces in the planning and execution of our military operations, in particular, in the areas of planning, targeting, and intelligence. We are tripling the number of forces personnel assigned to our training, advise, and assist mission for local forces in Iraq. Last month we also added three Griffon helicopters to the mission to enhance in-theatre tactical support transport, including medical evacuations.

On the intelligence front, an all-source intelligence centre was opened in theatre in late April. This capability responsible for collaborating, synthesizing, and analyzing information is derived from a variety of sources. This intelligence is then used to inform operational planning, ultimately contributing to the protection of coalition forces in the conduct of coalition operations. As we have announced, we are significantly increasing our intelligence capacity, because we understand that this is a complex interplay of forces that underlines the conflict environment in Iraq and Syria. We need to have a clearer picture of how all the pieces fit together so that we can better anticipate the impact of our actions. Our enhanced intelligence contribution will be invaluable in this regard.

Brigadier-General David Anderson, director of the global coalition's ministerial liaison team, and other Canadian Armed Forces members who are part of the multinational team, are now in Iraq to lay the foundation on which the team will provide strategic military support for the ministries of defence and interior. The role played by Brigadier-General David Anderson cannot be understated. It is extremely important that he coordinates the coalition forces and ultimately the Iraqi ministers who will be responsible for this head-on fight with ISIL. The ministerial liaison team will work with the Government of Iraq to further synchronize coalition efforts to clear ISIL from Iraq.

Members have heard in the past about various contributions of various amounts of money in humanitarian assistance, all of which has been implemented and was committed in budget 2016. The updated approach makes sense.

When Canada's military mission began in the fall 2014 it was a response to an emerging and immediate crisis. Since then the reality on the ground has changed dramatically. ISIL has lost territory and freedom of movement. It has lost over 45% of the areas it once controlled in Iraq. Its leadership is being targeted along with its organizational capability. We can trace from one point to the next point to the next point how intelligence allows the coalition forces to target the very heart of ISIL. Now that we have significantly degraded ISIL's capabilities, the coalition is focused on dismantling this extremist and violent threat.

A lasting solution rests on the shoulders of the indigenous ground forces, the Iraqi security forces that we are training. We are now able to conduct offensive operations and reclaim territory once held by ISIS. Our training and advising is empowering the local forces to establish the necessary security conditions for the return of the displaced persons we are talking about here today and follow up on stabilization activities.

I am extremely proud of the tremendous service our men and women in uniform have deployed on Operation Impact and I know that all members of the House feel the same way.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague and the colleague from the Liberal Party who spoke just previously used some important words. They used words like “abhor”, “outrage”, “deplore”, “appalling acts of violence”, “strongly condemn”, “carnage”, “slaughter”, “appalled”, and I could go on. These words were also used in relation to previous genocides in our history.

The Armenian genocide occurred in 1915. I am proud of our government's record in recognizing that as a genocide. Unfortunately, recognizing it after the fact had little impact, did very little to support the Armenian people as they walked through that tragedy.

Could the member tell me why we would wait until 50 or 100 years from now to label this as a genocide when we have the opportunity to do it today? I agree that simply labelling it is not going to change the facts unless the Liberal government would be willing to add to the word “genocide”, action which follows up.

The Liberal government has not yet given us one coherent reason as to why it pulled our CF-18s out of the mission in Iraq and Syria. If I could have my colleague explain one coherent reason why we did that, I would be better served.

• (1230)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that words do matter. In the very example he cited, the Armenian genocide was recognized as a genocide only after a thorough investigation. I will take it as a given that my colleague will support the Minister of Foreign Affairs' intervention, asking the UN Security Council to initiate an investigation with a view to determining whether the very things that we are talking about are genocide.

On the other point he raised, I do not know whether the hon. member recognizes that we are part of a coalition. A coalition, by definition, means that various people and entities in the coalition do different things. We had over 200 airplanes in the theatre of conflict. Where we were lacking was in the intelligence, assist, and advise mission. Canada said it would stop providing the jets, but we will step up with respect to the intelligence, assist, and advise mission.

We should ask ourselves what would be more effective: what the hon. member is most concerned about, namely, these atrocities; or having real intelligence capabilities that would facilitate the rooting out of this scourge by the indigenous forces that must lead the fight.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about atrocities, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed in Iraq and Syria, and we want to put a stop to it. The federal government announced funding of

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\$1.2 million over one year to investigate such activities and to restore some justice.

This investment has expired. What does the current federal government plan on doing to continue investigating these war crimes and crimes against humanity and to ensure that international legal action will eventually be taken?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of a good debate, I should respond in a more fulsome fashion to a specific question with respect to the continuation of those monies. I expect that has happened. I expect that we have contributed to the continuing investigation, because as I said in my response to the previous question, words matter, investigations matter, and evidence matters.

If we look at the Balkan wars, a lot of investigation went on. There were a lot of bodies exhumed and a lot of evidence taken before a procedure was initiated under the crimes against humanity legislation. Words matter and evidence matters. I hope that my response, in a more fulsome way to you, is that we are continuing to contribute to that investigation.

• (1235)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we resume debate, I want to remind hon. members to speak through the Chair and not directly to members on the other side.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Lethbridge.

On the relationship between peace and justice, there is a theoretical tension between these two. The pursuit of peace may on certain readings in certain situations require us to let go of things we would rather address, to allow to pass by things which we would rather confront but the confrontation of which would lead to a loss of peace.

On the other hand, the pursuit of justice may put us in conflict with others, with the purveyors of injustice and with those who, while desiring justice of a certain kind, have a different conception of justice than we do. When peace is valued over justice, we are inclined to leave injustice unaddressed. When justice is valued over peace, we risk regular conflict even between those with good intentions on the basis of rival conceptions of justice.

I do not just mean military conflict in the context of loss of peace but also conflict as in a disruption of favour and goodwill, and perhaps conflict in terms of being opposed in our ambitions. The pursuit of justice always upsets the tranquillity of life, in this context, the relative potential tranquillity of Canadian international diplomatic relations.

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During our previous Conservative government we regularly put the pursuit of justice ahead of tranquillity in international relations. We stood for what was and is right. We stood for the rights of persecuted religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities. We stood for the right of self-determination for any peaceful community. We stood for the right of the Jewish people to a safe and secure homeland. We stood for the right of the Russian people to know that human rights abusers from their country will not be able to travel to and invest in the west. We stood for the rights of Chinese Uighurs, Afghan Sikhs, Crimean Tatars, and yes, Yazidis, Christians, Kurds, Turkmen, Shia Muslims, and other groups in the path of Daesh.

We were willing to stand up and upset our tranquillity in the process. We believed that a country in pursuit of justice might have to pay a price for its stand, but that it was right that we be prepared to pay that price.

This government has a fundamentally different approach when it comes to foreign affairs. While we believed and believe deeply in the pursuit of justice, this government values peace, values tranquillity, over justice. The Liberals are not prepared to speak clearly about international human rights. They are downgrading our capacities in this respect and they are refusing to speak the truth about injustice. In this particular case, they are refusing to call a genocide what it is.

Now many of my colleagues have already spoken eloquently about why using the term genocide is not only justified, but is necessary in the case of Daesh actions towards Yazidis and Christians in Syria and Iraq.

The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Any one of these conditions is a sufficient basis to qualify as genocide, but there is clear, documented evidence that Daesh has engaged in all five of these things. That is why the American administration, the American Congress, the British Parliament, and the European Parliament have all recognized this as a genocide. Are we to seriously believe that our Minister of Foreign Affairs is wiser or happens to know something these august bodies do not?

The best that the Liberals can come up with in opposition to this is to assert that our membership in the International Criminal Court in some way prevents us from calling this a genocide.

The only thing worse than using legalese to cover moral cowardice is using bad, ill-informed, made-up legalese to cover moral cowardice. Every single EU country is a member of the ICC. They have all recognized the genocide through a motion very similar to this. The parliamentary secretary said it was just a motion in the European context. This is a motion as well, and our recognition of genocide should not be and need not be held up by a Security Council veto.

● (1240)

These arguments are obviously not the point. The evidence is clear and international law is clear with respect to what genocide is. We know it is clear, they know it is clear, and we know that they know it is clear. However, they still will not use the word "genocide", quite obviously because there is a certain safety, a certain comfort, a certain tranquillity, in resisting taking a stand and holding back on the call for justice; because using the word "genocide" upsets our peace. It is a disruptive word because it crystalizes and clarifies the truly evil nature of Daesh and our moral and legal obligation to respond in a serious way. The government prefers similar but sufficiently unclear language in this, so as to appear to be roughly on the same page but not to upset the Liberals' desired foreign-policy focus of peace and tranquillity as opposed to the pursuit of justice.

Why is it necessary to speak the truth in this case? Why is it necessary to call a genocide a genocide? Why do we take the denial of genocides, historic or present, so seriously? I have spoken before in the House about my grandmother's story. My grandmother was a Holocaust survivor, one of millions of European Jews who suffered in some way because of Hitler's efforts to exterminate them.

On August 22, 1939, about a week before the invasion of Poland, Hitler gave what has come to be known as the Obersalzberg speech to his military commanders, in which he laid out his genocidal intent, in this case toward the Polish people. For our understanding of history, of how and why genocides happen, it is important to know what he said:

...our war aim does not consist of reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy. Accordingly, I have placed my death-head formations in readiness...with orders to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women, and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space...we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?

In this seminal address to his commanders, it was important for Hitler to reflect on the absence of international recognition or regard for the Armenian genocide. This was not the first time that Hitler invoked a comparison between the Armenian genocide and his intended plans. He inferred from the experience of the Armenians that nobody would care if he killed the Jews.

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When we stand in the House to remember and recognize the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, the Holodomor, and other such events, we are not just engaging in a collective exercise in the study of history. We are remembering because reminding ourselves of the reality of past evil, ensuring that violence against the innocent is condemned over and over again in the strongest possible terms, is a way of ensuring that we finally learn the lessons of history. As much as it upsets our tranquillity from time to time to call out evil, in the past or the present, it must be done. What good is remembering the past if we only pay attention to genocides that happened decades ago? The failure to confront evil in the present is precisely what leads tyrants in the future to conclude that their contemporaries will not care either. To call out evil, to speak the truth about international human rights, to do so in a way that is clear and unambiguous may cost us friends and goodwill; it may cost us more still. However, it is the only thing that prevents would-be tyrants of this world from believing that they will get away with it.

On the relationship between peace and justice, there is, yes, a theoretical tension between the two, but there is also an essential unity between the two. Those who violate the basic rights and dignity of their own people invariably become a menace to their neighbours and the entire community of civilized nations, as Daesh has already become. It is not in the nature of tyrants to, on the one hand, overthrow the domestic rule of law and then to respect international law, on the other. It is a certainty that those who are a menace to justice in their own land will be a menace to peace, if not right away then eventually. Even on consequential grounds, it makes sense to stand up for justice in the first instance, but more important, we cannot call ourselves a just society if we refuse to speak clearly about justice on the international stage.

That is justice in the pursuit of peace, and justice that is disruptive to peace, because the 19 Yazidi girls who were burned alive in a cage this week are every bit as human as the members here or my daughter or their daughters. If members would call it a genocide for themselves or their people group, then they should do it for someone else's.

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when I listen to Conservatives speak on this issue, I wonder why they have chosen now to preach to us about the action we should take as government. The parliamentary secretary explained Canada's position quite well. I recommend the member read what the parliamentary secretary. It was well articulated.

If the member and his colleagues feel so passionate about this today, why did the former Conservative prime minister not ask for any sort of a motion, or did not take an official statement from the Government of Canada nine months ago when he was prime minister? The degree in which the Conservatives want to push this issue surprises me.

I do not in any fashion want to try to demean the horrific acts that have taken place under ISIS. I think it is universally felt across Canada. Every Canadian recognizes just how horrific these are. We are going through a process that will eventually come out with a final product that will be very close to, if not exactly, what the opposition going for. However, there is a process that needs to be followed.

When the member's leader was prime minister, he was content with that process. What has changed?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, with greatest respect to the member, there are so many things he said that are just not true. I was here for the parliamentary secretary's speech. I asked her a question. The argument she rests on is this supposed ICC process, without appreciating the fact that every member of the European Union is also a signatory to the International Criminal Court and they have all had no problem agreeing, through the European parliament, to recognize this as a genocide. This is not a process that any other country seems to feel is absolutely required before declaring this a genocide. This is a process that the Liberal government has created as cover because it does not want to call it a genocide for whatever reason.

The previous prime minister did call this a genocide. A motion in the House was not necessary because it was well understood and repeatedly communicated by the Canadian government. When we took power, I remember repeatedly asking members of the government questions about whether it recognized this as a genocide. This was during the debate we had about involvement in Daesh. We earlier sought a unanimous consent motion, and now we have this opposition day motion today.

We repeatedly raised this issue when we were in government and now in this Parliament, and I think the record will show that. Why are we pushing this issue? Why does this matter? Why do words matter? Words matter and words are important. That is why we take the denial of genocide in other cases so seriously because recognizing the reality of genocide is how we respond to them. It is the first necessary step to respond to them. It is why it is so important to the Yazidi community that we recognize genocide because it understands that is a necessary step to condemning genocide there and everywhere. It is a necessary part of the response that we use words correctly.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before I call for new questions, I want to remind the hon. members that while they are responding or even asking a question, if they do not mind looking up to the chair once in a while. If members see me signal, please wrap it up. The answers and the questions are getting kind of long and we do want to have as many people as possible speak. We are talking about fairness today and that would be a small way of moving toward fairness.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

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Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my hon. colleague's speech. I want to concentrate on part (c) of the motion where it states, "targeting gays and lesbians who have been tortured and murdered; and, as a consequence, that the House strongly condemn these atrocities...". In light of this specific motion, one of the problems I have had with Parliament is that we inconsistently apply our moral outrage.

In light of this specific wording, I wanted to bring to the member's attention that the trans-Pacific partnership agreement, which the Conservatives strongly support, includes the Sultanate of Brunei. In 2014 Brunei passed a law which advocated the stoning of gays and lesbians.

I would like to hear the member's opinion on that in light of this motion. Should we not at least be consistent in applying our moral outrage? Why should we reward that country with trade with Canada?

• (1250)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I strongly share the member's concerns, specifically with respect to human rights issues in Brunei. There are issues of discrimination toward gays and lesbians as well as significant religious freedom issues.

How we may be able to bring about improvements to human rights issues through trade agreements is a separate question. We have a bit of a disagreement with the NDP in terms of the potential positive effects of certain kinds of engagement on human rights. However, it is important that we have clear and consistent all through that process in communicating about human rights. We need to do that with respect to Brunei and a range of other countries.

I thank the member for raising the issue of Brunei because it is one of those countries that does not get the attention it deserves. However, there are significant human rights issues—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Lethbridge.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with a significant measure of urgency, combined with a degree of perplexity, that I stand before the House today and ask the government to take a stand for human rights.

The urgency comes from a place of care and compassion for tens of thousands of innocent Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims in Syria and Iraq who are being abducted, tortured, raped, and turned into slaves or killed at the hands of ISIS.

The degree of perplexity of which I speak is in response to the government's lack of willingness to call these crimes what they are. The atrocities committed by ISIS are genocide. Today, we call on the government to join with the U.S. and our allies in the U.K. and to declare that these crimes do in fact constitute genocide.

Those of us who sit in the House are free people. This chamber hosts 338 remarkable men and women who come from all walks of life. Many have had to overcome difficult situations. Others have been blessed with good fortune. However, all of us embody a story, a story of stewarding our freedom, the freedom that was granted to us simply because we were born or became Canadian citizens, freedom

to dream and have hope for a vibrant future, freedom to go to school and acquire an education and training, freedom to work and earn a living, freedom to make purchases, freedom to enjoy recreational activities, freedom to worship, freedom to speak about our beliefs and our values, freedom to move from one province or territory to another, and freedom to run for public office to become members of Parliament and sit in this chamber. As residents of Canada and members of the House, we are incredibly blessed. We are among the world's most privileged.

I am confident that each of my colleagues, myself included, ran for public office because we believed that we could make a difference, because we wanted to contribute to make Canada better, a better Canada domestically and on the world stage. However, what I find is that the four walls of this chamber sometimes have a detrimental side effect for those of us who reside in this place. In the short time I have been here I have become increasingly aware of the amnesia that sets in when we neglect to look beyond the ideals and the theory of this assembly room and into the space beyond these walls called reality.

Beyond these walls and across the ocean there exists a very different reality for tens of thousands of innocent Yazidis, Christians, and other ethnic and religious minority groups. In their reality, there are no plush green chairs, cheese platters, or mineral water. For this group, reality looks like living in fear, fighting for survival, men and women being abducted, men being lined up and shot to death in front of their loved ones, women and girls being captured, tortured, raped, and sold into slavery. In their reality, they are no more than a commodity on a black market.

Young virgins, some as young as nine, are a prized possession and sold for a price well above the average rate, determined by the powers that be within this lucrative and criminal world of commerce. Meanwhile, those who are pregnant will be killed or subjected to barbaric and excruciatingly painful abortions.

This is but a small glimpse into the real life situation faced by tens of thousands of innocent men and women in Syria and Iraq who find themselves at the mercy of ISIS. Rape is being used as a weapon of war. Torture is the daily norm. Of course, death is the only foreseeable escape route.

Meanwhile, Canada's present government appears to be undisturbed, content to sit on its hands and do nothing of significant meaning.

Just a few days ago, 19 Yazidi girls were marched through the public square in Mosul and forced into an iron cage where they were burned alive for refusing to have sex with the ISIS soldiers. Hundreds of people watched as this atrocious human rights violation took place. No one could do anything.

This is the reality beyond the four walls of this chamber and across the ocean in a not-so-distant place called Iraq and Syria. This is the reality that I call upon Canada's government to acknowledge as genocide.

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•(1255)

I call upon the government to do so because it is the definition that goes along with the wrongful practice that we are witnessing. The crimes that I speak of are crimes against humanity for the purpose of extinguishing a group of people.

Dr. Widad Akreyi who works for Defend International has called upon the international community to call these grave atrocities what they are: crimes against humanity, crimes against cultural heritage of the region, and ethnic cleansing.

One survivor who was interviewed had this to say, "If we're not protected soon, there'll be none of us left in the country—which is our country..."

On December 9, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly, within the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defined genocide as:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Based on this convention, which bears Canada's signature, I call upon the Canadian government to acknowledge the brutal acts committed by ISIS as genocide.

For over two years now, the persecution of minority groups, such as Christians, Yazidis, and Shia Muslims has gained international attention, starting with the U.S.-led air strikes against ISIS. Iran was close at hand. Shortly thereafter, 14 countries, including Canada, joined together in a U.S.-led coalition to execute air strikes on ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

When Canada's new government took power, however, efforts were significantly thwarted. For the most part, a blind eye was turned to those who are being persecuted at the hands of ISIS. I am perplexed as to why our Prime Minister will not join with those in the European Union and the United States of America to declare these acts for what they are.

In 1948, we joined our allies to legally define genocide for a reason, that we would be empowered to take action, action that defends freedom and acknowledges the value of human life. I would speculate that the current government is refusing to define these horrific human rights violations as genocide because doing so will require it to take action. It viewed the decision at hand as an unwelcome obligation rather than an opportunity to take a stand for the most vulnerable and defend human rights.

The matter of which I speak today is not to be taken lightly. In Syria and Iraq, tens of thousands of Christians, Yazidis, and other ethnic and religious minorities are living in incomprehensible fear. These are the people that would consider themselves fortunate. Others have been slaughtered, and still others have been kidnapped, tortured, and raped.

These are crimes against humanity committed by the hands of Islamic State militants for the purpose of ethnic cleansing. The wicked acts committed by ISIS are deliberate in nature and calculatedly committed against specific religious and minority groups.

What I have described today is in fact genocide as defined by the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. I thereby call upon the government to join with our allies and recognize the atrocities committed by ISIS as genocide, and to take action to prevent those who are responsible.

•(1300)

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her remarks, in particular at the outset when she summarized what I think every member of this House would agree is completely abhorrent behaviour on the part of ISIS, ISIL, Daesh, however one may refer to this terrorist group.

She indicated we need to call it what it is so we can take action, but I would submit that we are already taking significant action as part of an international coalition that is doing very positive work overseas.

What I would ask the hon. member is, does she not see that a contribution on the legal side, by following the legal definition of genocide through the international community, will also have a positive impact by co-operating with groups like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, this combination of the legal and militaristic options that we could pursue?

Does the member not see the benefit to working with the international legal framework to pursue a resolution?

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I would have to disagree with the member in terms of the actions of the Liberal government. In fact, the government has not taken action. It has actually withdrawn our combat forces from Iraq and Syria, thereby diminishing our effectiveness and ability to fight for the human rights that we value.

Furthermore, with regard to the ICC process, I would again urge the member opposite to consider the fact that every single EU country has signed on in calling this a genocide. The United States of America has declared this a genocide. There is absolutely no reason why Canada should not take leadership on the world stage and do the same.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think that all members of this House will agree that the astoundingly barbaric acts and horrors that Daesh has committed against religious minorities have reached epic proportions. Yes, the Conservative motion is correct. Yazidis, Syrian Christians, and even Muslims are suffering and dying at the hands of Daesh, and that includes many Syrian Christians of Armenian origin who are the children and grandchildren of victims of another genocide.

Does the member not think that it would have been better if the Conservative motion had also made reference to the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Bashar al-Assad's criminal regime?

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[English]

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, I believe there are many atrocities being committed against humans all around the globe, and each and every one of deserves acknowledgement.

Today, in the House, we are taking time to acknowledge those who are at the hands of ISIS within Iraq and Syria. We are taking a stand for minority groups that are minorities because of their ethnic backgrounds, as well as their religious backgrounds and their lifestyle decisions. We are taking a stand for them in the House today by calling on the government to call the acts committed by ISIS genocide. We call it genocide because that is what it is defined as by the UN in the declaration that Canada signed in 1948.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as my colleague stated, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Canada signed as a signatory on that document. It states very clearly that we are required to prevent and punish actions of genocide. I would like my colleague to speak to our obligation and duty to protect these people.

• (1305)

Ms. Rachael Harder: Mr. Speaker, Canada did, in fact, sign this convention in 1948 and we are, therefore, bound by this convention. It would seem reasonable, then, that we should be taking a stance for the individuals who are having these crimes committed against them, first to prevent the crimes and, second, to punish those who are committing them.

On the side of prevention, it starts by defining these acts for what they are, which, again, is what we are calling upon the House to do today.

Mr. Ahmed Hussen (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

This government shares the opposition's outrage at the atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL.

ISIL continues to commit widespread abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law in Iraq and Syria, including indiscriminate killing; deliberate targeting of civilians; persecution on the basis of ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity; destruction of cultural and religious sites; kidnapping; forced displacement of communities; and rapes and other forms of sexual violence. These appalling acts often target the most vulnerable of victims.

The motion introduced today by the opposition lists some of the deplorable acts committed by ISIL. It is this government's position that these atrocities, some of which may comprise war crimes, and crimes against humanity or genocide, must be independently investigated and the perpetrators must be held to account. The victims deserve no less.

The sentiment of the opposition's motion is commendable, but sentiment is not enough. Political declarations do not result in justice for victims of atrocities. What is needed is an impartial, independent determination by a competent court. This is why Canada has supported efforts to document and investigate ISIL's crimes.

Canada has called for the UN Security Council to establish an investigative mechanism with a mandate to investigate allegations of violations of international law by ISIL in Syria and Iraq to determine whether these violations constitute acts of genocide or other serious international crimes, to identify the perpetrators of such violations, and to identify measures to ensure accountability.

Canada has provided support to UN partners and domestic authorities to document and investigate atrocities committed in ISIL-affected areas, and to end the impunity by ensuring that individuals are held to account for committing these heinous crimes. Canada has also provided funding to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to document violations and abuses of human rights, and is also supporting local efforts to collect evidence and investigate serious international crimes.

The approach taken by the government demonstrates our leadership, and is consistent with the body of international treaties that define these serious international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Canadian investigators, prosecutors, and judges have worked and continue to work tirelessly in international criminal courts and tribunals across the world, from Cambodia to Sierra Leone, investigating and prosecuting atrocity crimes, all in effort to see justice done for victims. Canada has a long and proud history of contributing to international criminal justice.

The crime of genocide is one of the most serious international crimes, and the legal test to be met is set out in the genocide convention. This government shares the views of the United Nations, the United States, and others, that an independent investigation into ISIL's crimes is required. However, we do not serve justice when we presume to prejudge the outcome of eventual investigative and judicial processes.

This government is outraged by acts of violence committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The government is also firmly committed to do more for the promotion and protection of human rights globally.

As part of this commitment, on May 17, the government announced the creation of the Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion. The new office expands on the work undertaken by the former office of religious freedom, and will bring our efforts together and our comprehensive vision that includes all human rights, not just some. We are enhancing our work to promote freedom of religion or belief in Iraq and Syria, and indeed around the world, and we are committed to strengthening the global human rights architecture.

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• (1310)

ISIL poses a threat, not only to the stability of Iraq, Syria, and the entire Middle East but also to global international peace and security. ISIL has recruited thousands of foreign terrorist fighters from across the world to travel to Iraq and Syria to participate in its campaign of violence and terror. Combatting the horrible acts of violence and oppression that ISIL perpetrates requires a strong contribution to security through military and civilian means.

The UN Security Council recognized that a sustained and comprehensive approach is required to defeat ISIL and noted, in UN Security Council resolution 2170, that the participation and collaboration of all states is required to defeat the terrorist threat posed by ISIL.

Canada is answering this call. Sixty-six countries and organizations have joined forces in the global coalition against ISIL and have committed themselves to a broad international coalition to eliminate the threat posed by ISIL. Canada is committed to working with other members of the coalition and with the Government of Iraq to ensure that ISIL is degraded and, ultimately, defeated.

As the UN Security Council rightly identified, a comprehensive approach to countering ISIL is required. Canada's new strategy includes comprehensive contributions along all lines of coalition effort.

We are significantly increasing our military train, advise, and assist mission for the Iraqi forces who are on the front lines in the fight against ISIL.

We are tripling the number of Canadian Armed Forces officers assisting the Iraqi forces.

We are contributing to improving the fighting skills of these forces to ensure that they are capable of holding areas liberated from ISIL control.

The Canadian Armed Forces are also contributing aerial surveillance and refuelling assets to the coalition fight against ISIL.

Canada's strategy for engagement in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon includes the provision of \$1.9 billion, over three years starting in 2016, in humanitarian and development assistance as part of an integrated approach and response for the Middle East. On April 13, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie took the first step in delivering on this commitment by announcing \$100 million in humanitarian assistance funding to support the response to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Canada's bilateral development assistance is programmed using a gender-sensitive approach, recognizing that women and girls affected by conflict face a unique set of challenges. Canada remains committed to gender equality and the promotion of women and girls' human rights in situations of armed conflict.

The horrific abuse perpetrated by ISIL against women and girls is well known. We condemn ISIL for all these crimes, in the strongest terms, and are working with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and others, to address sexual violence in the region.

We must not lose sight of what matters most. What matters most are the families whose loved ones' lives have been taken, the communities forced from their homes, and the people who continue to suffer atrocities and oppression at the hands of ISIL.

It is for these people that Canada is working together with its coalition allies and partners, including the Government of Iraq, to put an end to this senseless violence.

In conclusion, while we fully respect the motion of the opposition, it gets ahead of the process and does not address punishing the perpetrators.

Whether genocide has been committed or not is not for members of the House of Commons to determine. It should be decided by a legal and competent court, not a political one.

• (1315)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I congratulate the member, whom I have known for many years, on his election to this place. This is the first chance I have had to hear him speak in the House.

While I have no doubt that the member is sincere in his words, I strongly disagree with the sentiments he just expressed. He concluded by saying that we must not get ahead of the process and that this House has no business in defining when a genocide has occurred. That is entirely contrary to the practice of this place, which recognized the Armenian genocide as such in a motion that I co-sponsored, not as a result of some international tribunal but as a result of the broadly accepted historical facts. This place recognized the genocidal nature of the Holocaust in the creation of a Holocaust commemoration day. It recognized the Rwandan genocide, prior to any determination by a multilateral tribunal, and it recognized the Holodomor as a genocide, even though that continues to be contested by Vladimir Putin and his propagandists. This place has consistently read history for what it is and has not waited for putative groups of lawyers to tell us what history means, what genocide is.

I find the prevarication of this government on this point not just regrettable but shameful, and it is for a reason. The Liberal Party, which took great pride in advancing the notion of the responsibility to protect at the UN, is opposing the recognition of ISIL's genocide for one reason: its recognition would lead to the inevitable conclusion that we must combat it.

The member said we are contributing to the fight against ISIL in all dimensions of the plan. I regret that is untrue. We are not participating in the single most powerful dimension of the plan against ISIL, and that is combat, because we ended the combat dimension of our air strike campaign against ISIL. How can the member justify ending combat against terrorists engaged in genocide?

Mr. Ahmed Hussen: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for giving me best wishes on my speech.

I want to respond to him by saying that our response has been comprehensive. We have not only tripled the amount of training we are doing on the ground, but we are also embedding more officers into the Iraqi forces so that they can better hold territory that they liberate from ISIL.

Business of Supply

However, we also understand that the problem is not just contained within Iraq and Syria. We have to do a better job at helping nations in the Middle East have better resilience to this problem so that they have more stability. That is why we have been proactive as a government to reach out to Jordan and Lebanon, giving them more assistance so that they can improve their resilience. Therefore, we are not backing off from this fight. In fact, we are helping those who are on the front lines.

Our response will continue to be strong and comprehensive and will strengthen the players in the neighbourhood as well.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ján Kubiš, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, told the UN Security Council that more than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq, and that ISIS is continuing its atrocities against women and children. I am glad to hear that Canada has called for an investigation. The other member said that Canada had written a letter and called for this investigation. I would suggest that the investigation is under way.

I would also suggest that ISIS has met, on every account, the definition of genocide under article II of the genocide convention to which Canada is a signatory. My question for the member is this. Is he aware of that?

Mr. Ahmed Hussien: Mr. Speaker, the genocide convention clearly sets out the terms that need to be met for the determination that a genocide has indeed taken place. We in this government believe that the crime of genocide is one of the most serious of international crimes and that the legal test must be met. That is why we as a government believe that test should be determined, set out, and analyzed by a competent authority in a legal court and not by the House of Commons.

• (1320)

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion introduced today by the Leader of the Opposition describes crimes and atrocities committed by ISIL. It asks for formal recognition of these acts as genocide.

What is genocide? The UN definition of genocide is set out in the 1948 international Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, specifically in article II, which describes the acts that constitute genocide.

There is no question that the acts committed by these terrorist groups are heinous and have caused a menace to the region and to the world. However, there is a process to determine if genocide has been committed. The motion gets ahead of the process.

There are two courts that determine genocide, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The International Court of Justice is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The court can consider two types of cases: one, contentious cases between two states; and two, requests for advisory opinions submitted by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

The International Criminal Court, on the other hand, is an independent permanent court with jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute individuals for serious crimes of international concern; namely, genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Whether or not the acts committed by this group can be described as genocide is not for members of the House of Commons to determine. This determination should be a legal one submitted to a competent court in the international community. It should not be a political determination.

It is undeniable that the actions and crimes committed by this group stir up emotions among all of us. They are heinous, despicable, and inhumane. However, as lawmakers we should ensure that our actions are informed by legal framework. In this light, on May 30, the Minister of Foreign Affairs formally requested that the United Nations Security Council establish a mechanism to investigate violations of international law by ISIL in Iraq and Syria. He requested a thorough, in-depth investigation of whether these violations constitute acts of genocide.

We condemn the atrocities and the widespread abuses perpetrated by this terrorist group. These do show the hallmarks of genocide, but we should not rush to judgment, as the motion asks us to do. We must follow a rigorous legal process, and that is exactly what we are doing under the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I would also like to point out that today's motion fails to propose any concrete solutions. On the other hand, our government is an active member in the coalition against ISIL. Canada's new role in the global coalition has provided an important contribution to shifting the momentum against it. Canada is in Iraq at the request of the Government of Iraq, and we are proud to be providing this assistance when asked by a partner in need.

[*Translation*]

When our government took over responsibility for the fight against ISIL last November, the terrorist organization controlled a large part of Iraq and Syria. It was able to project an image of strength, attract fighters from all over the world, and generate significant revenues from illegal oil sales and other criminal activities.

[*English*]

Six months later, ISIL is not the same organization. Coalition efforts have successfully halted its expansion and reduced its presence primarily to a handful of areas.

Canada's new, comprehensive, integrated, and sustained strategy has been part of that shift—

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Wow. Seriously?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Comprehensive, non-combat strategy.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Today, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak to Canada's new contribution to the coalition—

Hon. Jason Kenney: Did you read this before they gave it to you?

Mr. Frank Baylis: —noting that Canada is proud to have degraded ISIS—

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind hon. members that there is a process here, and screaming across the floor is not one of them. I will not say who, but there is an hon. member who decided that he would take the rules into his own hands, so I just want to remind members. I know it gets emotional and we sometimes forget and we lose control. I just want to remind everyone what the rules are. Thank you.

The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

• (1325)

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, today it is my privilege to speak to Canada's new contribution to the coalition, noting that Canada is proud to have degraded ISIS's ability to manoeuvre its financing and to attract foreign fighters, which had dropped from 2,000 a month to 200. Most importantly, we have allowed Iraqis to begin to return to their communities and to rebuild their lives.

From a security perspective, defeating ISIL is the top coalition priority. Once ISIL is driven out of Iraq, a key part of that stability will be to ensure that Iraqis can provide their own security. That is why Canada's new strategy focuses on building the capacity of the Iraqi forces to enhance their own effectiveness against ISIL.

In terms of military capacity, ISIL is much less the traditional military force it was when this campaign began against it. What is truly needed at this phase of the campaign is the ability to confront ISIL on the ground, and this can only be done successfully through an Iraq-led campaign. Our government is committed to training local forces. This is the way to success.

With this in mind, Canada is tripling the number of Canadian Armed Forces advising and assisting Iraqi forces that are leading in the crucial battles against ISIL. Canada has also developed a good rapport with Iraqi Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, and thanks to coalition efforts, these forces have improved their combat skills and cohesion.

Beyond its military contributions, Canada is also playing a crucial role in ensuring the stability of liberated areas. We will help displaced populations return to their homes by assisting with efforts to clear areas of unexploded ordnance, by assisting to restore security, and by bringing about basic services, such as water, electricity, and schools. The coalition has truly shown that the international community can come together and work in a constructive manner on a very complex, dangerous, and long-term crisis. This is why, when Canada refocused its strategy, it was important that it be comprehensive, integrated, and sustained.

[Translation]

As I already mentioned, Canada's contribution is very important. However, it would not be complete if we did not commit to helping in the long term. This complex crisis requires more than military efforts to weaken and conquer Daesh. It requires efforts to prevent other similar crises.

[English]

Therefore, we must sustain our support if we are to succeed, and the people of Iraq must know that Canada will be there with them for the long term.

[Translation]

The chances of Daesh creating a caliphate are lower today than they were six months ago. However, it is important to continue to exert the same pressure on Daesh. The coalition still has many challenges to overcome.

[English]

We must continue to support the Iraqi government to ensure that financial assistance is available to help the most vulnerable and to ensure Iraq's long-term development. There is no simple solution to this crisis.

The motion before us proposes no concrete action. On the other hand, we have referred this important matter to the proper bodies, and this is the proper process to follow. In the meantime, we are actively engaged as part of the coalition to fight ISIL, and together we are impacting where it truly matters.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how many more people have to die? How many more women have to be raped or burned? How many more atrocities will it take for the government to recognize the genocide being committed by Daesh? How many more people have to suffer? The government's lack of humanity is incredible. I cannot believe that the Liberals are being partisan in the face of such violent acts being committed against a people. It is astounding.

We are asking that the House recognize, once and for all, that terrible things are happening in those countries. We all need to stand up to the atrocities and the rapes, and stand up on behalf of the women and children who are being abused each and every day.

• (1330)

Mr. Frank Baylis: Mr. Speaker, the member raised an excellent issue in talking about the unfathomable atrocities that we are witnessing.

That is why over half of my speech was dedicated to real solutions and the work we are doing, as well as encouraging the opposition members to come up with other possible solutions.

In terms of legislation, there is no point in spending the entire day debating the nature of the question. We should be debating more pressing things, such as meaningful measures. That is where the government has a real influence.

[English]

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about how many atrocities it would take for us to recognize this as a genocide. Let me be clear that this government believes that one rape, one act of criminal activity against a child, is one too many.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has started the process of recognizing that the acts of ISIL-Daesh have all the hallmarks of a genocide and has started the process of writing to the international bodies. I ask my hon. colleague what he feels is the detriment in not following this process, this established international process. We all recognize that these are horrible acts ISIS is taking part in, but what is the detriment in not following the process?

Business of Supply

Mr. Frank Baylis: I would say, Mr. Speaker, I am very bothered by the attempt to trivialize such an important issue—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind hon. members that there is a process, and screaming across the floor is not it.

The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

Mr. Frank Baylis: I am glad you brought that up, Mr. Speaker, because it speaks to exactly what we have been talking about here. Every time a process is being followed that members on the opposite side do not seem to agree with, they choose not to follow the process. We just had fine examples of that many times during my speech.

I would say that it should not be trivialized. If people truly cared about this matter, they would be proposing concrete steps with immediate actions that could be taken today that would have an impact on the ground.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

I have been in this place for 19 years, and rarely have I been more disturbed than by what I have heard from the government benches on this matter today.

What we are seeking through the motion is very simply a recognition of the reality that the indigenous ethnic and religious minorities of Mesopotamia are the victims of an ongoing genocide at the hands of a barbaric terrorist organization.

This is not really a matter for debate, because the organization in question, Daesh, in English the so-called Islamic state in Iraq and Syria, admits openly, brags proudly, that it is engaged in genocide. Part of its doctrine is the destruction of those it deems to be apostates in the areas under its control, its so-called caliphate.

Since when do we question the reality of a genocide when the very perpetrators admit it? It is almost like admitting a redundancy.

This is the doctrine of Daesh, to create a caliphate, on the basis of a particularly violent 7th century conception of sharia law, to impose that violent Quranic law on all who fall within the sovereign territory of that ersatz caliphate. If those people are deemed to be apostates, like the Yazidi people, they are marked for death, torture, or slavery. If they are deemed merely to be *kafirs* or infidels, they are marked for dhimmitude, which, as expressed in the particularly perverse version of sharia of Daesh, means, effectively, slavery. The women and girls who fall within the custody of Daesh are not considered human beings. They are considered property to be bought and sold, traded, and raped.

The factual basis of this is not in doubt.

● (1335)

[*Translation*]

Nearly all organizations and experts on genocide have stated that what is happening right now in Iraq and Syria at the hands of Daesh constitutes genocide. Father Patrick Desbois, a French Jesuit priest

and expert who uncovered thousands of mass graves of Jewish victims of the genocide in eastern Europe and wrote about it in his book, *The Holocaust by Bullets*, is in Iraq right now doing research. He has stated that there is no question that there is a genocide happening there right now.

[*English*]

We have heard the Liberal members repeat this canard. There are unparliamentary words I am not allowed to use to characterize it. It is a completely misleading, specious notion that there is some established international legal procedure whereby committees meet and determine whether there is genocide. There is no such procedure.

I encourage the Liberal members reading the canned speeches written by the political staff in the Minister of Foreign Affairs' office to actually cite what procedure they are referring to. It does not exist.

I have right in front of me the 1948 convention on genocide. It does not speak of such a process. This document, drafted by Raphael Lemkin, defines genocide as committing "...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:"

I was the co-sponsor of a motion in this place, in 2004, to recognize the historical reality of the Armenian genocide, which is recognized as such by the overwhelming majority of genocide scholars and of course is supported by the facts. It has never, however, gone through some international legal tribunal.

Let me remind the Liberals of another shame that will always hang over the heads of the Liberal Party. The position of the Martin government in 2004, the position of the cabinet of the Liberal government then, was to vote against recognition of the 1915 Armenian genocide. The Liberals denied the first genocide of the 20th century, just as they are denying this genocide today.

[*Translation*]

I accuse the government of denying the basic facts for one clear reason: it does not want to fight a genocidal regime. That is why it is denying history. Quite frankly, the reason the Liberal government denied the Armenian genocide in 2004 was that it did not want to upset Turkish diplomats.

When genocide happens, governments must not allow themselves to be swayed by diplomatic or political considerations. They must recognize the truth.

● (1340)

[*English*]

We are happy to have here in Ottawa, members of the Yazidi community who are friends of mine, members of the Assyrian community, members of the Chaldean community, and members of the Armenian community. They are pleading with this place to recognize this genocide. They know what is happening and they expect Canada to speak the truth.

Business of Supply

Not only is the current government making things up from home cloth about some imagined, non-existent international process for the recognition of genocide, which has never before been referred to by this Parliament in the recognition of five genocides in the past, but the Minister of Foreign Affairs is making up the notion that Secretary of State Kerry of the United States did not actually recognize the genocide. The minister said in this place that Secretary Kerry said it requires more study.

I have before me the March 16 statement of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, who was responding to a unanimous vote of the United States House of Representatives in this regard when he said, on behalf of the Government of the United States:

My purpose in appearing before you today is to assert that, in my judgment, Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions—in what it says, what it believes, and what it does.

We call on the Government of Canada to do what the Government of the United States has done in recognizing that same genocide, because we are talking about the most vulnerable.

The Yazidis, the Assyrians, the Chaldeans, and the Armenians are indigenous people. The current government just signed a convention about the rights of indigenous people. We have indigenous people who were there long before Islam, long before any self-styled caliphate. Long before people spoke Arabic in that region, they were speaking their own languages and worshipping in their own religions. This is not the first genocide that they have faced. The Yazidis and the Assyrians faced genocide as well back in 1915 and before then.

Let us be clear. There is only one reason why the current government is denying the motion, as it did against the recognition of the Armenian genocide in 2004. That is because its recognition would compel the government morally to engage in the international combat mission to degrade and destroy ISIL.

I mentioned Father Patrick Desbois, the world's greatest living genocide scholar. In closing, when asked by CBS about this and how you stop the machine, he said that it can be only stopped militarily and that is how we stopped Hitler. CBS said, "You had to defeat him on the battlefield". Father Desbois said, "In one way or another", and to kill the idea and to "kill the people who carry" the idea of genocide.

Our government was doing that in the combat mission. Let us recognize the motion and let us stand by the indigenous peoples of Mesopotamia to protect them from this genocide.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I will emphatically state that the government does stand firm in its solidarity with the people who have suffered long under the influence of Daesh and ISIS. There is no debate about that on this side of the House.

I would ask my hon. colleague, why, nine months ago when the Conservatives were in power, did they not name this as a genocide then?

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we did. If the member chooses to go to *Hansard* and do an index search, she will find that I referred

to this as a genocide 24 times in the last session of this place. It is on the transcript. The then prime minister of Canada recognized it as a genocide on the floor of this place, as did the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of national defence.

Therefore, the position of the current government is a reversion from that of Canada last year. Why? It is because the Liberals ended the combat mission to stop the genocide and they are ashamed of it.

• (1345)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my friend gave a passionate speech excoriating Canada's support for a country that imposes, in his words, a barbaric form of sharia law on all within its borders.

The sultanate of Brunei is a country that has imposed, in three stages, the following in terms of sharia law: first, fines and imprisonment for such crimes as pregnancy out of wedlock, propagating religions other than Islam, or not attending Friday prayers; the second phase, floggings and amputations for property offences; and just this year, the third phase, execution by stoning for homosexuality or blasphemy.

This is a country with which the member and his government wanted to negotiate preferential economic benefits through the trans-Pacific partnership. The Conservatives never said a word about signing an agreement with a country that puts people to death because of their sexual orientation.

Therefore, I would ask the member to stand in the House, with all of his rhetoric about rights and respect for human rights, and tell members how he justifies condemning one country for abolishing people's human rights, but giving economic benefits to another that executes people for who they are.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I find it regrettable that the member chooses to make extraneous political points about trade agreements rather than focusing on genocide, which is the subject before the House. Second, my party is not the government today. Third, the member raises perfectly legitimate concerns, which I share and endorse with respect to those barbaric practices, including the stoning of homosexuals and all of that.

The member raises an important point, but by the way, Daesh is not a country. The so-called Islamic State, thanks to God, is not a state. It is an ersatz caliphate, not an actual one, not recognized.

There is a constant theme here, which is the threat to human dignity posed by the more extreme forms of Salafi doctrine that informs many in that government as well as Daesh. When we speak of root causes, I submit that the root cause is this: a doctrine of hatred that we must all call out for what it is and defeat.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before resuming debate, I believe the hon. opposition whip has a point of order or request.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, June 14th, 2016 at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

Business of Supply

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Calgary Midnapore for his very passionate speech on how critical this debate is, and how disappointing it is that the Liberal Party and the Liberal government is not supporting the motion.

They seem to be caught up in this whole idea that what is happening today in Iraq and Syria, and is being perpetrated by Daesh, the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq, is actually not a genocide. I could not disagree with the government more.

I want to take some time to explain to the Liberals what genocide is. As my colleague stated earlier, he brought a motion before the House about the Armenian genocide and the Liberals voted against it. I was proud that I was able, when we were in government, to bring forward a motion to recognize the Ukrainian Holodomor in 1932-33 as a genocide, which was supported and passed.

If we look at the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly back in 1948, that resolution which was drafted and advocated for by Raphael Lemkin clearly lays out what genocide is. His experiences in witnessing the genocides of the 20th century, starting with the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and Holodomor, really informed his definition, which was accepted by the world.

I just want to remind everyone what article II says in the convention, as it defines genocide. It says:

....any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Then it goes on in article III to say that these crimes can be punished under the convention:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

If we look at what ISIS has been doing in Iraq and Syria, in trying to perpetrate their genocidal tendencies around the world, every one of these articles in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide are checked off. There is no debate on what ISIS has perpetrated and the atrocities they have

committed, the way that they have bragged about committing genocide, the way that ISIS has gone out and targeted groups and encouraged hateful crimes against ethnic minorities and religious minorities throughout the region in their attempt to establish their caliphate.

I agree wholeheartedly with the members of the U.S. Congress, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, members of the United Kingdom's House of Commons and the entire British Parliament, and members of the European Union Parliament, who have all said that ISIS has committed a genocide. They have passed resolutions, they have passed motions, and they have condemned the actions of ISIS as genocide.

Why will the Government of Canada not? Why should this Parliament not stand with our most trusted allies?

The government keeps saying there is a process we have to go through under the United Nations, and that takes a resolution through the Security Council. However, we have human rights abusers who hold vetoes and sit on the Security Council. Because of the dysfunction of the United Nations Security Council, we will never get the United Nations to condemn the genocide that is being perpetrated and committed by ISIS.

● (1350)

In that vacuum, without that leadership from the United Nations, it is inherent upon this Parliament, this government, to stand and call ISIL's atrocities what they are, and that is genocide.

We do not have to go into great detail about all the atrocities. My colleague, the member for Calgary Midnapore, just clearly outlined how ISIS had gone out of its way to target the Yazidis, the Chaldeans, the Christians, the Shias. Anyone it considers apostates, who will not convert to its demented ideology and its warped sense of religion, is systematically executed.

We just learned this past week of 19 Yazidi girls who refused to convert to ISIS' way of thinking, to its view of Islam. They refused to be sex slaves to the ISIS terrorists so they were put in a cage and burned alive.

We saw the Yazidis trapped on Mount Sinjar. We saw how the ones who were captured were executed. We have seen how ISIS has gone after Christians. We have seen how it has gone after Turkmen. It continues to isolate and exterminate those who are not like them. That form of racism turned into genocide should never ever be tolerated.

I am sure everyone is wondering why the Liberals will not come out and call this genocide what it is. Even though they like to talk about the United Nations' responsibility to protect, they do not want to go out there and exercise that responsibility to protect.

A case in point is that one of the very first actions of the Liberal government was to pull out of the combat mission against ISIS. Rather than stand with their coalition partners and rather than be there with our fighter jets bombing ISIS, degrading its capabilities, they decided we would step back, let others do the heavy lifting and not be there in a combat role.

*Statements by Members***CALGARY STAMPEDE PARADE**

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on July 8, the greatest outdoor show on earth will kick off with the annual spectacle of the Calgary Stampede Parade.

As a past Calgary Stampede board of director, I am pleased that award-winning singer-songwriter Jann Arden and homegrown country music superstar Paul Brandt will lead the 2016 Calgary Stampede Parade. These two great Calgarians, both eight-time Juno Award winners, will lead more than 150 western themed entries, including 30 marching bands, 40 floats, 750 horses, and 250,000 people along the parade route. It is not just a parade marching down the avenue; it is a march through tradition, history, and local Calgary culture.

While our western roots are strong, we also have multicultural flair, with many people travelling from all over the world to walk and ride in the parade. I invite all Canadians to come down to Calgary this July.

* * *

GUELPH MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of the Guelph multicultural festival. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the festival, and I am proud to say that our diversity has only increased since the festival began.

Guelphites from a variety of backgrounds from around the world will come together to share food, music, fashion, and good company. It is cross-cultural events like these that demonstrate not only how diverse the community is, but also how Guelph lives up to Canadian values such as acceptance, understanding, and inclusion.

I would like to thank Delfino Callegari and all the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this festival a tremendous success over the past 30 years.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the city of Vancouver has released its finding for its 10th homelessness count, and the results are heartbreaking.

Over a 24-hour period in March, staff and hundreds of volunteers counted a record-breaking 1,847 homeless people in Vancouver, a 6% increase from 2015, of which 38% of the homeless population was aboriginal peoples. This is a city where the aboriginal population is only 2.5%. The count also saw an increase in those on disability and those who had employment income.

Homelessness is increasing and, to make matters worse, Canada is at risk of losing 21,000 low-income co-op units across the country. For B.C. alone, it is 4,000 units.

Canada needs a long-term national affordable housing program, and not just a two-year short-term initiative. Let us get on with it. No more band-aids, no more excuses. Real change means a real long-term national affordable housing program.

As we heard earlier, and as we have seen and witnessed on TV today, ISIS' degradation and its ultimate defeat is only going to be possible through combat and the heavy bombing that our coalition partners are carrying out. The uptake that had to be shared among other member nations of the coalition because Canada pulled back our CF-18s really speaks to what the Liberal government really feels about exercising the responsibility to protect, to protect those who cannot defend themselves, to protect those who are the target of ISIS hate, to protect those who are being killed, eliminated, and displaced because of the genocidal tendencies of ISIS.

We really need to exercise our moral and ethical beliefs and stand up for the words that are spoken by all members of the House.

Raphael Lemkin said, "If you act in the name of conscience you are stronger than any government in the world." It took great conscience for the Government of Canada, during World War I, to step in and stop the genocide that was taking place by the Ottoman Empire. It took great conscience and strength by Canadians who volunteered and signed up for the Canadian Armed Forces to stop Hitler's Holocaust in World War II.

It was Canadians who went in and fought genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia. It was only effective when they could actually fight, not peacekeeping but fighting.

• (1355)

The only way we can actually stop what is happening in Iraq and Syria today is to fight. I call upon the government to do the right thing, to admit that what is happening today in Iraq and Syria is a genocide. I ask the government to do the right thing and put our jets back in the fight, to do the right thing and stop these atrocities.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman will have five minutes for questions once we return from question period.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

*[English]***WALKING THE LINE FOR DIABETES 2016**

Ms. Kate Young (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the work of Jennifer Miller, a passionate and determined mother in London. Jennifer's two daughters, Haylee and Lilee, were both diagnosed with type 1 diabetes under the age of 10.

"Walking the Line for Diabetes 2016" was a passion project Jennifer created to bring awareness and make a difference in the future of all diabetics in Canada. She began her journey from the steps of London's own Banting House, the birthplace of insulin, to Parliament Hill. On June 6, Jennifer Miller completed her mission of walking 1,000 kilometres across Ontario.

Canadians such as Jennifer Miller have the power to change the conversation from a sense of defeat to empowering others who have been affected by this growing epidemic. I congratulate Jennifer. The people of London, as well as all Canadians, walk alongside her.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

FABROSE SOCCER CLUB

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since 1974, young families and athletes in Laval have been counting on the Fabrose soccer club to provide a range of services to players, coaches, referees, and other volunteers. As the honorary president of the 2016 Fabrose finals, I would like to underscore how much volunteers contribute to our community.

With summer fast approaching, I invite the people of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin and their families to come out in force to the Minotaures recreational soccer tournament this weekend.

This local festival is all about participation, sportsmanship, and energy. At the Marc-Aurèle-Fortin park in Fabreville, the focus will be on positive encouragement from parents and on sportsmanship.

• (1405)

I would like to thank and salute all of the volunteers who support sports teams from coast to coast.

* * *

[English]

TORONTO ARGONAUTS

Hon. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this year marks a new beginning for Canada's greatest sports franchise, the Toronto Argonauts. They are returning to the shores of Lake Ontario as they start their season in their new home at BMO Field.

Proud tradition meets innovation in the Toronto Argonauts organization. New President Michael Copeland is providing inspired leadership. COO Sara Moore will head up this year's Grey Cup celebrations in Toronto. CFL Hall of Famer Michael "Pinball" Clemons continues to play an important role in the Argos organization as vice-chair of the team, and also with his tireless work with charities, schools, and community groups.

Canadian football is a unique game. It is part of our Canadian identity. It helps make us who we are. Its history is part of our history. Among those adding new pages to the Argos 143-year, 16-Grey Cup history will be offensive lineman Corey Watman, a York—Simcoe resident from Queensville. With a revamped defence and the return of Ricky Ray at quarterback, Argos fans have a lot to cheer about as they aim for a hometown Grey Cup this year.

* * *

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 12, Filipino Canadians across the country will celebrate Philippine independence day, marking the 118th anniversary of Philippine independence. As an executive of the Canada-Philippines Inter-parliamentary Group, I had the privilege to stand today with the ambassador and raise the Philippine flag on Parliament Hill.

All across Canada, Filipino-Canadians make great contributions. Their hard work, active role in our communities, and boundless spirit make our country a richer place for all of us. Today, Canada is proud to be home to one of the largest and fastest growing Filipino communities in the world, many of whom call my riding of York

Centre home. Toronto's "little Manila" is in the heart of my riding, and this weekend I will be celebrating the many contributions the Filipino community makes to Canada.

On behalf of my constituents, and to everyone in this House, *mabuhay*.

* * *

[Translation]

PORTUGAL DAY

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on June 10, the Portuguese diaspora around the world is celebrating Portugal Day. The culture and language that have shaped us are among the many facets of these festivities and are what bring us all together.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the millions of Portuguese who live all around the world and who brought with them much more than just wine and chorizo.

More than anything, a Portuguese person who lives abroad is someone who exports their own way of life to the world. The contributions that Portuguese people make in the countries that welcome them are well known and generally very appreciated.

On behalf of this big family in the diaspora that I am a part of, I wish everyone a happy *Dia de Portugal*.

* * *

LE GRENIER FOOD BANK IN LÉVIS

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Le Grenier, the food bank in Lévis, is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year.

Last year, almost 5,800 food hampers were distributed to help out many individuals and families in Lévis who are struggling to make ends meet. In the past 25 years, 73,000 food hampers have been distributed and 140,000 meals have been served.

I would like to pay tribute to the volunteers and supporters of this food bank for its success and the important work they do in helping the most disadvantaged members of our society. I would especially like to congratulate the president, a congenial man by the name of Yvon Gosselin, who was awarded the Medal of the National Assembly for his contribution to Lévis.

I will be swimming across the St. Lawrence River along with 20 intrepid swimmers and kayakers on July 3 in order to save the soup kitchen.

Please donate the cost of a meal to traverseestlaurent.ca.

Congratulations to Yvon Gosselin and his entire team, and long live Le Grenier food bank in Lévis.

Statements by Members

[English]

APHASIA AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the first week of June is aphasia awareness week. A third of all Canadians who suffer a stroke will develop aphasia, a condition that makes it extremely difficult, and at times impossible, to speak to others. People who have aphasia still retain their intelligence and competence. They just need to find new ways to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Aphasia affects every relationship and almost every daily activity. Those affected cannot carry on a conversation as before, read a book, or send emails. They are likely to lose their jobs.

Aphasia awareness week focuses attention on this often misunderstood condition, and salutes health care professionals, researchers, and thousands of family members and volunteers across the country who provide treatment, training, and hope for people with aphasia. I especially salute the Aphasia Institute in North York, a place of courage and compassion, competent professionals, and amazing volunteers.

I ask members to please join me in commemorating aphasia awareness week.

* * *

• (1410)

WATCH ME GROW IN STYLE

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 29, 2014, Tammy Penner, the owner of Watch Me Grow in Style, suffered a major loss after the building that housed her small business burned to the ground in downtown New Liskeard. She lost everything. However, in the face of adversity, Tammy forged ahead and was determined to rebuild. I am pleased to inform this House today, Watch Me Grow in Style celebrates its grand reopening in its new location at 27 Armstrong Street South in New Liskeard.

Tammy's strength and perseverance in the face of adversity is a true testament of her northern Ontario spirit of resiliency. Please join me in congratulating Tammy on the grand reopening of Watch Me Grow in Style.

* * *

SELKIRK—INTERLAKE—EASTMAN

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, summer is a beautiful time in friendly Manitoba. This is especially true in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, where we can enjoy some of the best beaches on Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba, or enjoy fairs and festivals all summer long.

This weekend summer truly kicks off in my riding with the Lunder Agricultural Fair, and there is much more to take in. This year is the 50th anniversary of the Selkirk Highland Gathering and Heavy Games that celebrate the colourful Scottish culture and heritage. In Gimli we can celebrate the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba, *Islendingadagurinn*, or take in the world renowned Gimli Film Festival. If we were looking for something with a little more kick, we would have to stop in at some of the MRCA-accredited rodeos in Selkirk, Beausejour, Arborg or Ashern.

For the history buffs we have the Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site where we can explore the fur trade. There are also Metis Days, Winnipeg Beach Boardwalk Days, Lac du Bonnet's Fire and Water Music Festival and Eriksdale Creamery Days, just to name a few festivals in the time I have. I extend an invitation to Canadians from coast to coast to come to Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman and experience the friendly people, rich culture, and our natural beauty.

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENT WEEK

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that this week we celebrate Canadian environment week. This year's theme is "Why climate action matters to you".

[Translation]

The effects of climate change are already being felt around the world and are having an impact here in Canada on our weather, our wildlife, our air quality, our oceans, and especially our indigenous peoples.

[English]

This government is working hard to get the solutions Canadians want to fight climate change and grow our economy. We invite the members of this House, and indeed all Canadians, including indigenous peoples, to mark this year's environment week by submitting their climate action ideas to us at LetsTalkClimateAction.ca. I am delighted we are moving forward with enhancing ecological protection for Rouge National Urban Park. Let us reflect, discuss, and propose what we can do, individually and collectively, to protect our environment and foster clean economic—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cowichan—Malahat—Langford.

* * *

COWICHAN—MALAHAT—LANGFORD

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the hard-working women and men in agriculture in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford and their important role in local food security.

Blessed with Canada's only maritime-Mediterranean climatic zone, the Cowichan region is continually making a name for itself as a region capable of producing a wonderfully diverse range of high-quality farm-fresh produce, artisanal foods, and beverages. Whether it is organically grown produce of our numerous community-supported agricultural programs, the very fine wines of our many award-winning wineries, or the delectable pork, beef, lamb, chicken, turkey, and eggs raised from our pastures, our farms have what it takes to allow every visitor to sip and savour their way through a beautiful summer.

Oral Questions

As an owner of a small-scale farm myself, I am proud to stand here in support of our local food and drink producers and their role in making our region a highlight for the thousands of visitors who come to Vancouver Island every year.

* * *

SIX NATIONS

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in solidarity with the people of Six Nations. Last week, a senseless act of violence on Six Nations territory left three people wounded, including 16-year-old Ashton VanEvery, whose life came to an end far too soon. A student at Brantford Collegiate Institute, Ashton has been described by his friends and family as someone who had a good head on his shoulders and was always smiling.

The Six Nations of the Grand River, Canada's largest first nation, is a resilient community with strong leadership. I know that they will come together in support of all those affected during this trying time, with resolve to restore peace to the community.

I invite all members of this House to join me in solidarity and support for the victims, their families, and friends, and the entire Six Nations community. To Ashton's family, we extend our deepest condolences. They are in our thoughts and prayers.

* * *

•(1415)

HUMAN TOUCH AWARD

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to a special constituent in my riding. Marjorie Brewster is 86 years young and has volunteered at the Southlake Regional Health Centre pediatric oncology clinic for the past 27 years, and can be found there four days a week. Marjorie lost her own son to leukemia when he was only nine years old. She treats the children at the clinic as if they were her own. She spends her own money on toys for children who are undergoing cancer treatment and brings joy to them and their families. She is a shining light for these families during some pretty dark days.

Marjorie has been awarded the prestigious Human Touch Award by Cancer Care Ontario, celebrating the unsung heroes on the front lines of cancer patient care. Marjorie is a shining example of the positive impact one can have in a community through volunteerism. Marjorie is making a difference in our community every day.

My special thanks to Marjorie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ISIS has committed crimes against humanity aimed at Christians as well as other religious and ethnic minorities.

The United States has called this a genocide. The United Kingdom has done the same.

Will the Prime Minister finally join Canada's allies and recognize that the crimes perpetrated by ISIS constitute genocide?

[English]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada strongly condemns the atrocities and widespread abuses perpetrated by the so-called Islamic State against religious and ethnic communities. Whether ISIL's crimes constitute a genocide is not for us to decide. It is not a political determination. The determination is a legal one.

That is why we share the view of the governments of the U.S. and the U.K. and the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to the Secretary-General, that the situation must be the subject of an independent investigation by a competent court or tribunal.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that Canada needs new fighter jets. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to hold a transparent and competitive process to purchase the fleet of jets.

Will the Prime Minister commit to act like a statesman and listen to what the experts have to say about this? Will he follow through on his promise to hold an open process to provide our men and women in uniform with the best equipment available so that they can serve our country well?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, I find it rich that the member is talking about open competition, considering they were going to be sole-sourcing the F-35. Right now we are in the process of doing our due diligence in making sure we have the right information, but no decision has been made. However, we will be replacing the fighter.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the signature to begin the F-35 process was made by the Liberals. Whatever, Canada needs new fighter jets. Whatever the Prime Minister claimed during his campaign, and no matter what was stated in his platform, it is now time for him to act like a statesman. Will the Prime Minister make the commitment to provide our men and women in uniform with the best equipment they need through a transparent and competitive process?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making sure that our men and women have the right equipment, and we will continue to do so in all our services.

Oral Questions

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces do not ask for much. They go where we ask them to go, they follow orders dutifully, and they get the job done. The least we can do is help them protect themselves as they protect us. However, this is a Liberal hat trick. They pull our jets out and leave our troops vulnerable; they allow campaign promises to determine equipment purchases, instead of the military experts; and they break their promise for an open and competitive process.

Why is the minister putting politics ahead of the safety of our men and women in uniform?

• (1420)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a former serving member in combat, I can assure you that my government and I would never be putting our men and women in vulnerable situations.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, weeks ago, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated that ISIS “kills Christians because they are Christians; Yazidis because they are Yazidis; Shia because they are Shia”.

The Obama administration has clearly and unequivocally labelled the atrocities committed by ISIS against these vulnerable minorities as crimes against humanity that constitute a genocide. Yet the Liberal government has the gall to say that there is not enough evidence and that further investigation needs to occur.

Are there any Liberals who are embarrassed that our Prime Minister is afraid to take a moral position and call the murder of innocents a genocide?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear about what Secretary of State Kerry actually said, because the Conservatives on purpose leave out this paragraph. He said:

I want to be clear. I am neither judge, nor prosecutor, nor jury with respect to the allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing by specific persons. Ultimately, the full facts must be brought to light by an independent investigation....

That is what our government is doing, and that is why we sent a letter, and that is why we have received a response from the Iraqi ambassador thanking us for a strong stand against ISIL.

* * *

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada rendered a historic unanimous decision. It recognized the constitutional right to medical assistance in dying in certain circumstances.

Instead of doing things right, the Liberals chose to play politics with this matter of rights. The Liberals refused to listen to the experts and rejected all of the opposition's substantive amendments.

How will they fix a bill that does not even respect Canadians' rights?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand up and speak to medical assistance in dying, Bill C-14, the legislation we put forward to provide a national framework for medical assistance in dying in this country. This national framework would provide and strike the right balance between personal autonomy and protection of the vulnerable. This is a significant step forward for us as a country. It certainly respects rights, balances rights, and is justifiable and responsible in terms of the time frame we had to put it in place.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two courts, the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Ontario Superior Court, say that what the Minister of Justice just said is wrong, and we trust those court decisions.

The Liberals have badly mishandled medically assisted dying. It should have been non-partisan and evidence-based, and they have made it political. They steamrolled Parliament to pass an unconstitutional bill. Now the Senate is refusing to pass the legislation without the amendments we proposed.

Liberals know full well that their bill will not survive a court challenge. Will they now admit that the bill must be fixed, and will they fix it?

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the premise of the question. The reality is, with respect to the court decisions from Alberta and otherwise, that those court decisions were with respect to specific amendments that were in place prior to June 6. They were not decisions with respect to Bill C-14, the legislation we have put forward.

The Supreme Court of Canada provided great deference to Parliament to put in place the necessary and balanced approach to medical assistance in dying, and that is exactly what we have done in Bill C-14.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are in a mess entirely of their own making. The NDP tried to bring all parties together at the special committee. We tried to fix the bill at second reading. Then we tried again to fix the bill at report stage. Every step of the way, we proposed solutions based on witness recommendations, and the Liberals just rejected them all, every step of the way. Will the Liberals finally admit that they have made a mistake, and will they fix the bill to make sure it respects the rights of Canadians?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has already indicated, we responded to the Supreme Court of Canada decision and put in place a piece of legislation that would allow Canadians to have the autonomy they require to access medical assistance in dying, while simultaneously upholding the protection of vulnerable people. It is our hope that the Senate will deal with this legislation and that we will be able to, as soon as possible, allow Canadians who want that access to have it. However, we want to also, at the same time, make sure vulnerable people are protected, and we will do the work necessary.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to stop providing false information.

We can protect vulnerable people and respect the rights of Canadians. The government rejected all of the opposition's proposals to make Bill C-14 consistent with the charter and Carter. As a result, the Senate is making the same proposals. If the bill is not amended, it will be challenged.

How can the Liberals justify forcing people who are sick and vulnerable to go to court to protect their rights?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, because of the legislation we put in place, ideally as soon as possible, people who require dignity in their last days of life would be able to have that access. Right now, unfortunately, there is no legislation in place; there is a patchwork of regulatory processes across the country that do not adequately respect the safeguards that need to be there. We hope our colleagues will work with us to see that this legislation passes at the earliest possible date.

* * *

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, under fire for ignoring the plight of the Yazidis, the minister said, "...acceptance of refugees is based on those who are most vulnerable...".

Hundreds of thousands of Yazidi people have been murdered, tortured, raped, sold into sexual slavery, and forced from their homes at the hands of ISIS. These are the most vulnerable people in the world. ISIS has committed genocide and war crimes against ethnic and religious groups in the country, including Yazidis. Why does the minister not feel any urgency in helping these people?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course the situation facing Yazidis is deplorable, but from the beginning we have welcomed vulnerable refugees as determined by the United Nations, irrespective of religion. In addition, we are admitting refugees from other countries, including Yazidis. We are very proud of the fact that we have admitted almost four times as many refugees as did the Conservatives.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, department officials, on May 12, admitted that they had processed nine cases of Yazidis as part of tens of thousands of people brought to Canada by the government's Syrian refugee initiative.

We then learned that the minister had been approached months ago about a plan to bring 400 Yazidis girls to Canada. He denied hearing about this. Shaarey Zedek Synagogue in Winnipeg is raising funds to bring Yazidis to Canada.

With so many Canadians wanting the government to act on this, why is the minister completely ignoring the plight of these girls?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the number nine is wrong. Our department does not record the nationalities or religions of the refugees.

I have, in fact, spoken to the individuals in that synagogue to which the member refers. We had a good conversation. We are working actively to bring those refugees to Canada as soon as possible. Her facts are wrong.

We are working very hard to admit refugees of all descriptions, including Yazidis.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people in Saint-Ubalde in my riding joined forces and raised \$25,000 to cover a refugee family's expenses for one year.

They rented a house and made all the arrangements. I visited the house and there are even photos of the family on the refrigerator. The family is still waiting for an arrival date. This situation was urgent during the Liberals' campaign.

Will the minister speed up the process, show some respect for people in the regions, and allow them to welcome the family this summer?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have already expedited the process. A few weeks ago, I said that anyone who had submitted an application before March 31 would arrive in Canada by the end of this year or early next year.

Our challenge is that Canadians are so generous that it is hard to admit refugees fast enough. However, we are doing our best and we have expedited the process. It is wonderful to see how generous Canadians are.

[*English*]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding has been waiting five months for the arrival of Syrian refugee families. Local groups have raised money and paid rent on housing.

The Liberals' inaction has cost my constituents over \$10,000, and they are frustrated. While many government-sponsored refugees in other ridings are having trouble making ends meet, funds raised in my community for the needs of refugee families are going to waste.

Why has the minister failed these refugee families?

Oral Questions

• (1430)

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of what our government has done on refugees, and I am even prouder that Canadians have been so extraordinarily generous that we are having trouble keeping up with the demand from all these generous Canadians who want to host refugees.

That is a wonderful thing. It is unique in this world, I would say, that we are so welcoming. We are accelerating the process to let these refugees in as quickly as we possibly can.

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like other charitable Canadians, the Unitarian Church of Calgary raised funds, collected donations of household goods, and completed paperwork to privately sponsor a refugee family fleeing Iraq.

After doing all this work, the Liberals nullified their application by changing the mix to admit more government-sponsored refugees and fewer privately sponsored ones.

Would the minister explain his thinking in frustrating generous Canadians who are volunteering their time and money to help refugees?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I have answered that question.

It is more than a little passing strange that these same Conservatives who wanted us to slow down are now telling us to speed up. These are the same people who let in only about a quarter of the number we let in, the same people who deprived refugees of basic health care, which was unconstitutional. I do not think they have the right to criticize us on refugees.

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the immigration committee has heard testimony from Syrian refugees. They are stuck in bug-ridden apartments, isolated without language training services, and cut off from the job market.

Could the minister tell the House when he will start providing refugees with the tools they need to thrive in Canada?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we already are providing them with tools to the extent that 99% of them have permanent housing, and we are making great progress on the question of jobs and language.

I just heard today that the Liberal government has been incredibly efficient. In committee today, I released the following numbers: whereas we had budgeted to spend \$455 million on refugees, we ended up spending \$136 million less. So we saved money for the taxpayers of Canada.

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INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, five months ago, the Prime Minister came to La Loche and promised “the federal government will be there...in the weeks, months and indeed years to come”. Yet since the shooting in La Loche, the much-needed services are piecemeal and inadequate, and the federal government is nowhere to be found.

Will the government now make good on its promise and ensure that La Loche has the culturally appropriate mental health services it needs?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts remain with the community and the survivors of the terrible tragedy that took place in La Loche. As the hon. member knows, we undertook to stand with La Loche and the area for the long haul to build a stronger, safer, and healthier community.

We continue to work with the Province of Saskatchewan, the village, and the adjacent first nation community to provide health supports, to ensure safety at schools, the hospital, and the community at large, and to provide new and better opportunities, such as working to bring back Project Venture for young people.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the health minister for visiting Kashechewan and Attawapiskat with me last week. It is ground zero in the indigenous health crisis.

The minister met people who have lost loved ones because there were no doctors, and children with respiratory illnesses, because Tylenol is the only medication available, yet there was no money in the budget for the shortfall, and she did not make any new commitments on health services to the region.

I have a simple question. The youth and leaders will be in Ottawa next week. Would she be willing to put the money on the table so we can end this discriminatory, substandard, third world health standard?

• (1435)

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we did have a very important visit to both Attawapiskat and Kashechewan last week. I know that the young people from Attawapiskat are coming to Ottawa next week.

I want him to also know that yesterday I met with the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council and had an excellent meeting discussing these very issues. We talked about strategies for mental health. We talked about what programs are being successful, and we will work with them to implement the most successful programs available.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are intentionally grounding our fighter jets. Our Conservative government announced a \$400-million life-extension project for our CF-18s to keep our fleet operational until 2025, but the Liberals have not invested a single dollar, or awarded a single contract, for the life-extension project. They are intentionally creating a capability gap, solely based on politics.

Why is the Minister of National Defence allowing the Prime Minister to play politics with the replacement of our CF-18s?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record here, if it was not for the mismanagement of procurement by the previous government, we would not have actually had to extend the CF-18s. We should have purchased new ones so that we did not have this gap that has been created.

However, do not worry, Mr. Speaker, our government is committing to replacing the CF-18s, and we are diligently working toward this.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the credibility gap is on the Liberal front bench and is the only reason why our air force could experience a capability gap.

The Liberals are ignoring the Royal Canadian Air Force, they are ignoring industry, and they are ignoring the academic experts. Now they are refusing to continue the CF-18 life-extension project. This decision will endanger the lives of our fighter pilots.

Will the defence minister tell the Prime Minister to stop playing politics with a decision that could jeopardize the security and safety of our troops and our nation?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, because of mismanagement, we have no choice but to extend the CF-18s to 2025, and we are working toward that, but the gap does remain, and we are making sure that we are going to be replacing our CF-18s. We are working diligently to make this happen, because our men and women deserve the best equipment to carry out their missions.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the reports confirm that the government has made up its mind to buy the Super Hornet. The only thing left to do is to find some red lipstick to put on the pig to make this thing presentable. This is very typical of the Liberals.

The minister says that no decision has been made and that information is being gathered in order to make the best choice for the Canadian Forces.

If that is the case, can the minister tell us whom he is in contact with in the industry, other than Boeing, to replace our CF-18s?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of information, obviously, because we have been part of the F-35 program. Our officials are gathering the information. No decision has been made yet. When we have the appropriate information, we will be making Canadians and the House aware of this.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the more time goes by, the more the decision to buy the Super Hornet makes no sense. Retired Colonel George Petrolekas does not see the point in buying the Super Hornets as a short-term measure. It will take two or three years just to get the aircraft.

Why not immediately launch an open and transparent process to find a replacement for the CF-18s? If this is so urgent, why deal only with Boeing and create jobs in the U.S.?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated many times before, no decision has been made yet. We are working toward this.

As I stated, we are committed to replacing the CF-18s, and our officials are working diligently toward this and making sure that we purchase the right fighter for the capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ms. Hoodfar, an anthropologist who teaches at Concordia University, is currently in Evin prison, where political prisoners are detained. The situation is all the more worrisome because she needs prescription drugs to keep her healthy, but nobody knows if she has access to those drugs.

Can the minister tell us exactly what his department is doing to secure Ms. Hoodfar's immediate release?

[English]

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is very concerned about the detention of Dr. Hoodfar in Iran. We remain in close contact with her family. In fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I have met with her family. Our consular officials are in constant contact with her family as well. We have raised this issue with like-minded countries that will help us in raising this issue.

Despite the difficulties of not having a diplomatic presence in Iran, we are going to do whatever we can to release Dr. Hoodfar.

● (1440)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after being interrogated by the revolutionary guard since March, Canadian professor Homa Hoodfar was arrested and jailed at the notorious Evin prison on Monday. Her family is worried sick about her health and safety, and with reason. We should remember that in 2003, another Canadian woman was killed in the same prison.

What is the government doing to secure the immediate release of Homa Hoodfar?

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank the hon. member for raising this issue. This is a very important file. We are very concerned about the well-being of Dr. Hoodfar. Given the realities on the ground, we are raising this issue with our like-minded partners. Because of privacy concerns, I cannot get into further details on that.

I want to assure the hon. member and everybody in the House that we are taking this case very seriously.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Rouge National Urban Park is a result of hard work by many in my constituency. I want to thank them for their commitment to making this vision a reality. They worked for the past forty years with different levels of government and overcame many obstacles. Our government introduced legislation today to ensure that the full potential of this park comes to life.

Could the Minister of Environment and Climate Change tell the House how she will protect the environment in North America's largest urban park?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to extend my thanks to the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park, other greater Toronto area colleagues, and the many Canadian stakeholders and citizens for their advocacy and hard work on Rouge National Urban Park, Canada's first national urban park within one hour of seven million Canadians.

Today I am thrilled that we are taking the legislative steps required to strengthen ecological protection of the Rouge while respecting and promoting a vibrant farming community within the park.

In close collaboration with the Government of Ontario, we are confident that this will lead to the expansion of the Rouge National Urban Park to close to 80 square kilometres. What a great present to Canada for our 150th birthday.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past, the Liberals consulted Emmett Macfarlane on constitutional matters. Perhaps they should consult him again on electoral reform. Here is what he says: "I can't think of a good reason why Canadian voters should not be consulted on whether they favour the proposed new system over the status quo". He also says, "surely it would be a sad irony to bring in a new electoral system when a majority of Canadians might have rejected it in a popular vote".

Is Professor Macfarlane not right? Is there not a need for a national referendum before we change the way in which we elect members to the House of Commons?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and remind all members in this House that the special all-party committee that has now been agreed upon is going to reach out to experts and academics and to Canadians from all walks of life.

Additionally, our decision will be informed by the work that all 338 MPs in this place do in reaching out to their constituents and bringing their hopes and aspirations into this conversation.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, red lights are flashing all over the place, but the minister does not even seem to notice.

Oral Questions

A well-respected *Toronto Star* analyst confirmed that the Liberals' position on the referendum is not in sync with that of the Canadian people.

A *Le Devoir* reporter wrote, "The people will not have the final say because the government has dismissed the idea of a referendum".

Will the minister ever understand that the government cannot change the voting system without holding a referendum? That is what everyone seems to be saying.

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned in this House before, I have a great deal of respect for a free and independent press. I do not believe that there is anything more important to democracy than a well-informed electorate. I also believe that the opportunity we have before us in this House, as we review opportunities and options available to us to modernize our electoral system, requires us to reach out to those Canadians who do not have the platform that many of us enjoy.

Reaching out to those Canadians is an important priority of mine, and I am looking forward to what members from all 338 ridings bring to the committee to add to its report.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently the Prime Minister told the *Toronto Star* that it is not up to any one person, even if it is the Prime Minister, to define exactly what the right system is, but as per usual, his actions do not match his words.

If it is really not about politicians and their preferred system, he will listen to all Canadians, and three-quarters of Canadians are calling for a referendum prior to any changes on their electoral system.

If the Prime Minister is really open to listening to Canadians, as he claims, will he hold a referendum and give Canadians the final say, yes or no?

● (1445)

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister, and indeed all of us, heard from Canadians loud and clear when over 60% of them voted for electoral reform. The best way to go about this process is not to make the decision on their behalf but to reach out to them and hear from them how they would like to go about this process. That is why we committed to bringing forward a special all-party committee to review the options available.

I am looking forward to the work all 338 MPs will do to enhance the work of that committee.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the fact that the government has misled this place on the question of ISIS's genocide.

Oral Questions

The government denies the recognition of the genocide by the United States, even though Secretary Kerry said, “Daesh is responsible for genocide...[and] is genocidal by self-proclamation”.

The government also says that it needs an international tribunal of lawyers to declare a genocide, yet the House recognized the Armenian genocide as such in 2004, without an international judicial process. True, the Liberal government voted against that recognition.

Are the Liberals now saying that the Armenian genocide did not happen, because it has not been recognized by an international tribunal?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we recognize the Armenian genocide and also that we recognize the fact that it was 100 years after the fact, which makes it a special, extraordinary circumstance.

Canada continues to stand side by side with our allies, including the U.S., the U.K., the EU, and the UN. We will contribute all we can to hold the perpetrators to account for their atrocities.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has made a formal request to the UN. We have heard back from the ambassador from Iraq thanking our Minister of Foreign Affairs, our Prime Minister, and Canada for its strong stand against ISIL in Iraq.

The determination of genocide should be a legal—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICER

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget officer appeared before the Standing Committee on Finance this morning.

It was a good opportunity to remind everyone that the Liberals took a page from the NDP playbook during the election campaign in promising to strengthen the role of the parliamentary budget officer, make his office truly independent, and give him the resources he needs to do his job properly.

Seven months after the election, however, nothing has changed and nothing is happening. Time is moving on. Just some simple changes to the Parliament of Canada Act would suffice to enhance his independence. We could simply bring back the private member's bill introduced by the member for Outremont in the previous Parliament.

When will the Liberals make the office of the parliamentary budget officer a fully independent and well-funded organization?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have tremendous respect and support for the work of the parliamentary budget officer. We will continue to work closely with his office.

We also would like to draw the attention of the hon. member to what the PBO said recently about what this government had done to

render the budget and estimates process more transparent and open. We will continue to view his work as being important and work to establish a more open and transparent government and budgeting process for Canadian.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's community pastures program helped restore and protect millions of acres of native prairie grasslands for both agriculture and conservation until the successful program was canned by the Conservatives. Now management is being transferred to the provinces, with no conditions or even an environmental assessment, and some of this public land is now being sold to private interests.

Saskatchewan's prairie grasslands are among Canada's top 10 endangered places. Will the government now put the transfers on hold and restore the community pastures program?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, the previous government began the transfer of these pastures a number of years ago. However, I and my officials will be having further discussions with the provinces on the process regarding the divestiture of community pastures.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, three months ago we asked when the Liberals would start funding the cenotaph program again. The Minister of Veterans Affairs claimed to be on top of it, but we have heard nothing since. The Liberals do not like military symbols and it is clear that honouring our veterans is no longer a top priority for them.

When will the minister do what he said he would do and reinstate the funding for the cenotaph program?

• (1450)

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is important to us on this side of the House that we honour and respect the men and women who have served our great nation boldly in the Canadian Armed Forces. That is through any theatre we have participated in, from Juno Beach to our peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan and the like.

We will continue to do that. We have restored that in budget 2016, with a committed and dedicated program to fund our community war memorial programs and community events.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): There is more, Mr. Speaker.

With the funding cuts to the cenotaph program came the cancellation of a monument to honour the 40,000 military personnel who served honourably in Afghanistan and the 158 who unfortunately gave their lives there. It is shameful that the government cannot pay a small price to recognize the huge price paid by those military personnel.

How and when are the Liberals going to honour our Afghan veterans?

[English]

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not true. The Conservatives had a piecemeal approach, where they had to go back from time to time, year after year, to reinstate it, and, in fact, it had run its course.

This government is so committed to honouring the men and women who have served our great nation that we have committed to this in our full budget cycles, so we can honour and respect those in a regular ongoing fashion. That is what this government will continue to do.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, between 2001 and 2014, 40,000 Canadian Forces members served in Afghanistan, including 158 who made the ultimate sacrifice. These brave men and women deserve recognition, yet the Minister of Veterans Affairs has not confirmed when or if the national memorial for Canada's mission in Afghanistan will be built.

If the minister claims to treat our veterans with care, compassion, and respect, then why is he refusing to give them the recognition they deserve?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the member that we have to honour the men and women who have served our country bravely and honourably in our Afghan mission. We will do that in my work with Canadian heritage and, in fact, with the members who served on that mission.

I will remind that party that it announced the project twice and did not get it built under its watch. We will do this and continue to honour those men and women who have served our great nation boldly and bravely.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's total merchandise trade with the Pacific Alliance, a grouping of Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico, reached \$46.2 billion in 2015. In fact, the four countries account for more than 70% of Canada's two-way trade with the whole Latin America region.

Could the Minister of International Trade update the House on what she is doing to promote deeper economic and people-to-people linkages with this important region?

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in Mexico City, I was proud to sign a joint declaration making Canada the first country to enter into a strategic partnership with the Pacific Alliance, one of the most important economic blocs in the Americas.

Oral Questions

This is another example of our government's progressive approach to promoting trade and investment with fast-growing markets across the world. This initiative will help diversify our trading partners and create good-paying jobs for middle-class Canadians.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Liberals promised to continue the small business tax cuts brought in by Conservatives. Instead, once in power, they broke their promise and raised its taxes.

Also, just last night, the Liberals actually voted against a motion that would allow them to follow through on their promise.

Why did the Liberals break their promise and turn their backs on our job creators?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2016 focuses on growing our economy for all Canadians. We know that a healthy economy improves business conditions for small and medium-sized enterprises and Canadian businesses. We know that helping Canadian consumers and families will help businesses, as they are their customers and we can better sell their goods and services.

A better economy for all Canadians and more revenue for business helps everyone. This will make a stronger economy for all Canadians. That is the good work we are doing.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked a question about the U.S. surcharge on the export of supercalendered paper. I was told that the government has called for the creation of a binational committee.

For months I have been asking the government to take action and form a special committee. Obviously, the government is dragging its feet. Even the Premier of Quebec does not trust the situation and does not feel reassured. The 184 employees at the Resolute mill in Kénogami will be without work for 11 days and that is just the start.

Will the Prime Minister stop pretending to work on this issue and start making some phone calls?

● (1455)

Hon. Chrystia Freeland (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about the United States' action on this file. We are in regular contact with the stakeholders, including the Resolute mill. My team is also in contact with the office of Quebec's minister of forestry and the economy.

Oral Questions

We have called for the creation of a special binational panel under chapter 19 of NAFTA. Today we are taking formal steps toward establishing a WTO focus group. We will defend Canada's interests.

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LABOUR

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minimum Age Convention, which dates back to 1973, is one of the International Labour Organization's fundamental conventions and is key to promoting decent work. International labour standards have an impact on labour laws and practices and also help improve working conditions around the world.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour tell the House about the government's initiatives on labour conditions all over the world?

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in Geneva, the minister announced our government's ratification of the International Labour Organization's convention on minimum age. This convention requires ratifying countries to set a minimum age for employment of at least 15 years and to prohibit hazardous work for young workers. This sends a clear message about Canada's values and shows children that children's rights are not only a moral, but a legal obligation as well.

We stand together with countries around the world, denouncing child labour, exploitation, and abuse. We continue working toward the full international respect for fundamental rights for workers.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today's genocide debate reminds us that the Liberals are just not that interested in international human rights. That is becoming very obvious as we learn about another Liberal smoke-and-mirrors show. Their new office of everything to replace the Office of Religious Freedom is not actually a separate office at all. It is just a line within the Department of Foreign Affairs, without an ambassador.

How about an actual office, with an actual ambassador, with an actual mandate and actual responsibilities?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how about an actual office of human rights, freedoms and inclusion? The new office expands on the work of the former office and holds a comprehensive vision to improve all human rights, of course, including the freedom of religion.

In order to support this approach, our budget dedicated to the promotion of human rights has tripled. Canadians are stronger not in spite of our differences, but because of them. Promoting acceptance and protecting the differences that make us so unique cannot be divided. They are universal, indivisible, and interdependent.

[Translation]

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Senate amended Bill C-14 by deleting the criterion of reasonably foreseeable death in order to allow the most vulnerable to have access to medical assistance in dying. That is what the Barreau du Québec, the lawyers for the Carter family, the eminent constitutional law expert Peter Hogg, the Bloc Québécois, and the NDP were calling for all along.

Why is the Minister of Justice intent on withdrawing the right to self-determination from the most vulnerable people in society, the people suffering from a grievous and irremediable illness, disease, or disability that causes intolerable suffering?

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the amendment that the Senate voted on last night reflects and puts forward a substantive amendment to Bill C-14. We sought to thoughtfully consider this complex matter to ensure we respected the rights of all Canadians and balanced those rights, balanced personal autonomy with respect for the vulnerable.

This is a momentous change in our country in what we are doing with respect to medical assistance in dying. We need to take a responsible approach that is reasonable, and this is what we have found in Bill C-14.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Thériault (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is avoiding this fundamental question, and I will put it to her in another way.

Given that medical assistance in dying can only be accessed as a result of a freely given and informed request that is strictly voluntary, on what basis is the minister assuming the authority to oppose the will and the autonomy of the most vulnerable people in our society, those who are in unbearable pain, knowing that she is imposing on them the inhumane burden of a hunger strike, or of having to win their case in court?

● (1500)

[English]

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this chamber before, the Supreme Court of Canada courts do not hold a monopoly on the promotion or protection of human rights. Parliament plays a role in terms of being an ally to the vulnerable.

We have sought, in a very considered way, to put forward legislation that will provide a national framework for medical assistance in dying in our country. Just because there are constitutional risks with respect to a particular piece of legislation does not mean the bill is unconstitutional.

[*Translation*]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I wish to draw the attention of members to the presence in our gallery of this year's recipients of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards. The recipients of the Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award are Susan Aglukark, Marie Chouinard, Ben Heppner, Robert Lantos, and Suzanne Lebeau. The recipient of the Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Performing Arts is John D McKellar.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*English*]

The Speaker: I invite all hon. members to meet the recipients at a reception in Room 216 North after question period.

I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Ed Doherty, Minister responsible for Service New Brunswick, Aboriginal Affairs and the Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation for the Province of New Brunswick.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if someone from the government could inform the House as to what we will be debating for the remainder of this week and next week when we return from our constituencies.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would love to inform the House what the plan is.

This afternoon we will continue debate on the Conservative opposition motion.

Tomorrow, we will resume debate on Bill C-15, the budget legislation. We have been in discussion with our opposition colleagues, and I hope we will conclude third reading at the end of day tomorrow.

Monday and Tuesday of next week will be allotted days.

On Wednesday, we will have a debate on concurrence of the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities concerning the transportation of grain. Following that debate, we would then take up second reading of Bill C-13, which implements the WTO trade facilitation agreement.

On Thursday, we will resume third reading debate on Bill C-6, Citizenship Act amendments.

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, should you seek it, I hope you will find unanimous consent for the motion that notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the order is for consideration of report stage or at third reading stage of Bill C-210, An Act to amend the National Anthem Act (gender), if the member for Ottawa—Vanier is not present to move the concurrence of report stage or the third reading motions, they may be moved by the member for Orléans.

Speaker's Ruling

The Speaker: Does the hon. chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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POINTS OF ORDER

TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised on April 18, 2016 by the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby concerning the procedural admissibility of Motion No. 43 standing in the name of the hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

● (1505)

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for raising this matter, as well as the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition and the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge for their contributions.

The member for New Westminster—Burnaby contended during his intervention that the motion in question, Motion No. 43, contravenes Standing Order 68(4), which grants ministers of the crown the power to introduce motions of instruction to a committee to study a matter and bring forth a bill based thereon. As there is no explicit provision in the Standing Orders for private members to do the same, and the very few relevant examples provide no justification, he concluded that the motion is inadmissible.

[*English*]

The House leader of the official opposition, as well as the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge, agreed that the Standing Orders do limit this prerogative to ministers only but continued, arguing that that alone cannot therefore be interpreted as the only way to provide such instructions to a committee.

In fact, this is precisely why the motion sponsored by the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge provides for a special order that allows the House to determine ultimately how it wishes to proceed. This, he felt, was in keeping with the regular practice of the House to adopt motions to regulate its proceedings or to provide for procedural mechanisms that are not found in its Standing Orders.

Thus, where the disagreement lies in this matter is not in whether a private member can propose a motion instructing a committee to bring in a bill pursuant to Standing Order 68(4), for there is agreement that they cannot. That is a provision that is now reserved strictly for ministers.

Instead, the question is rather the following: Do the Standing Orders or practices of this House permit the presentation of such a motion?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Since Confederation, the rules of the House of Commons have provided for two methods by which public bills can be introduced in the House; that is, either a member moves for leave to introduce a bill or a committee presents a report after having been ordered by the House to prepare and bring in a bill. The latter method has been employed only rarely.

[English]

Changes to the Standing Orders, and in particular Standing Order 68, in February 1994 specified that a minister could move such a motion under government orders, while, with the addition of paragraph (4)(b), a private member would have to do so through the process of private members' business.

Then, in March 2003, the third report of the Special Committee on the Modernization and Improvement of the Procedures of the House of Commons recommended several provisional changes to the rules pertaining to private members' business, including the temporary suspension of Standing Orders 68(4)(b) and 7(b).

Thus, since the concurrence in the report by the House on March 17, 2003, private members have no longer been able to instruct a committee to prepare and bring in a bill pursuant to Standing Order 68. This became a permanent change to the Standing Orders on May 11, 2005, when the House concurred in the 37th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

[Translation]

Of note is the fact that, during the time that Standing Order 68(4)(b) was suspended, notice was given of a private members' motion instructing a committee to bring in a bill pursuant to that same Standing Order. On March 22, 2004, the Acting Speaker made a statement in the House declaring that, due to an error, motion No. 479 was improperly before the House and directing the clerk to modify the text of the motion so that it took the form of a resolution rather than an instruction.

[English]

However, while the Standing Orders describe the process for private members' business, they do not fully prescribe the limits to what is admissible as a private member's motion, other than those that exist in relation to the financial prerogative of the crown and the limit set out in Standing Order 68(4).

● (1510)

[Translation]

Other guidance can be found in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, at page 1119, which provides a broad description of the types of motions that private members can introduce:

Private Members' motions are used to introduce a wide range of issues and are framed either as orders or resolutions, depending on their intent. Motions attempting to make a declaration of opinion or purpose, without ordering or requiring a particular course of action, are considered resolutions....The government is not bound to adopt a specific policy or course of action as a result of the adoption of such a resolution since the House is only stating an opinion or making a declaration of purpose. This is in contrast to those motions whose object is to give a direction to committees, Members or officers of the House or to regulate House proceedings and, as such, are considered Orders once adopted by the House.

[English]

In the past, such orders by private members have not usually taken the form of instruction to a committee to bring in a bill. While it may seem that two exceptions to this are found in Motion M-411 in 2003 and Motion M-541 in 2004, as the member for New Westminster—Burnaby pointed out, their admissibility was never questioned as these items were neither placed on the order of precedence, nor moved or debated. Thus, they cannot be looked upon as precedents either way.

Given the evidence, the Chair cannot state categorically that Motion M-43, in its current form, offends the provisions and limitations of Standing Order 68(4); its wording is not so direct as to allow the Chair to draw that firm a conclusion. Instead, Motion M-43 is worded in such a way that it could in fact be viewed as an alternate path to Standing Order 68(4), as has been suggested by both the House leader for the official opposition and the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge. They indicated that, although the motion does propose an instruction to the Standing Committee on Finance, it also takes the form of a special order so that the House may proceed in a manner not stipulated in the rules of the House, should it so choose.

O'Brien and Bosc, at page 528, further supports the notion that it is ultimately up to the House to determine whether to adopt a proposal put before it:

A motion is a proposal moved by one Member in accordance with well-established rules that the House do something, order something done or express an opinion with regard to some matter. A motion initiates a discussion and gives rise to the question to be decided by the House.

Accordingly, I am prepared to permit debate on the motion standing in the name of the member for Calgary Rocky Ridge to continue in order to provide the House with the opportunity to determine whether or not it wishes to proceed in the manner outlined in the member's motion. Therefore, the motion will retain its position on the order of precedence and can proceed in its current form.

[Translation]

That being said, the Chair remains aware of different views expressed in reference to the admittedly unusual approach set out in Motion No. 43. In order to provide the House and the Chair with greater clarity and assurance, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs may wish to examine the matter further, with a view to reviewing the guidelines with respect to the procedural admissibility of private member's motions and report back to the House any conclusions and recommendations at which it may arrive.

I would like to thank hon. members for their attention in this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1515)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ISIS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Business of Supply

The Speaker: There are five minutes remaining in questions and comments after the speech of the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his statement. Again, I believe he could find consensus on all sides of the House that we believe that the atrocities against vulnerable populations by ISIS/ISIL are deplorable.

However, I asked this earlier today. I saw that the former government, when it had the opportunity to do so, put forth motions related to ISIS. Where they talked about the threat of ISIS to vulnerable populations and its barbaric acts, they did not include the word genocide. I would ask the member why they did not do that when they had the opportunity.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as has already been clearly articulated here, members of the previous government during the Conservative time clearly said that it was genocide. We did not need a motion to pronounce it because the government already did pronounce it as a genocide.

Something I was incredibly proud of is that at the time our prime minister, our foreign minister, and our defence minister would stand up and say that Daesh was committing a genocide against the vulnerable religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq. I wish that the current government would do that, that it would show some leadership and show some backbone and actually stand up and denounce ISIS, and stand with our allies rather than wriggle around on a hung jury that sits at the UN Security Council because of the veto powers of China and Russia.

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his excellent work on this issue and his great speech.

Listening to the speeches for most of the day today and during question period as well, I find it disheartening that writing this letter is all of a sudden going to solve the problems that ISIS is causing in the Middle East, especially with the Yazidi girls who have been forced into sex slavery. We had the news that 19 Yazidi girls were burned alive the other day.

We also heard today during one of the questions from across the floor that our CF-18s just fly over and all of a sudden this is going to solve some problems. Our CF-18s were having a much bigger impact on what was going on in there.

What is the connection that my hon. colleague feels in the inability to see a genocide and what has happened with our CF-18s?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Alberta for his observations that he has had through the day here. It was really disappointing to listen during question period to the idea that the Liberals, who often preach the responsibility to protect, can only send a letter.

Responsibility to protect is actually stepping up and taking the fight to the genocide group that is committing the atrocities, that group being ISIS. That means having our CF-18s actually dropping bombs on the heads of ISIS. That means plowing a way so that the religious and ethnic minorities can get away. That means that we are

there supporting those on the ground with air support, so they can take the fight to ISIS.

There is a new offensive happening right now, as we speak, in Fallujah and Kirkuk and around Mosul. The Kurdistan regional government still is saying that it needs more air support. We should have kept our CF-18s in that fight.

I call upon the government to do the right thing. If we are going to defeat this genocidal group, if we are going to stop this genocide on the ground right now, we have to do what was done in World War I to stop the Armenian genocide and what was done in World War II to stop the Holocaust. We have to get in there and we have to actually be on the front lines, supporting our allies and stopping the slaughter of innocent women, children, and men who are ethnic and religious minorities.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this House stands together in solidarity with the victims of ISIL atrocities. That is why our government broadened Canada's engagement in the Middle East and, in particular, in the fight against ISIL.

We are focused on eradicating ISIL today and preventing its return tomorrow. However, today's debate on the Conservative motion is not about the fight, but rather on the determination of whether these atrocities may constitute genocide.

Our government strongly condemns the terrorist acts committed by ISIL, and we are actively supporting the prosecution of perpetrators and the investigations into ISIL crimes to determine if some amount to genocide. While we fully respect the motion tabled by our Conservative colleagues, it gets ahead of these investigations.

Furthermore, the motion before us does not go far enough to address punishing the perpetrators.

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

On May 11, our Conservative friends said a few times that several parliaments had recognized the genocide. I would like to tell it like it is. No national parliament has followed the European Parliament's lead on that except the British Parliament, and the British government dissociated itself from that view.

In the United States, Secretary Kerry said that he was speaking on his own behalf, not on behalf of the American government. I will share a quote to confirm that shortly. Today, I want to make the point that, on May 11, the Swedish Parliament rejected motions similar to the one before us today.

I therefore invite all of my colleagues to demonstrate the same wisdom as our Swedish counterparts because, if we were to vote in favour of this motion, we would be setting a deplorable precedent.

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[English]

For the first time, the House of Commons of Canada would label crimes as genocide without following the absolute rigour that characterizes past decisions.

To avoid this mistake, we must vote against this motion. We should not play politics about that.

The government has done everything in our power to avoid this divisive situation. Regrettably, our Conservative colleagues have made clear that they are not interested in amendments.

The House can be proud that, each time we recognized genocide in the past, we did so based on overwhelming evidence and a great sense of conviction, history, and moral responsibility.

In the case of the atrocities committed by ISIL, we are not dealing with events that happened decades ago. The evidence is being gathered as we speak. Canada is playing its part to assemble this evidence.

Some of these crimes may indeed deserve the description of genocide, but for the label to stick, it is important to have that determination made by an independent judicial process recognized by the international community.

Whether today's crimes can be considered genocide is not for me to determine, nor is it for all of the upstanding and concerned members who join the debate today.

The determination should first be a legal one by a competent court, not a political one.

[Translation]

Let us look at the relevant questions in order. What is genocide? Can any of ISIL's crimes be considered genocide? What process should be used to determine that? What effort is Canada making to get the process under way?

Let us start with the first question. What is genocide? The Conservative motion would have us indiscriminately label all of the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL as genocide. However, as heinous as a crime may be, it is not necessarily genocide.

[English]

To declare crimes as genocide, the genocide convention and the Rome Statute both require a demonstrable specific intent to target and destroy an identifiable group in whole or in part.

It is not enough to establish that abhorrent, widespread, unlawful killings, mistreatment, sexual violence, or mass deportation of civilians have taken place. It must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that such atrocities were committed as part of a campaign to totally or partially destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. In the absence of intent to commit genocide, such crimes would likely amount to war crimes.

The International Court of Justice has interpreted the obligation to prevent genocide as not including an obligation to intervene militarily and held that the scope of the obligation to intervene, to prevent, is commensurate with the state's ability to influence the situation.

● (1525)

[Translation]

Whether the atrocities committed by ISIL are crimes of war or genocide does not change our determination to put an end to them. The purpose of our military engagement as a member of the international coalition against ISIL is to eradicate the terrorist group. Our goal in supporting the Iraqi forces is to strengthen their ability to fight ISIL.

Now for the second question. Can any of ISIL's crimes be considered genocide?

[English]

ISIL has committed many crimes, many atrocities against religious and ethnic communities in Iraq and in Syria, including against Yazidis, Christians, Shiites, and also Sunnis.

UN bodies and NGOs have reported killings, rape and sexual slavery, forced religious conversions, and the conscription of children.

A March 2015 report of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded that there is evidence to suggest that ISIL may have committed genocide.

UN investigators found that ISIL may have committed acts of genocide against the Yazidis in Iraq in the summer of 2014. To date, it has not been established that acts of genocide were committed in Syria or that groups other than the Yazidis were the targets of genocide. There is a need for further independent investigation. The evidence is mounting.

As territory is retaken from ISIL, evidence of the group's heinous crimes will continue to be uncovered.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq told the Security Council last month that more than 50 mass graves have been discovered so far in several areas of Iraq.

[Translation]

That brings us to the next question. What process should be used? The word "genocide" must be reserved for the worst possible crimes. We must therefore be extremely rigorous with respect to the process for officially recognizing that genocide was committed.

[English]

International tribunals can make a determination that genocide occurred when looking at individual conduct and responsibility. For example, the International Criminal Court has indicted Sudanese President Bashir on charges of genocide.

The ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda were set up by the UN Security Council to try individuals for their participation in atrocities, and they found that individuals did indeed commit genocide.

Iraq and Syria are not parties to the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, but the Security Council could refer ISIL's crimes in these countries to the court.

Our government is of the view that, as much as we are appalled by the horrendous acts of violence committed by ISIL, investigations by competent authorities are necessary to reach a proper judicial determination. We are by no means alone in that assessment.

As the U.K. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Tobias Ellwood, said on April 20:

...genocide is a matter of legal rather than political opinion. We as the Government are not the prosecutor, the judge or the jury.... It is essential that these decisions are based on credible judicial process.... Ultimately, this is a question for the courts to decide;

Also Adama Dieng, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, shares the view that an independent investigation is needed to assess whether some of ISIL's atrocities can be qualified as genocide.

As for U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, he said the following:

I am neither judge, nor prosecutor, nor jury with respect to the allegations of genocide...and ethnic cleansing by specific persons. Ultimately, the full facts must be brought to light by an independent investigation and through formal legal determination made by a competent court or tribunal. But the United States will strongly support efforts to collect, document, preserve, and analyze the evidence of atrocities, and we will do all we can to see that the perpetrators are held accountable.

I agree with every word Secretary Kerry said. Canada is and will continue to take an active role in supporting further independent investigations and the prosecution of ISIL atrocities.

● (1530)

[Translation]

This brings me to my final question: What effort is Canada making to get the process underway?

[English]

The United Nations, Canada, and several of our allies have called for the matter to be brought before the courts.

This past week, I wrote a letter to the UN Security Council president, calling on that body to establish a mechanism to determine whether ISIL's violations constitute acts of genocide. My letter also called on the Security Council to identify the perpetrators of such violations and to take measures to ensure that they are held to account for their crimes, including indictments to the International Criminal Court, as appropriate.

Canada is providing significant financial assistance to United Nations bodies and civil society organizations to document and investigate ISIL crimes. Through this support, Canada is providing training on how to collect and analyze evidence to ensure that it can be used to determine the existence of genocide and in future domestic or international prosecutions.

Canada will continue to support initiatives to investigate and document atrocities, including through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The French government has recently called for reform on how UN Security Council permanent members vote on mass atrocities. France has called for permanent members to voluntarily and collectively undertake not to use the veto where a mass atrocity has been ascertained. This is a fundamental undertaking, which our govern-

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ment will fully support and which I will announce at a United Nations Security Council meeting in New York tomorrow.

[Translation]

In closing, it is very important that any recognition of genocide come from an entirely independent and extremely rigorous legal assessment.

The recognition of genocide must not be confused with some sort of barometer of our moral outrage in the face of these atrocities. No matter how repulsed we are by the slaughter, that is not enough to call it “genocide”.

I would also like to encourage all of my colleagues in the House to resist the kind of political pressure that would push us to exploit the word “genocide” to prove our determination to combat terrorist groups.

Using the label “genocide” and having the willingness to fight those groups are two different things.

[English]

The whole House shares in its outrage at the atrocities committed by ISIL in Syria and Iraq. ISIL has committed atrocities that may constitute genocide. This government stands with the United Nations and its international partners in calling for a judicial investigation on this matter and for an end to impunity for the perpetrators of serious international crimes.

We welcome our Conservative colleagues to amend their motion to reflect the approach taken by the Government of Canada and by the international community to call on the United Nations to launch a responsible international investigation.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I have ever heard a clearer example of how moral relativism can paralyze a national government.

I wonder if the member opposite could comment on this statement:

My purpose in appearing before you today is to assert that, in my judgment, Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups in areas under its control, including Yezidis, Christians, and Shia Muslims. Daesh is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions....

What is it about that statement that the minister opposite does not understand? That is a statement made by John Kerry expressing the United States' position on the nature of Daesh and the nature of the genocide. It has declared it a genocide. I can read him a quote by the representative from the House of Representatives who brought the motion forward. He stated that this should finally end the discussion about whether this is genocide or not.

To be honest, the member opposite is misleading the House when he quotes selectively from John Kerry's remarks and does not use the part that I just read to him.

● (1535)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that Secretary Kerry gave his opinion, but it is only an opinion. He said himself that it is not a formal recognition by the government of the United States that it is a genocide.

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Who is selective here? It is my colleague who did not read the paragraph after. Why did he not do so? Why does he want to mislead the House?

The next paragraph is the following, which I said in my speech, but I will repeat it for him if he will listen. This is what Secretary Kerry said:

I want to be clear. I am neither judge, nor prosecutor, nor jury with respect to the allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing by specific persons. Ultimately, the full facts must be brought to light by an independent investigation and through formal legal determination made by a competent court or tribunal.

Can you please stop playing politics? This is too serious.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind hon. members to direct their comments to the chair.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[*Translation*]

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

Could the member comment on the political aspect that the Conservatives are playing with, and the responsibility that parliamentarians have when it comes to using such consequential words? Could he talk about the political games being played by the Conservatives, who are acting without any regard for the facts and the normal processes in place for using such words? Does he think the Conservatives are behaving responsibly in the House here today?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. It reflects his great sense of responsibility.

Sometimes in politics we have to make tough choices. Unfortunately, there is political pressure from the previous government. The Conservatives do not seem to understand why they ended up in the opposition. They are using political pressure to have us believe that if we hold to the true meaning of “genocide” that somehow means we are not determined to fight terrorism, that we are not as deeply moved as we could be by the atrocities that are being committed.

We must resist this pressure and hold to the specific meaning of the word “genocide”. The atrocities, horrors, and massacres are not necessarily genocide. We must not let our emotions get the better of us. This House has never done that in acknowledging any genocide. We are known around the world for always being very serious and very responsible.

I am very ashamed of my Conservative colleagues today.

[*English*]

Ms. Kate Young (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this place can agree that they are horrified by the reports of what ISIL is doing.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague why it is so important to have an independent body determine if the crimes that ISIL is committing are in fact genocide.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of rule of law. It is a crime with an intention to kill a group because it is a certain group. This crime is not necessarily perpetrated only to kill people. One needs to have an intention for this. That is genocide.

It is not necessarily the same as massacres or other atrocities. It is something more, and we need to keep it this way in order to be sure that the perpetrators who do this on purpose, who kill a group because it is a religious or ethnic group, will be accused of genocide.

We need to keep that apart from other crimes. Therefore, we need a very professional, independent investigation, and not the crass politics that the official opposition would like us to use.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I debated in the House quite a lot on the issue of ISIL and the engagement of Canada, when he was in the opposition and I was on that side. Therefore, for him to now get up and get really angry, he should not be getting angry.

However, the fact of the matter still remains that over the period of time that we started debating in the House on ISIL, we could see the steps that ISIL was taking. Every day, more and more incidents are coming out to say that ISIL has been acting, not just in massacres, which the minister talked about, but in many massacres that have mounted to the level that there is absolute unanimous opinion that it is a genocide.

Now, if the minister says it is a genocide today, and stops hiding behind the law, it does not change the fact that those who committed this crime need to be brought to justice, either through the International Criminal Court or whatever means of international justice there is.

Therefore, it is still beyond my understanding why the minister would not simply say this and why he would hide behind the law.

● (1540)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, the government will never hide behind the law. The government will respect the law, the international law. However, if our Conservative colleagues want to have a debate about how to be sure that the perpetrators will pay for their crimes, why did they not do so? There is not a word about it in their motion. If they wanted to have a debate about how we can annihilate ISIL and to be sure that another terrorist group will not come back after, why did they not do so? They decided to play politics with the word “genocide”. They must be responsible for their words because it is crass politics.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Can he help members of the House understand how the word “genocide” is used and the consequences of having a genocide recognized by an international court or an international organization?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, that makes no difference to the determination and the great vigour with which the government and the House, I have no doubt, want to fight the terrorist group ISIL and all other perpetrators of such crimes.

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However, there are certain legal consequences for those who commit these crimes. They can be convicted of genocide in a court. We hope that this would deter any other group or state that one day would want to destroy another.

For that reason we must retain the definition of “genocide” and avoid associating it with our moral indignation towards these crimes, murders, and horrors. I ask that the House retain this definition because the House of Commons of Canada is an institution that has always acted responsibly when considering a determination of genocide .

[English]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the House heard the minister say that it was important to proceed under the rubric of the rule of law. This is a question of international public law procedure. I think he also alluded to the fact that it is important to pursue this because the evidence that is collected through those investigations is evidence that is very important in terms of the ultimate prosecution of those who commit these kinds of atrocities, genocides, and are prosecuted for them after the fact.

Could he expand on that so Canadians understand how that evidence through that process is indispensable for the successful prosecution at the back end?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague answered his question. It is very clear that if we start to play politics with the definition of what genocide is, we are outside the rule of law. How can we have due process to be sure that the perpetrators rightly pay for their crimes if we identify genocide to all the massacres and the horrors of the world? We need to be very specific.

I want to mention that in my Conservative colleague's motion all the acts of ISIL are considered genocide. It is not only the Yazidis as was said in the press conference. They apply genocide to everything that ISIL has done. There is no way that we can say that this is due process, that this is the way to proceed, or that this respects the very definition of this terrible act, which is genocide.

• (1545)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the formidable member for Calgary Nose Hill.

I rise today to support the motion calling upon the Liberal government to recognize the atrocities committed by ISIS as genocide, because that is exactly what the deliberate slaughter of specific groups of innocent people is. It is genocide.

This barbaric and merciless organization is responsible for unspeakable crimes and human rights abuses against Yazidis, Christians, Assyrians, Shia Muslims, and others across the territory it controls. ISIS slaughters innocent religious and ethnic minorities, and captures prisoners and civilians whose only crimes are being or thinking differently from these terrorists. ISIS tortures and beheads children. These savages use rape and sexual violence as weapons of war and enslave innocent women, girls, and boys as a means to incite fear and to perpetuate their reign of terror. They have cruelly targeted gays and lesbians, torturing and murdering them in unimaginable ways, simply because of their sexual orientation.

We need to explicitly recognize it here in the House in support of the thousands of victims and on behalf of all Canadians. Those

barbarians are ruthless. They are murderers and rapists. They are terrorists.

I want to talk about the tens of thousands of innocent men, women, and children who have suffered the wrath of one of the world's most abhorrent terrorist organizations.

Samia is a 15-year-old Yazidi teenager who, along with her family, was captured by ISIS and held captive for six months. Men and women were separated, their possessions taken, and girls as young as seven years old were raped. Deemed unworthy to keep as sex slaves, older women were killed.

The British Parliament recently heard about the 16-year-old girl who had witnessed indescribably brutal violence. Her father and brother were executed in front of her. She witnessed the repeated rape of an innocent nine-year-old girl, so brutal and vicious that the girl died. She listened helplessly to the desperate screams of her friends as they were tortured and raped. She also witnessed ISIS barbarians force a mother to eat the ground-up remains of her child.

In the August heat of Raqqa, a two-year-old girl was placed inside a tin box and left in the middle of a courtyard for seven days. Her distraught mother was told that if she tried to rescue her tiny, innocent daughter, her other two children would die. The mother had seen her husband and father brutally executed by ISIS soldiers, so she knew they would follow through on their threat. After being beaten, the toddler died.

ISIS attacked the city of Sinjar in August of 2014 and tens of thousands of Yazidis fled to the mountains. Trapped, without food or water, thousands were massacred on the bloodstained slope of Mount Sinjar.

There would have been thousands more casualties if it had not been for an U.S. air attack targeting armoured ISIS fighting vehicles. The U.S. air strike is the only reason the Yazidis in the region were not completely exterminated.

After capturing the ancient city of Palmyra in May 2015, ISIS massacred over 400 people. It beheaded them and mutilated their bodies. Why? Because they had co-operated with the government and did not follow ISIS orders.

ISIS extremists were driven out of Sinjar in November 2015, after a two-day operation led by Kurdish forces and backed by U.S. air strikes. After the expulsion, Kurdish forces uncovered two mass graves where the bodies of men, women, and children were found. At least 50 of these mass graves have been found in the region.

The people committing these atrocities do not behave like human beings. They do not have a conscience. They do not believe what they are doing is wrong. They are not moved by the rule of law or due diligence or processes. They are monsters.

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The victims of ISIS deserve recognition that genocide is taking place in the Middle East, and these words matter. Our government would not be the first to acknowledge this, without an unnecessary lengthy, so-called investigation. The European Parliament passed a resolution recognizing the systematic killing and persecution of religious minorities in the Middle East by ISIS as a genocide. The U.S. Congress and the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, declared that ISIS is committing genocide against religious minorities in Syria and Iraq. The British House of Commons unanimously passed a motion stating that Christians, Yazidis, and other ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria are suffering genocide at the hands of ISIS. The previous Canadian Conservative government also recognized the actions of ISIS as genocide.

● (1550)

In 2014, the member for Calgary Heritage said that ISIS was “committing genocide against people they see as different”, as did the previous foreign affairs minister, the member for Niagara Falls.

What else do the Liberals need to know before they call these atrocities exactly what they are? The whole world can see what is happening without an investigation, except the Liberal government. By declaring ISIS crimes as genocide, we are not precluding all of the other measures being taken to denigrate and destroy this terrorist organization.

Our allies are doing more, not less, to defeat ISIS, including declaring its actions as genocide. Calling it genocide drives their actions. Our allies are combatting this evil with full forces.

The destruction and specific targeting of minorities was the reason, along with threats to our own security, that the former government entered the war against ISIS along with our allies. It is why we continue to call for Canada's full participation, in contrast to the current Liberal government, which recently removed our CF-18 fighter jets from the mission. It continues to call it a training mission, and seems to believe a lengthy bureaucratic process will somehow provide more information that we do not already know in order to just say the truth.

The Liberals have yet to provide a single coherent reason for ending our air combat mission against these genocidal, barbaric terrorists, even after numerous attacks by ISIS around the world. Instead of pulling our CF-18s and proposing unnecessary processes, we need to explicitly stand with our allies, say what is happening, and participate fully in the combat mission against this evil. Let us not forget that Canada is not immune. We are not standing on the outside looking in. We are a part of this, and Canadians are as vulnerable to attacks as any of our allies.

While the Liberal government has worked to meet its election commitment to resettle 25,000 refugees in Canada, the religious freedom organization, One Free World International, says that it is turning its back on 400 Yazidi women and their families who could seek refuge in Canada to escape ISIS. Why is the government ignoring this proposal, while girls are sold as commodities, tortured, raped, and murdered? While the government delays, people are being exterminated.

The member for Spadina—Fort York earlier dismissed the importance of one word. Those whose lives have been changed by

ISIS and its genocidal barbarism would disagree. The word “genocide” carries deep significance, particularly for the victims.

It is important for the House to pass the motion not only to band together with our allies, but also at a basic human moral level. Genocide is the most despicable, most heinous crime imaginable. Formally recognizing the actions of ISIS as genocide shows the victims of these atrocities that we respect their inalienable dignity and sanctity as human beings. It sends a clear message of support and solidarity during their deepest and darkest times.

The official opposition has continually called on the Liberal government to stay with our allies and to strongly condemn the atrocities committed by ISIS. This is our chance. I urge my colleagues from all parties, representing Canadians from every corner of our country, to support our motion today. Canada must join our EU, U.K., and U.S. allies in recognizing ISIS as a genocidal entity, responsible for horrific crimes against humanity.

Over the years, as monstrosities against mankind have happened across the world, every government in every developed country has vowed never to let these types of atrocities happen again, but they happen. We know right now that these crimes against humanity are being systematically being carried out by ISIS. The motion is our never again moment. It is incumbent upon all of us, now, to stand up to condemn ISIS and recognize its atrocities as what they are, genocide.

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on the following. To cripple ISIS, we have some means. Who supplies ISIS with arms and with ammunition? Who feeds ISIS financially? Who allows ISIS to smuggle and sell crude oil? Why do other countries allow other fighters from all around the world to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq? If all of those elements could be prevented, ISIS would be crippled. I would like her to comment on this.

● (1555)

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, what I think is most disturbing about this debate today is the attempts made by members of the Liberal government over and over to refuse to talk about what needs to be said and named, which is that the acts of ISIS are acts of genocide. Therefore, I will read the definition of genocide from the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Article II of the convention defines “genocide” as:

...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Article III defines the crimes that can be punished under the convention. They are genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, attempt to commit genocide, and complicity in genocide.

ISIS is committing genocide and the Canadian government, on behalf of all Canadians who know that to be true, needs to say it.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at our committee this last Tuesday, a witness from the One Free World International presented a brief. In his comments he suggested that 400 young Yazidi girls had been rescued, yet they did not have the means to find their way to come to Canada as refugees. To my understanding, the same presentation was also made at the committee on foreign affairs.

What is the member's view on this? Is it her view that the government should do everything it can to help bring the girls here on the basis of humanitarian and compassionate reasons as refugees to Canada? For that matter, if we knew this was happening anywhere else in this world, Canada, which wants to be known and be identified as humanitarian and compassionate in addressing refugees, would exercise every means it could to address the sexual violence against young girls.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, I think all members know but maybe will not admit that the position of the previous Conservative government was to prioritize the specific targeting of religious and ethnic minorities, the most vulnerable who were facing genocide by ISIS, and to expedite bringing those specific groups to Canada as refugees, while protecting the safety and security of all Canadians.

I wholeheartedly support the expediting of refuge for the 400 Yazidi women and girls who are facing systematic and constant extermination by ISIS. They should be prioritized as refugees to Canada. Doing so would reflect the compassion and the will of Canadians who want to provide refuge for innocent people being slaughtered in the region by those terrorists.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a growing and a rare consensus among western lawmakers and world leaders that the atrocities committed by ISIS against the minorities under its control constitutes the crime of genocide.

The U.S. Congress, the British Parliament, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, the U.S. Holocaust Museum and the International Association of Genocide Scholars have preceded us in making this determination. Like John Kerry, Hillary Clinton and Pope Francis, these institutions have recognized this crime by its rightful name, genocide.

What should Canada do? The facts demand that we call this genocide. Our obligations under the genocide convention demand we call this genocide. In fact, if we do not, we betray not only the victims and the cause of justice, but we fail Canadians who expect us as MPs to do better than our predecessors who sat in these very seats in addressing a crime that was rightly described by Winston Churchill as the crime of crimes.

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I believe I am not alone in the House in carrying a sense of shame over the silence that resonated all too often in the western world and in this chamber as previous genocides were perpetrated. I therefore must take issue with those who have suggested that this motion, like those that were passed in the U.S. and in Europe, is somehow beyond Parliament's purview, and that recognizing genocide for what it is is strictly a legal determination to only be made by a court.

Today, the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country said that genocide was not for us to decide. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also said that genocide was not for us to determine. They are both so very wrong.

It is true that an individual accused of this crime can only be convicted in a court of law. However, our obligation as parliamentarians and as Canadians under the genocide convention to punish the perpetrator of genocide was never meant to replace or impede our concurrent obligation to prevent genocide. Our obligation to prevent and to protect, demands that parliaments like ours make a determination, an indictment of sorts, upon which our policies are to be predicated.

Today, the member for Spadina—Fort York said, “there is this sense that simply uttering a word is going to save a life; that simply uttering a word is going to suddenly transform action on the ground”. The member for Burlington said, “it is times like these where it is compelling, when we see the videos, when we see the images, to want to name what is happening.” Then they went on to define why we should not.

We know we cannot prevent what we cannot name and because we know this, their comments are cowardly and shameful. Waiting for a legal ruling that could be years away, if ever, before raising our voice as a country would simply add another shameful chapter to the history of reticence in the face of genocide, which has plagued the last century.

As noted by Diane Orentlicher, an expert on genocide at American University's Washington College of Law:

One of the mistakes we have made in recent memory is we have performed legal gymnastics to avoid using the word 'genocide' when describing real-time atrocities... That misses the point of the [international] Genocide Convention—which is, if you wait until it's legally certain that a genocide has occurred, you have waited too long to prevent it.

Genocide has a very specific legal threshold that is different from those required to determine whether an atrocity should be considered a crime against humanity or a war crime. It is a legal threshold that in the past has sometimes been difficult to prove. However, today we have cellphones, video cameras, an instant news cycle, social media, YouTube, Periscope, and many other methods to transmit information. ISIS has used this to its disgusting advantage.

Its genocidal actions have been widely documented and disseminated. Its genocidal actions are undeniable. Its genocidal actions are unabashed and open, and its guilt, freely admitted and publicized in numerous publications, including *Dabiq*, the official ISIS magazine.

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Mass graves have been uncovered. Documentaries of women in sexual slavery have been made. Yazidi women are being sold over the Internet. What more proof does the government need? Furthermore, ISIS genocide is neither a crime nor even a tactic, but an ideal and a value unto itself, and one that is espoused by this group.

• (1600)

Secretary of State John Kerry put it succinctly and accurately, “[ISIS] is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology, and by actions – in what it says, what it believes, and what it does”. He is right. The evidence has far exceeded the threshold for probable cause and the quotient of atrocity required for this determination.

The first question today asked of the Leader of the Opposition in moving the motion was again by the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I was blown away. The first question was on what responsibility the Leader of the Opposition feels to the International Criminal Court. I would ask her and my colleagues here, should that be our first concern? Are we so down the path of moral relativism that we cannot acknowledge that our first responsibility should be to save the women who are at this very moment, while we sit here arguing over semantics, being raped and tortured by ISIS?

Our first responsibility should be to the tens of thousands who were trapped on Mount Sinjar and felt starvation and dehydration. It should be to those who cannot reach refugee camps because they will be further persecuted. It should be to those who have nowhere to go and nowhere to turn. If that is not our first responsibility and our first concern, then who are we as a country?

I have to mention two Yazidi women who have been in contact with me in Calgary. They have been through so much, and they do not understand it when the government stands up and cannot conform to its obligations under the genocide convention of preventing genocide.

This is what they told me. They told me that girls have jumped from two stories, breaking their backs while trying to escape. Many others were killed trying to escape. The Yazidis were all trapped at the top of the mountain. Many were betrayed by their neighbours, only to be captured or killed. All men are executed except for young boys, who are then brainwashed into being child suicide bombers, willing to return to destroy their previous communities. A woman refused to let go of her baby while being brutally raped, so they killed the baby in front of her and continued to rape her. The women, once rescued, are unable to go back into society because they are considered damaged goods. Recently their leader spoke out, saying that the communities must accept the women, but they are still unwelcome. There were 150 women who were put into one dark room for days with no water and no light bulb, brought out a few at a time for short periods, only to be raped and abused by their captors. There are 272 Yazidi children who will not come home because they were brainwashed by ISIS for suicide missions.

I have sadly concluded that up until now, the atrocities against these minorities have not adequately found their way into the policies of the western world, and only a tiny fraction of these communities have found their way on to western shores. This is why rediscovering our sense of urgency has to start by beginning with

calling these crimes genocide. It is a word that conveys a particular level of evil, of premeditation, of monstrosity, and it should never be blithely used, but it also must not be shied away from because of the sheer gravity of the word.

Making this designation does not establish a hierarchy of suffering in the world of atrocities, but it does recognize a hierarchy of evil as defined by our laws and our most basic of values, a hierarchy that should be a critical component in defining our policy priorities. We should not be worried about what we need to do after we call this genocide. We should call it genocide and start getting that stuff done.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs just said in the House that supporting the motion would be playing politics and that it would create a dangerous precedent. I would argue rather, that voting against the motion by each member of the government would do those exact things.

Former president Bill Clinton has publicly expressed his deep regret on multiple occasions for not declaring the Rwanda slaughter as a genocide, and it would be a terrible error for us to make the same mistake. No number of future apologies, mournful eulogies, or successful prosecutions will atone for and acquit us of the error of silence.

• (1605)

Canada should not remain outside this extraordinary moment of consensus in the face of an extraordinary evil. I urge my colleagues to reconsider this, look in the bottom of their heart and figure out what is right, and to consider their vote based on these facts, irrespective of any policy consideration. I urge my colleagues to consider why they are here. They are here to protect the people we serve and stand up for what is right. I urge my colleagues to save many lives and support this motion.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem to think that if they say the word genocide three times, spin around in a circle, and click their heels, suddenly something stops. It is as empty a set of rhetorical arguments as the notion that saying “Get out of Ukraine” suddenly solved the crisis in that part of the world.

Margaret Thatcher once said, “if you want something said, ask a man; if you want something done, ask a woman”.

In this Parliament, it seems if people want something said, they should choose the opposition; if people want something done, choose what the Liberal government is doing. What we are doing is actually setting the stage for the prosecution and the end of the atrocities. We think that these atrocities are just as evil as anyone else in this House.

What we are trying to do, and what we hope the opposition will support, is a move to declare this a genocide legally under the conventions of the United Nations. Additionally, we are not waiting for that action. We are taking actions specifically on the ground, with an increased support for the people who are fighting to stop this.

Would the members not agree that the action to stop this outweighs any word that they could ever attach to the atrocities, all of which we denounce with them?

• (1610)

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, in 50 years, when some future government stands here and apologizes to the world for inaction on this, I hope the member for Spadina—Fort York's comment, that if one calls it genocide and clicks their heels, that level of glibness, is remembered. I hope the disgusting trivializing of hundreds of thousands of people dying and being raped and how he treats it are remembered by his constituents.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Calgary Nose Hill for the courage of her convictions. She often stands up for values, and I cannot help but understand her motivation.

I understand full well how the message is received in an entirely different way, even by myself, when it comes from her. The messenger and the choice of words make all the difference. When she states that in 50 years we will remember certain comments in the House, she is evoking a type of consensus, a global conscience.

Why does the motion not mention the UN Security Council? Personally, I am not an expert on international politics. However, when I see that the United Nations is moving in a certain direction, I am reassured that we are doing the right thing, that we are on the right side of history.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, in May 2015, the United Nations issued a report which went over this issue. The findings were irrefutable in terms of the commission of genocide by ISIL, by many groups.

As I said in my speech, we are in a time of rare consensus among many groups who usually have disparate opinions. As humanity, in order for us to stop what is happening, we need to call this genocide and focus all of our foreign policy and aid efforts on stopping this.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been here since this morning, and I am surprised to see how little compassion there is in the House.

I would like to ask my colleague a question: Does she think that the members on the other side of the House are burying their heads in the sand when they refuse to call a genocide by its name?

No one here is suggesting not taking any action. You have to call a spade a spade and a genocide a genocide. Millions of women and children, human beings, are being raped or burned. What will it take

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for every member of the House to rise and say that enough is enough?

Could my colleague answer my questions? Is a genocide a genocide?

[English]

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, I am now in my fifth year in this place. For my colleagues who are new to this place, especially my colleagues in the government, there will be many times when they will think they cannot make a difference or do something, but there are moments in this place when their actions, their words, and their votes materially impact hundreds of thousands of lives, and this is one of those moments.

My colleagues in the government need to go back to their caucus and cabinet and say that they need to do something that is right. They need to stand up for something that is right. This is not partisan. This is what it means to be a human being. For me, this is why we need to support this motion.

• (1615)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the path of destruction of the repulsive Daesh, or ISIL, needs no introduction. We have been very graphic in describing it here today.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported in 2015 that the following atrocities were perpetrated by ISIL against the Yazidi community: the rape and abduction of women and girls as young as six and boys as young as eight forced into war as soldiers. These actions were directly targeted at the Yazidi people. As well, we all know very well the ISIL crimes that have also targeted Christians, Shia Muslims, and LGBTQ individuals.

For all intents and purposes, this is genocide. We have heard today how we are compelled to use this word in moral persuasion. I am doing so, and yet I remind my colleagues that this is a term that does, indeed, have its roots in legalese.

From my experience on the Subcommittee on International Human Rights, I have gained a deeper understanding that Canada has an imperative role as a leader in shaping international policy. Canada can count on its own allies among those who have called this genocide a genocide. Beyond this label, Canada has a distinct responsibility to act where clear evidence has presented itself. Therefore, please allow me to express my practical reservations about this motion.

First, I do not want to legitimize this group's actions on behalf of its demented imaginary state any further, but, at the same time, I wish to legitimize the persecution of targeted groups of humanity who have faced atrocities. I admit, I hope, there is some immeasurable value in these communities knowing that Canada recognizes their suffering and pledges to meaningful action.

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Simply labelling this a genocide will not be enough. I comprehend that this is where our differences in the House must have consensus built around them in order for us to move forward. Canada wields great influence in the world, but our influence is most useful in complement with international co-operation. We should do more than to label this a genocide. We should focus our attention on the responsible way forward and refer this issue to the UN Security Council, maximizing Canada's ability to use its influence to assist those persecuted by ISIL. This must be our priority.

Additionally, I am disappointed the Conservative motion focuses only on the atrocious actions of ISIL. We in the NDP believe it is important to recognize all atrocities committed in the region, not just by ISIL but by Syrian President Assad's forces and opposition militias. We cannot forget that there are multiple actors committing war crimes in the region and the focus on ISIL is part of a complex regional issue of dysfunction and despair.

New Democrats believe that Canada has an important role to play in addressing the threat that ISIS poses to the global community and in alleviating the suffering of civilians caught in the conflict.

We have long argued that more stress needs to be put on crucial areas that perpetuate ISIL. Canada should focus on stopping the flow of arms, funds, and foreign fighters, including improving anti-radicalization efforts. It is imperative to move now to boost humanitarian aid in areas where there would be immediate life-saving impact. We will address radicalization by building winterized camps for refugees, with water, sanitation, hygiene, health, and education for the displaced. Support in areas of Canadian expertise is where we can do so much more work, combatting sexual violence, support for survivors, protecting minorities, and providing assistance to investigate and prosecute these alleged war crimes.

• (1620)

Canada should be providing considerable help to vulnerable populations in Iraq and Syria. This includes basic humanitarian support, but also long-term support for recovery such as the psychosocial support that has been mentioned earlier today, to help these groups return to their communities and rebuild. Along with the international community, Canada should assist in the development of long-term reconstruction for Iraq and Syria. It will take decades to rebuild.

Canada should be asking the UN Security Council to mandate international independent investigations and refer the issue to the proper court. Canada should provide immediate financing for these investigations and gathering of evidence. We need to maximize this area of our expertise. If using the terminology "genocide" is going to hold any weight in the future for something legalese, then we have to make sure that we have this evidence collected professionally and properly because that is what the International Criminal Court requires.

Naomi Kikoler is the deputy director for the Centre for the Prevention of Genocide and she stated at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum last November that there has been virtually no effort to systematically document the crimes that have been perpetrated, to preserve evidence, to secure and preserve forensic evidence, and to ensure that mass graves are being protected so that we can have successful prosecutions in the future.

This is one area where Canada can play a crucial role in supporting financially and intellectually with our expertise in sending experts to areas that have been liberated from the Islamic State. This is very crucial if we are to take seriously the term of genocide.

Also, in keeping with the emphasis of the Prime Minister's government on humanitarian assistance, there is a great deal more that can be done to help survivors of Islamic State crimes. Most notably, the women, children, and men who have been kidnapped and subsequently freed are released from Islamic State. They need considerable help when it comes to providing that psychosocial support to help them return to their communities and rebuild their own well-being.

One unresolved matter in which Canada can actively assist those persecuted by ISIS concerns the Yazidi young women who have been referenced here several times today. I recently met with Reverend Majed el-Shafie, who is the president of One Free World International, a human rights organization that advocates for religious minorities. One Free World International has put together a proposal that includes private sponsorships in order for young Yazidi women, 400 of them, to come with their families to Canada to flourish and to be that next generation of decision-makers and policy developers who will lead with a sense of power that comes from a sense of contentment in community and compassion, not fear and might.

We need to be able to not just care for these young people and foster and nurture their development so that they can take on the roles that we as esteemed members have in their place in the world, we have to recognize how imperative it is to do this now. Let us do it.

The NDP wholeheartedly supports this proposal and I was extremely disappointed to learn that it has been sitting on the Minister of Immigration's desk for months. There is a level of frustration here when we know that there is a real tangible impact we can have right now directly related to these atrocities that we are calling genocide now.

While opposition motions such as this carry the weight of a decision in the House of Commons, they have no binding effect on the executive branch. The recognition of genocide by the executive branch has in the past come through statements by the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (1625)

We know that in the legalese we have been talking about, genocide has been defined. I have heard it described here as the definition already in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Canada is a signatory to that genocide convention.

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If the government were to recognize the actions of a sovereign state as genocide, then the consequences would and could include sanctions, which are really hard for us to apply to non-state actors, even though they consider themselves a state. This is where it is really problematic.

However, in the future, it will not be problematic for us to press for an International Criminal Court treatment of these same actors if we were to make sure that our expertise is used now to collect that evidence. This is because, as impactful and emotional as the anecdotal evidence is on YouTube with the beheadings, and some of the reporting that we have heard in the news, we cannot deny that there is an International Criminal Court.

Earlier today, I heard one of my colleagues on the other side call the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court dysfunctional and impotent. I have to say that if that really is the case, then we all need to think about the voluntary mechanism that is our United Nations, our world government. It is only going to be as strong and impactful as we, the member nations, let it be.

We are the sovereign state here. Let us not forget that. ISIL is not a sovereign state. There are actions that we can take so that we are making it impotent in the future, and not our own international body that we are trying to bring forward, a global community that sees security and peace for all. In order for us to be able to do that, we are going to have to recognize and face that this is only going to be as strong as we let it be.

Canada should be providing considerable help to vulnerable populations in Iraq and Syria as well. We know that basic humanitarian support not only helps communities flourish and develop strong sovereign states, but it is also what helps to alleviate and eliminate radicalization.

As a country, if we are going to use the word “genocide”, I embrace that. New Democrats continue to urge the government to boost humanitarian aid, and to prosecute alleged war crimes. In order to do that, we do have to accept our role in the international community. If all it takes to get the momentum going on very important initiatives for humanity is to install the use of the word “genocide”, I do not want to stand in the way of that.

Let us answer to the urgency of those affected by this genocide, and let us do it now.

Mr. Marwan Tabbara (Kitchener South—Hespeler, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned in her speech the stopping of the flow of arms and radicalization efforts. This can only be done through collaboration with the international community and neighbouring Middle Eastern countries.

Stopping the flow of radicalization can only be done through the growth of economic prosperity. There are no jobs there, and so the youth are evidently joining radicalized groups, because there is no economic prosperity.

The previous government did not degrade ISIS and did not bring stability to the region. Our government has committed to training local troops on the ground to take the fight directly to ISIS.

I would ask, as did my colleague for Laval—Les Îles, who is supplying ISIS with funding and arms? This is the question that we

need to ask, because this is how we can degrade ISIS. If we can stop the flow of arms and resources, we can degrade ISIS.

Does my colleague not agree that this is the way to degrade ISIS?

• (1630)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the intent of my hon. colleague's question. However, in that is where I see our problematic issues, where we would have to build consensus once we called this genocide. I believe that each sovereign state as an actor is going to voluntarily, in the international community, bring strength to whatever action we have. Therefore, I do not accept the premise that economic stability trumps human rights.

There are things we have to do in tandem, but it is not acceptable to be participating in trade when we know there are flagrant human rights violations. We have talked about this with regard to trading with Saudi Arabia. We have talked about this with regard to countries having diplomatic relations and dialogues with countries that do have human rights. Actually a very prominent country with which everyone is very anxious to trade apparently has warned us publicly not to be talking to it about human rights if we want to trade with it. It was on the front page of a national paper.

Something that the opposition party has brought forward with this motion is the idea that we should call this genocide and have some integrity. That means as—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Vancouver East.

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very thoughtful comments. The member referenced taking various legal avenues. With respect to the atrocities that have taken place, would the member agree that Canada should be asking the UN Security Council to mandate international independent investigations into these atrocities? More specifically, should Canada be taking certain actions—for example, to provide immediate financing to help with the investigation and the gathering of the evidence—so we can get some of these matters dealt with in an effective manner, we hope, through the judicial system?

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for that thoughtful question because that is very important. If we are going to use a word like genocide, then we are going to have to put some actions behind those words. That is what I was alluding to earlier in my speech. Our expertise is going to be required on that international stage with regard to the role that the International Criminal Court will have to play in the future if we are calling this genocide.

For us to embrace that, we will have to embrace the whole responsibility that goes with it. That means that, yes, we will have to put our money where our mouth is, and we will have to support an investigation. We are going to have to support a fulsome investigation that also brings forward a long-term plan for rebuilding. There are so many ripple effects of this that are going to require so much of us. For us to call it a genocide is one step.

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I am hoping that will be the momentum that we can use to move forward with very real and comprehensive responses that include the important role of the United Nations. Otherwise, our role is actually as impotent as the member earlier said the United Nations is.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a reference to what Canadians might do if they looked back over 50 years. If they looked back over 52 years, what they might see is the Hon. Irwin Cotler, one of the clearest and most distinct voices on human rights on the international stage, one of the people who put the duty of care provision into the United Nations.

It was he who first raised in this House the issue of the Syrian refugee crisis, and his motion to accept refugees was actually defeated by the previous government. I might also add that the opposition tried to slow down the arrival of refugees, tried to stop the arrival of refugees, and has fought the refugee process every inch of the way, including the most unusual practice of removing medical care for refugees in a move that the Supreme Court deemed cruel and unusual punishment. When it comes to the process of getting Syrians into this country, there is one party that opened the doors and there is another party that tried to keep those doors as closed as it possibly could. Now to lecture us on humanitarian values is, my God, unbelievable to listen to.

My question for the member opposite is this. It is not just a question of calling things a name and hoping that they stop. Prevention of these sorts of atrocities is even more important than anything else we can do as a government. Would the member opposite please talk about and reflect upon the preventive strategies that international development might play in stopping the atrocities? We do not care what we call them; they would simply not exist anymore.

• (1635)

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle: Mr. Speaker, peace building and democratic development are extremely important, and we do know that with the previous government there were vast funding cuts to those areas.

I am new to this, and I am kind of naive. I am not a seasoned politician here. I know some of the members feel the same way, with the idea that we are going to weigh words so significantly and then, when push comes to shove, just not really have that momentum to move forward. No matter what we have done in the past, there is a lot of immediate action we can take.

We do have to have a holistic approach. We have talked about stemming the funding that goes to organizations such as ISIL. We have talked about stemming not just the flow of funds but the flow of arms and fighters.

It all boils down to money. With an informed citizenry, these peace-building and democratic programs cannot be underestimated. This is where the real work is. It does not pack a punch like the emotional response when we are watching a very poignant and disturbing video on the screen, when we see some type of military strike. It feels good, and I get that. However, I want to say that we cannot confuse revenge with justice, with real preventive measures.

There is room and distinction for these actions. That is why I was saying earlier that if we were to all say, yes, let us call it genocide, that is not really what the issue is here. It is how we move forward, and how we all get our heads around what comes next. We really have to form consensus.

It is very frustrating for somebody new like me to see how people who are so esteemed, who achieved their honourable seats here in this House, cannot form consensus on an issue as fundamental as this, because of pride.

The Deputy Speaker: 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—Lewvan, National Defence; the hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill, Wine Industry; and the hon. member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith, Justice.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague, the member for Calgary Forest Lawn.

It has been an interesting afternoon for me as listened to the debate. I was fascinated to hear my NDP colleague just say that for all intents and purposes, ISIS has committed genocide, but we just cannot bring ourselves to call it that. What concerned me even more was the position the Liberals have taken this afternoon. We heard the member for Spadina—Fort York give a number of very extreme comments about us. I guess he does not understand that we had the largest numbers of immigrants to our country ever when we were in government, so I am not sure what he was trying to imply.

One of the things that really concerned me this afternoon was the Liberals' interest in actually trying to use John Kerry's statement to justify their position. I just want to take a couple of minutes before I get into my speech to talk about his statement.

He is very clear in the statement. He talks about his purpose being to assert that in his judgment Daesh is responsible for genocide against groups. He goes on to talk about Daesh executing Christians solely because of their faith, saying it has massacred hundreds of Shia Turkmen and Shabaks at Tal Afar and Mosul just because of who they were. We know that, in areas under its control, it has made a systematic effort to destroy the cultural heritage of ancient communities. He talks later about one element of genocide as being the intent to destroy an ethnic or religious group in whole or in part. That is actually the definition the Minister of Foreign Affairs quoted in the House about an hour ago. It is interesting that John Kerry has that in his statement. He talks about how Daesh has given its victims a choice between abandoning their faith or being killed. Clearly, he is talking about that being genocide.

Then, toward the end, he talks about being neither judge nor prosecutor, which is the quote the Liberals like. However, that is in the context of the fact that we know this is genocide, and now we need to go find the perpetrators and convict them of that. I wish the Liberals would quit misusing that quote this afternoon. People who are paying attention to this know they have no credibility when they do that.

Let us talk a little about how we got here. ISIS developed out of al Qaeda in the late 1990s. It showed up in areas around Iraq. In 2011, the group started to kind of push into Syria when the conflict there began to expand. It was led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi at the time. In 2013, it broke away or was kicked out of al-Qaeda and was renamed ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh, as people refer to it.

It is a Sunni jihadist group that wanted to wage war in the area. The interesting thing is that, from some of the figures we see, between 27,000 and 31,000 people from a number of countries have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS. I heard one of my colleagues a little earlier talking about the challenge with finding jobs for young people, but for some bizarre reason, people have come from other countries to join this group.

It capitalized on a number of things, particularly a deteriorating security situation in Iraq, where the Iraqi government was reluctant to acknowledge it was losing control in the country and did not act on the revolt soon enough. The government had been put in place and it was supposed to be inclusive. It was supposed to bring the other minority groups in, so both Sunnis and Shiites could work together. Rather than do that, it isolated the Sunni communities. Certainly, political disenfranchisement followed from that, which allowed ISIS to begin to recruit easily.

It was a bit of a surprise to most of the world to see how ISIS seemed to come out of nowhere in 2014, but certainly it had been working for years. It was severely underestimated at that time. Therefore, its expansion was not met with the appropriate use of power at the time to stop it before it really moved ahead. The provisional authority in Iraq was not particularly helpful because its sentiments and the provisions it had taken had actually basically brought the population to a point that it was not supporting the government.

Throughout the last few years, ISIS has had significant financial resources, generated through taxation in local areas, illicit oil sales, and lots of ransom, extortion, and smuggling.

We heard a little earlier about some of the consequences of what ISIS has done. I want to try to put a human face on this. There are a couple of groups that have been specifically targeted by ISIS, and I think we need to talk about that when we are talking about genocide. One of the main conditions for genocide is that groups are targeted specifically. Certainly, we can say that about the Yazidis and about the Assyrian Christians.

In 2014, there was a very rapid expansion of ISIL. In August 2014, it started pushing into the Sinjar district in Nineveh province. This is the Yazidis' homeland. It is their sacred ground. It is the place they have been for many years.

• (1640)

However, in August 2014, as ISIS pushed in there, the massacres and the pressure on the Yazidi people took place.

Early in August, 5,000 Yazidi men were killed and 4,000 were missing. As the conflict arose, women were captured, children were taken, people were killed, raped, and abducted, and about 40,000 to 50,000 Yazidis were trapped on Sinjar mountain. They probably all would have been slaughtered, as my colleague pointed out earlier, just because they were Yazidis if there had not been international

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intervention. A U.S.-initiated coalition began air strikes in early August. With the help of the air strikes and Kurdish officials in the area, a corridor was cleared and 35,000 out of 50,000 Yazidis actually fled through that corridor and were able to get out of there. Unfortunately, they had to leave their homeland, but that corridor prevented them from being wiped out. There would have been wholesale slaughter had they been left there. However, for those people who were left, life was hell.

Our minister said earlier that the definition of genocide is an intention to kill a group just because it is a group.

I think we have to conclude that the treatment of the young men who were captured, the boys who were then indoctrinated into the ISIL ideology, the young girls who were taken as wives, sold and taken as wives by someone else, raped multiple times, the women who were taken and sold in the slave markets that were set up, was because they were targeted specifically for being part of this group. Certainly, the hatred for this group is why they were targeted by ISIS. That, to me, qualifies as a major reason why this would be called "genocide".

The land of the Assyrian Christians, who were the first people in the world as a nation to convert to Christianity, was partitioned after World War I and Assyrian Christians have been spread out among three or four nations for the last 100 years. Certainly the Nineveh plains region is their home. Again, they were driven out of their homes. They were driven out of their towns, and approximately 500,000 refugees had to flee. In June 2014, when Mosul fell, Christian houses were ID'd.

Again, we start to hear some of the reasons why we could call this a genocide. People were identified because of who they were, because of the group they belonged to. All 45 Christian churches in Mosul have been destroyed. They were targeted specifically because they were Christian.

There were beheadings. There were rapes. Interestingly enough, there were crucifixions. If people would not convert, they were crucified.

In 2003, there were one million Christians in Iraq. Today, there are around 150,000 Christians left. That seems to me that people are being targeted for who they are.

This is not a distant issue for either the Yazidi people or the Assyrian Christian community. No family has been left untouched. Some people, and I have met some of them, have had a dozen or more family members killed or kidnapped because of this conflict. This is not a distant thing for them. It is very much an issue of the heart.

We can debate today about crimes against humanity, but when we know people in those communities, it is always much closer than that. I think that, today, it is shameful for the government to say it is not for us to decide. Instead, we hear the minister talking about writing a letter. That is going to be their response.

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They know that when individual ethnic communities are targeted for annihilation, that is the definition of genocide. The government is failing to protect these people. Trying to be all things to all people, as it has done again in its new office of everything, ensures that no one gets anything of substance.

Genocide involves targeting specific groups. The Liberals' refusal to even acknowledge that there are such categories that deserve protection means that the Canadian government will be of little use to anyone in the future when we see these kinds of conflicts. It is a sad situation and the consequence of a government that knows nothing about moral equivalence.

• (1645)

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague how he can reconcile what he has just said with our \$1.6-billion comprehensive commitment to fighting ISIL together with 60 countries in the ISIL coalition.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I thought the member might know better than to ask that question.

The contribution that we are making right now is unfortunately far inferior to the one we were making in the previous government. The Liberals have pulled our jets off. We know that they are not providing air support. They are telling us that they are not involved in combat. We know that they have thrown troops onto the front lines without the protection they need from our air forces. It is unfortunate that they say one thing out of one side of their mouth and do something else.

We just had a discussion over the last few days about jets and how the Liberals are fooling around with our CF-18s. Even though we should be using them in the Middle East, they have pulled them back. They refuse to use the equipment that we have. Then they come in trying to create what they call a “capability gap” in order to try to convince Canadians that they need to buy something else because they made an election promise. Therefore, I do not think we will take any lectures from them about the money or the commitment that they have made to our military.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

When I look at the motion, I see various points. I think that the House agrees with most of the points, and that it recognizes that ISIS is responsible for crimes against humanity aimed at groups such as Christians, Yazidis, and Shia Muslims, as well as other religious and ethnic minorities.

That is indeed the case, and it is recognized that they are using rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving women and girls. I think there is no debating that matter. It is indisputable that Daesh is targeting gays and lesbians who have been tortured and murdered. Moreover, there is no question that the House strongly condemns these atrocities.

Now we are talking about the last point in the motion, which states that these crimes constitute genocide. If we take the declaration of

the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, we see that genocides are acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. I think that for most people, this meets the definition.

Therefore, can we not go along with this motion by giving the government direction to act in accordance with the perspective of the United Nations for recognizing this crime as a genocide and to take action accordingly in the United Nations?

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have heard the New Democrats say that they thoroughly agree with the motion but then put a qualification on it, which is that the government needs to act in some other fashion. Therefore, I would encourage them to support it. Part of supporting that can be in their messaging to encourage the government to do something more as well. If they want to turn to the United Nations as a later solution to some of the issues with respect to this, it is fine for them to do that. However, the reality is that they say that they agree with this. We are talking about crimes against humanity. We are talking about rape and sexual violence. We are talking about targeting gays and lesbians. We are calling upon the House to strongly condemn these atrocities. I do not think it should be a question for anyone in the House that the government should be able to do that.

The reality is that our allies, the United Kingdom, the EU, the U.S. State Department, and the House of Representatives in the United States, have all called this genocide. It is not out of the realm of reason and good decision-making for the House to make that same clear statement.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his speech today and for his advocacy for minorities in this place over his time here.

What concerns me greatly about this debate particularly are some of the flippant comments coming from the government about having a debate on a moral issue, on a decision that this Parliament weigh-in on horrendous crimes of genocide taking place on the other side of the world. The fact is that the government, and even the NDP, seem paralyzed on making a call that is morally clear. What this Parliament does by no means precludes us from being a multilateral nation working with the International Criminal Court. However, our very basic premise is for this Parliament to speak out when there are crimes and horrendous crimes against humanity taking place. We are sent here as representatives of our communities and as the conscience of the nation to speak up, not to outsource our morality to a tribunal of lawyers. We can participate there as well but it is up to us.

Can the member comment on the duty this Parliament has to speak up when crimes such as this are being committed?

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Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with my colleague. I think it is a very important point that we make because what we are seeing is this notion of moral relativism, and moral equivalence seems to be permeating the government's position so that it cannot take a stand on anything. We understand what has happened here. Entire communities have been destroyed, men and boys have been slaughtered, and women have been taken, raped, and sold, specifically because they are part of a group of people from a particular area. That qualifies as the definition of "genocide", even to the Minister of Foreign Affairs who earlier said it is an intention to kill a group, because it is this group. Certainly, that fits with this definition.

The government opposite needs to make a moral decision to support this and do the right thing.

• (1655)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am once again rising in the House to debate this topic. I do not know how many times I have spoken on this subject, both when I was in government and now.

During the time of the Conservative government when ISIL came onto the scene, we joined the coalition because of the horrendous crimes that started happening. Throughout the debates we had on the extension of the mission and other things, it became extremely clear that we were dealing with a type of group we had absolutely never dealt with before. It was very cruel. Everybody here, even members on the government side, have said very clearly what this group has done.

We have now reached the point where the question is not about engagement in the fight against ISIL. That we have done. The Conservatives have an absolutely different approach than the current government. We took a very strong approach, including air strikes. The Liberal government is taking a different approach in fighting ISIL, which we do not think is a very robust fight.

The point is that we brought in the ICC. We were concerned that the people committing these horrendous crimes against humanity across the world would go unpunished, so we brought in the ICC. The Rwanda genocide tribunal was in my hometown of Arusha, where I went to see the people who committed these crimes being brought to justice.

The same situation is arising now. Crimes have been committed and everybody is talking about it. As a matter of fact, everybody is talking about preserving the evidence. The evidence already exists. People are dying. Why are we preserving the evidence? We need to recognize what exactly is happening in this region by this group, which is the most violent non-state group ever.

The horrific crimes we have seen shock everybody's conscience. It absolutely shocks everybody. Therefore, it is right for us to stand up and say exactly what it is. It is genocide. Genocide is being committed in that part of the world. To say the UN should do it or a bunch of lawyers should do it is like saying, and I do not know if these are the appropriate words, but coming from Africa, it reminds me of an ostrich putting its head in the sand and not recognizing what is happening in reality.

What difference does it make? The Minister of Foreign Affairs tends to get angry and says it is partisan. He is admitting to me that he has been partisan all this time, even when he was on the other side. What difference does it make? It is not partisan. Conservatives are trying to bring attention to an issue that we think is absolutely necessary. We want to put it in the spotlight and say exactly what is happening. We cannot close our eyes.

If I recall correctly, it was a Liberal government that brought the right to intervene to the United Nations. Where did this right to intervene come from? The right to intervene came about so that genocides and massacres would not occur and states would have the right to intervene if the government did not. In this case, the governments of Syria and Iraq both did not have the capacity, so we intervened as part of the coalition.

Does it change the fact that this group has committed genocide? Does it change the fact that this group has committed horrendous crimes? Does it change the fact that this group needs to be brought to justice in front of a tribunal? We had the Rwanda tribunal, the Nuremberg trials. We can do it now. We can say it is genocide.

Today we are debating something that Canadians do not understand. They ask why we are debating this when ISIL is committing crimes. We are talking about genocide and whether lawyers should decide if genocide is occurring or not. Yes, it is genocide. They are crimes against humanity. We need to bring them out into the open. Genocide is a strong word. I agree. We need a strong word to describe what this group is doing.

• (1700)

The group ISIL is committing horrendous crimes, so what is wrong in saying that this group does commit crimes? Telling them it is genocide does not change one fact. It is exactly what this group is doing. It has taken the Armenian genocide and other genocides to be recognized, and now after 100 years, countries across the world are recognizing the meaning of genocide. What is the point after 100 years in recognizing this? We want to do it now so that we can start the process of setting up a tribunal under the United Nations and bringing these people to justice.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that he would have supported if we had put in our motion to do something about it or to work with the United Nations to set up a tribunal. If they agree to the motion and they are the government, they should start the process. The Liberals should go to the United Nations. The opposition cannot, but they can. They can set up the tribunal right now and encourage the world to set up tribunals. We are debating what a British parliamentarian said, or John Kerry said. Let us move along and get these people who have committed this horrendous tragedy so that they do not get away. Many of them are trying to run away so they will not be charged under crimes against humanity.

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Nonsense. We have laws in Canada to stop them from going there, but things have not changed. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals want to close their eyes and not do anything. This is genocide. We have to go there and bring these people who are committing crimes to justice.

Roméo Dallaire is very clear when he speaks about genocide in Rwanda. There was killing in Rwanda, and at the time no one did anything. I myself have been to Burundi and have talked to a child soldier. When I looked at a child soldier, he was a 13-year-old boy who had already killed 20 people by that time, and there was no emotion there. This was a child soldier.

I am not talking about child soldiers, but about those people who are responsible and should be brought to justice. Right now, we are at war. Many of them have been eliminated through strikes, which is good, because we have to stop this group. At the same time, we should start the legal process to recognize what is taking place there. We should not wait for another 50 or 100 years from now for other parliamentarians to get up in the House and say, let us have unanimous consent to say that what happened in Syria and Iraq was genocide. Let us do it now.

This is the opportunity to do it, and then I think we should pick up on what the Minister of Foreign Affairs said. His government can start doing it by going to the United Nations and saying let us set up a tribunal now. We do not have to wait until they are defeated. Set it up now, and they can be brought in front of a tribunal. That is what ICC has done.

There have been talks in Africa where the African leaders are upset with the ICC, but the fact is that we need to bring people who are committing crimes to justice. Genocide or not genocide, it does not matter. It is there, so let us set it up. Let the message be clear to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the Liberal government, to go to the United Nations and start setting up a tribunal to bring them to justice. Whatever we want to say, it is genocide.

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member has a lot of experience. Why is his side of the House focused on the jets and that term when we have gone well beyond the jets? Our partners were only too willing to replace those and add more when they saw our commitment to military training, military intelligence, humanitarian aid, active diplomacy at the local level, and the stabilizing we are doing on the ground in Syria, in Iraq.

Second, we are already under way with the United Nations, so we are moving along. Why does the member opposite think we are somehow not being proactive?

• (1705)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government sent in a robust military force to fight ISIL and one of the most effective ways to fight it was the air strikes. When we were in government our trainers were over there. We still strongly believe that the air strikes were the most effective way of weakening ISIL.

That member stated that somebody else has gone in to fill the gap, which is another thing that we are really worried about. Why would somebody else go in? It is our responsibility to fight ISIL. Why do

we have to wait for another country to send in its aircraft when our aircraft were very effective?

Could the member give me one reason why the government pulled out of the air strike? Why were the strikes not effective? She wants to say it was because the minister said the committee looked at it. We also have a robust democracy. I can say quite clearly that what she thinks is a clear engagement, from our point of view is not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

On a subject as important as this one, we could agree that this type of international political action is very important. In this case, it would be more unifying if the motion included a proposal to take the matter to the United Nations Security Council. Since this was not done, I sincerely believe that no effort has been made to bring people together and achieve easy consensus on this subject.

Why not build bridges and ensure that everyone is working toward the same end?

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is good at putting amendments forward to any motion that comes here. I do not know why that party could not put forward an amendment to this motion and say it would approve the motion. I am very sure that all members would agree to it. If the member felt there was a shortage of that and he could not support the motion because of that amendment then he should have asked for an amendment like he has done in the past.

We all need to work together. The fact of the matter is we need to move forward. Let us call this genocide. Let the government go back to the United Nations and let us bring those people who are committing crime to justice.

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to speak as the chair of the Parliamentary Friends of the Kurds group here on Parliament Hill.

I want to give a name to the groups that the motion speaks to, the Yazidis, Assyrian Chaldean Christians, the Sabeen Mandaean, the Shabak, the Turkmens, and the Kakai, who have been targeted by ISIS in Daesh.

Could the member tell me what message the government is sending to these groups, to the Yazidis of the village of Kocho, who were mass murdered? What message is the government sending when it refuses to call this for what it is, genocide?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for working with Kurds in his riding and for being a part of the parliamentary association. Many of them are also my friends.

It is terrible. We need to send the strongest possible message not only to these groups but to the ones who are committing the crimes. Calling it what it is, genocide, would fulfill two things. It would send a message to those who are committing the crimes and to those who have been suffering as a result of the crimes. It is important we do that.

The NDP should have brought in an amendment. Everything would have passed.

The strongest message needs to be sent and the strongest message is that ISIS committed genocide and it is going to pay for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we go to resuming debate and the hon. member for Willowdale, I will let the hon. member know that there are only about five minutes remaining in the time for the debate on the business of supply motion for today. I will give him the usual signal before I need to interrupt him at 5:15.

The hon. member for Willowdale.

• (1710)

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise to speak regarding the opposition motion before us today. I stand before this House to voice my strong opposition to this ill-considered and premature motion on the topic of genocide.

Allow me to begin by reminding members of this House that the march of human rights and dignity across the globe has been one of the great, albeit unfinished, success stories in the past seven decades. Central to the progress has been the entrenchment of genocide as a key principle within international humanitarian law.

Indeed, the Canadian government has always proudly advanced the cause of global human rights and human security. From sanctions against the South African apartheid regime, to the courageous actions of Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire in Rwanda, to international leadership on issues such as anti-personnel land mines, our great country has always championed the protection of vulnerable populations across the globe.

Canada and the Liberal Party have always been at the vanguard of the rights revolution, whether protecting and enshrining individual rights here at home or promoting and safeguarding human rights and security abroad.

Apart from actions of successive Canadian governments, great Canadians in modern times have made championing human rights synonymous with Canadian values. The first draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights bears the imprint of Professor John Humphrey. Former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour, to cite another example, is universally recognized as one of the international community's foremost experts on human rights. Of course, one need also mention other individuals, such as Mr. Philippe Kirsch, who was the first president of the International Criminal Court, and, even today, one of Canada's foremost legal scholars, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, serves as the UN Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on issues of genocide and human rights.

Despite the seminal contributions of our country and many great Canadians on the development of international law, I fear that the motion proposed by the Conservative Party today is utterly bereft of a principled approach towards international law and strays from the approach of our closest allies.

The basis for which I oppose the Conservative motion is fourfold. One, genocide is a precise legal definition, and that precision is lacking in today's motion. Two, Canada cannot simply go it alone in regard to pronouncing acts of genocide and must instead act in concert with its allies and international institutions. Three, the

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gravity of the situation at hand behooves us to act in a sophisticated, deliberate, and meaningful manner. Four, it would greatly undermine our new-found credibility to act as effective and responsible players on the international scene should we adopt the Conservative motion.

Allow me to begin with my first objection, which is the definition of genocide.

While the term genocide conjures up chilling images, we must not forget that the term carries a precise legal definition. Precision is required because of the term's incorporation by reference in various statutes, whether it is the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda or, of course, the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

However, any reference to international laws and precedents surrounding genocide are curiously absent from the motion put forward today by the Conservatives. The motion operates irrespective of well-established legal structures, and therefore does little to bring justice to the victims of Daesh's brutality. This is a matter best handled by independent and international jurists, not partisan politicians.

Other legal requirements that the Conservative motion glosses over are, for example, that the 1948 convention is arguably predicated on the notion that only states may commit the crime of genocide. Of course, that is something that the motion does not address.

Another legal requirement that is glossed over by the Conservative motion is that the genocide convention clearly states that collective action is required in response to genocide. The 1948 treaty, after all, was signed by 148 nations and expressly behooved the signatories to work collectively for greater certainty, as the preamble stated, "in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required".

On the second, the basis for my objection is that we must act in concert with our allies in international institutions. Genocide is by definition a matter of international law, and our government has rightly decided that such determinations regarding the nature of Daesh's abuses are best achieved acting in lockstep with our allies and co-operating through international organizations and mechanisms.

We know that the previous government proudly flouted its desire to not just go along in order to get along, and that it diminished the United Nations as spending too much time on itself. This aversion to multilateralism led Canada to lose its bid to win a seat at the UN Security Council for nearly a decade.

• (1715)

Finally, the gravity of the situation behooves us to act in a sophisticated and deliberate manner, which is precisely what our Minister of Foreign Affairs outlined in his letter to the United Nations.

Private Members' Business

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, June 14, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, it has always been a great pleasure all these years when I rise and through my magic wand say, let us see your watch as 5:30 p.m..

The Deputy Speaker: I that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

IMPAIRED DRIVING ACT

The House resumed from April 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-226, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (offences in relation to conveyances) and the Criminal Records Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise this evening to speak to Bill C-226. I would like to thank my colleague and friend, and my seatmate, the member of Parliament for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, for his advocacy on this issue. Bill C-226 is the impaired driving act and is really the next evolution of Canada's response to the social problems and tragedies caused by impaired driving across Canada.

Being a member of Parliament and a father from southern Ontario, I would like to start with a few names to show this is not one of the debates in the House that is theoretical; it is one that impacts Canadian lives.

Daniel Neville-Lake, nine years old; Harrison Neville-Lake, five years old; Milagros Neville-Lake, two years old; and their grandfather, Gary Neville, were killed tragically last year in southern Ontario in an accident. It hit Canadians, wherever they were, when they heard about a young family taken through the callous act of another Canadian who could have easily avoided the situation he put those young children and their grandfather in. I do not think there is a member of the House or anyone in Canada who watched that court proceed and saw the anguish of the parents, particularly the mother of the Neville-Lake children, and what that entire episode put them through.

We have to remember that bills like private member's bill, Bill C-226, can make an impact. We can look back and say that was the turning point, that this tragedy the family suffered through led to better policy, better laws, and an updating of Canada's response to impaired driving. I hope if we can get Bill C-226 through the House, and I implore the government to ensure it gets to committee, the family members can find some degree of solace in the fact that their tragedy is helping other families avoid the same.

I read four names in the House, but there are thousands of names and families that have been touched by impaired driving, certainly over my lifetime. As the member of Parliament for Durham, I am struck by the statistic from the Durham Regional Police Service. It states that 42% of traffic accidents in my area of the country involve alcohol. Estimates have suggested that the social cost through accidents, death, illness and hospitalization is \$4.5 billion related to a crime perpetrated on victims that could easily be avoided. I say that because we live in an age when this has been socially unacceptable, even since I got my driver's licence at 16.

I remember when I was at Port Perry High School there was a crashed car on the lawn of our high school. It was put there by a new group in Canada at that time, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, to bring home to young people the cost of driving after consuming alcohol. For my generation and indeed for most members of the House, this is not socially acceptable, yet we still face this problem.

We also live in an age when technology and innovation have made it even easier for people to make the right choice with respect to impaired driving. We live in an age when there are not just traditional taxis or the phone call to a mom, designated driver, dad, or a friend. We have Uber, we have ride sharing, and we have programs that are dedicated to avoiding impaired driving, like Keys to Us whose drivers will follow people back in their vehicles. That did not exist 30 or 40 years ago. There is absolutely no reason for somebody who is impaired to get behind a wheel today.

● (1720)

With social host liability, which has been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada, there is a zero tolerance now in our country for impaired driving, yet we still see the horrific accidents and the tragedies they lead to for families like the Neville-Lake family. It is up to this Parliament to react and modernize our laws.

In fact, it was the intention in the last year of the Conservative government to update and modernize these laws and show Parliament's zero tolerance for impaired driving, so I am very proud of my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for bringing something forward that he knew the last government was working on.

Private Members' Business

How would it work? The most important element, which in some areas is controversial, is the mandatory screening measure. Why is that responsible? It is because in nations that have introduced the mandatory screening, like France and Australia, they have seen a 20% additional reduction in impaired drivers on their roads as a result of the fact that they could encounter a RIDE program, like we know in Ontario, the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere program. However, in this case with mandatory screening, the officer would not need to have indicia of impairment: breath, glassy eyes, and that sort of thing. I know the next speaker on the government side who has spent many years in uniform will maybe know that procedure far better than I do, but the police would be able to do mandatory screening, because if individuals are on a roadway, it is a responsibility they have, not actually a right. We already ask them to pass driver's tests, vision tests. It is a right and a responsibility that they have to not be impaired.

If we can lead to more people not being impaired on our roadways, accidents being reduced, tragedies being reduced, why would we not do this, particularly when a country like Australia or a country like France has had such success with that public policy move?

This is not an invasion of anyone's privacy by any stretch of the imagination. Right now, if individuals are going too quickly on our motorways, they can be pulled over to the side. If their sticker is dated, if their car is not sound, they can be pulled over for safety reasons by a law enforcement officer. If the driver is not sound, we should have that same right, and mandatory screening would let everyone know that an individual is not able to be on the road in an impaired state and that there will be a zero tolerance.

The other thing Bill C-226 would do is toughen sentencing, particularly for repeat offenders. Alcoholism is a sickness and people can get help. If they can be treated, there should be zero tolerance for them on the streets at all, particularly after their first offence.

We should show society's denunciation of that conduct through a tougher sentence, so we would allow courts to give sentences in the 10-to-14-year range, and higher in repeat offences causing bodily harm, which Canadians expect.

We saw what the court determined in the Neville-Lake tragedy. We should make sure courts can do this. We should also speed up, reduce the trauma on victims by not allowing frivolous claims with respect to binge drinking before driving or after an accident, defences that really are beyond the pale in this day and age when it comes to this offence. We should not allow those sham defences to clog and delay our courts with respect to this offence.

As I said, at 43, I have grown up in an environment where there has been a zero tolerance already for drinking and driving, for impaired driving. We now have a government legalizing marijuana and risking further impairment from that drug on young people and people of all ages driving. It is up to the government—in fact it is up to the next speaker—to show that our society is also modernizing our impaired driving laws to show our re-commitment to zero tolerance.

In the Durham region, the MADD program started when I was in high school. People like Michelle Crabb in the Durham region, whose family was struck, and Dave Pereira are our volunteers who

have been working on the front line for 40 years. We need to give them the new tools to make sure we have no other families like the Neville-Lake family facing tragedy from impaired driving.

• (1725)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to join in the second reading debate on private member's Bill C-226, introduced by the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis. I believe that all parties in the House support efforts to reduce the devastating harm that is so often caused by impaired drivers, while at the same time respecting the charter rights of all Canadians.

As members are undoubtedly aware, on average, nearly four Canadians lose their lives every day as a result of choices people make to drink and drive. Countless thousands more are injured and impacted by this terrible crime. Accordingly, I believe Bill C-226 should be given second reading and referred to committee for study and possible amendments to improve it. The bill proposes a fundamental reform of the impaired driving provisions, and other transportation provisions of the Criminal Code. The government accepts in principle the proposal in Bill C-266 to enact a new part that is written in simple language to make the law easier to understand and to enforce.

The existing Criminal Code provisions dealing with transportation offences, particularly those addressing impaired driving, are complex and often difficult to apply. In part, this is a result of successive piecemeal reforms that have taken place over many years. They have also been considerably interpreted by our courts, making it difficult to understand how they operate simply by reading the provisions. This has in turn impacted the effectiveness and the efficiency of our investigations, prosecutions, and sentencing in these important cases. The provisions can benefit from the reforms proposed in Bill C-226.

Today, I will limit my remarks to some of the key elements of the bill. First, the bill proposes to have uniform, higher maximum penalties for all transportation offences upon summary conviction and indictment. In particular, the proposal to have a 10-year maximum penalty on indictment for simpliciter offences, rather than the current five years, would make it possible for the crown to make an application to have a repeat drunk driver declared a dangerous or long-term offender. The code currently provides that a person must be convicted of an offence having a maximum penalty of 10 years or more before such an application can be made. At present, a person cannot be declared a dangerous or long-term offender even if they have committed multiple impaired driving offences.

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The government therefore supports the maximum penalty proposed of 10 years for simpliciter offences, 14 years for bodily harm offences, and life for all offences causing a death.

The bill proposes to hybridize the transportation offences involving bodily harm. This would provide the crown with discretion to proceed by summary conviction in cases of minor bodily harm or by indictment in cases of significant bodily harm. Currently, the crown can only proceed by indictment. Therefore, the government supports this change.

Bill C-226 proposes many new and higher mandatory minimum penalties. We believe that higher mandatory minimum penalties of imprisonment are inadvisable. I wish to advise the House that the Minister of Justice will be undertaking a review of sentencing that includes all mandatory minimum penalties. Importantly, the bill's proposed five-year mandatory minimum penalty for causing a death and the provision requiring consecutive sentences for each person killed raise significant charter issues. I therefore encourage members of the committee receiving the bill to strike from the bill all of the new mandatory minimum penalties of imprisonment.

The government is, however, prepared to support the higher mandatory minimum fines for first offenders found with a high blood alcohol concentration, or BAC, or who refuse to provide a breath sample. We know that the higher the BAC, the more likely the driver is to cause a crash. The increase in fines from \$1,000 to a minimum of \$1,500 for a person with a BAC of 120 milligrams in 100 millilitres of blood, and doubling the fine to \$2,000 for a person with a blood alcohol concentration of 160 milligrams in 100 millilitres of blood reflects this greater danger.

To ensure that an offender who refuses to provide a breath sample does not gain any advantage over those who comply with the demand, the \$2,000 fine would also apply to refusal offences. I note that a blood alcohol concentration of 120 would be an aggravating factor should the person be convicted of a subsequent impaired driving offence.

The bill proposes mandatory alcohol screening, otherwise known as random breath testing or RBT. It must be borne in mind that driving is a privilege and that it is subject to many conditions. Most importantly, police already have the authority to stop any driver at random to ensure that he or she has a valid licence and that the vehicle is registered and insured.

● (1730)

Indeed, the courts have upheld the authority of the police to make random stops to check whether the driver is sober. During these stops, the police currently try to determine the sobriety by smelling the air for an odour of alcohol, by asking drivers if they have been drinking, to looking to see whether their eyes are red or bloodshot, asking them to produce various documents, and to observe their co-ordination.

Research has also shown, unfortunately, that drivers who are over the limit often, far too often, manage to get through a police stop without being detected.

Mandatory alcohol screening of drivers who have been stopped, whether as part of a random check stop for sobriety or because there is something in their driving which has led the police to make the

stop, will identify far more of the drivers who choose to drink and drive while impaired. It is a quick, scientifically valid way of determining whether the driver has consumed alcohol and appears to be over the limit.

The realization that they cannot avoid giving a breath sample at roadside will have a very significant deterrent effect on people who may choose to drink and drive. I would like to advise the House that this deterrent effect has been demonstrated countless times in many other countries.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights in its 2009 report pointed out that random breath testing reduced the number of people killed on Irish roads by 23%. In New South Wales, Australia, it resulted in a decrease of 36% in the number of fatally injured drivers with a blood alcohol concentration over the legal limit.

The Department of Justice issued a discussion paper in 2010 that pointed out that:

RBT has had such remarkable results that in 2004 the European Union recommended that it be a part of every EU nation's traffic safety measures. According to the European Transport Safety Council, RBT is now in use in 22 European states.

The fact that random breath testing has been implemented in other countries, where it has saved thousands of lives and prevented countless injuries, is powerful evidence in its favour.

The government therefore supports the bill's recommendation for mandatory alcohol screening and random breath testing.

The bill also proposes to facilitate the way in which blood alcohol concentration is proven in court. It would provide that blood alcohol concentration at the time of testing would be conclusively proven if there were two breath tests on an approved instrument taken 15 minutes apart, preceded in each case by an air blank test and a calibration check, which produce results that are within 20 milligrams of one another.

Currently, the law provides that blood alcohol concentration at time of testing is deemed to be the BAC at the time of driving if the test is taken within two hours. Where the test is conducted after the two hours, a toxicologist must be called to provide evidence of what the person's BAC would have been at the time of driving if his or her evidence of consumption is accepted.

Bill C-226 proposes a legislative formula for calculating the blood alcohol concentration beyond two hours, which would significantly simplify trials in these cases. The bill also proposes to eliminate the bolus drinking defence and limit the intervening drink defence by making it an offence to have a blood alcohol concentration of 80 within two hours of driving, subject to a limited defence for innocent post-driving drinking.

The bolus drink defence arises when the driver claims to have consumed a large amount of alcohol just before driving so that, although their blood alcohol concentration was over 80 at the time of testing, the alcohol was still being absorbed at the time of driving. This defence rewards those who consume a significant amount of alcohol immediately before driving, which I am sure we can all agree is behaviour that should be discouraged.

Bill C-226 proposes two additional significant changes to the law relating to evidence in the area of drug recognition and evaluation, DRE. First, the law would be clarified to ensure that the evidence of an evaluating officer conducting the DRE is admissible without a hearing to qualify the evaluating officer as an expert. This would respond to several lower court decisions, which have refused to hear expert opinion evidence from the DRE officer with respect to drug impairment.

The government supports these enhancements to the drug recognition and evaluation program. As well, the government will be seeking to have some technical amendments presented at committee. As I stated at the beginning, I am sure we can all agree that the goal of the bill, to make our roads and highways safer for everyone, for all Canadians, is one we can and must support.

Therefore, I would urge all members to vote for the bill so we can get this important bill to committee where it can be studied in detail.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-226, introduced by my colleague, the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis.

As mentioned several times in the House, Bill C-226 is designed to limit or make more difficult the conditions that allow for impaired driving, a glaring problem. I can say that I have had a close personal experience with this problem. Just a year and a half ago, while I was driving around in my constituency, I nearly had a collision with someone who was impaired. As some members of the House will remember, in March 2015, the former provincial member for Gaspé, Georges Mamelonet, died in a head-on collision involving an impaired driver, very close to Rimouski, in fact.

This is an extremely important matter, and no one in this House will deny the importance of dealing with it appropriately.

The bill itself has three particular components. The first proposes tougher sentences by setting minimum sentences for cases of impaired driving causing death. The second component of the bill is intended to restrict legal defences and eliminate the possibility of defending oneself legally and using certain defences that are questionable and harmful to the fight we must wage against impaired driving. The third component is intended to institute random alcohol testing for impaired driving.

I can say that I do not have a problem with eliminating certain more questionable defences. People have probably abused legal loopholes to actually avoid facing the consequences of their actions, namely choosing to drink and drive.

With regard to random alcohol testing, I am open to the possibility. Obviously, it raises certain questions associated with privacy and individual freedoms. In some cases, however, we also have to look at the common good, in general. In that regard, I am not completely convinced, but I would lean in that direction.

With respect to minimum sentences, we see here, unfortunately, the usual automatic response of the Conservatives to opt for such sentences in almost every case. What is interesting is that the

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Conservatives, in a previous government, in 2008, had toughened certain legal provisions on impaired driving. As part of that reform and those amendments, the fines for a first impaired-driving offence were raised from \$600 to \$1,000. For repeat offenders, who are liable to a term of imprisonment, the sentence was increased from 14 to 30 days.

However, while this was expected to deter impaired driving, in the end the opposite effect was observed. The number of people failing impaired-driving tests did not decrease, far from it. This demonstrates the limitations of using sentences as a deterrent. That has often been proclaimed in the House. There is no evidence that sentences, whether they are minimum sentences or just tougher sentences, produce enough of a change in behaviour to truly satisfy the intentions of the House, the intentions of legislators and especially the intention that we should have in legislating for the public good.

Therefore, I can say from the outset that I am opposed to the provisions concerning minimum sentences. I am not the only one in this situation, as MADD, or Mothers Against Drunk Driving, is also opposed to the imposition of minimum sentences, and in this case, a minimum sentence of five years. That does not mean we are in favour of lighter sentences, quite the contrary. However, giving that discretion to judges, allowing the legal system to make decisions that account for the context, will, in our view, be completely satisfactory and will undoubtedly lead to tougher sentences and a wider acceptance of that legal power.

• (1740)

In many cases, judges make their decisions based on a social context in which impaired driving is less and less tolerated. It is no longer a socially acceptable behaviour. On the contrary, it is socially and universally condemned. My colleague from Durham said it well. In that regard, that often leads to more serious legal consequences, unfortunately. I am thinking specifically of minimum sentences.

Let us then allow the judges to do their jobs, and let us do ours as legislators. I was somewhat disappointed with this bill, because if the idea was to deal with impaired driving, other elements could have been included. There is a lot of talk about sentences and punishing crime, but not much about prevention.

If the intent was really to discourage people from using a vehicle while impaired, it would have made sense to include in the bill provisions such as the obligation to have an alcohol-ignition interlock device in cars, which might automatically prevent drunk drivers from using their cars.

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It would also have been worthwhile to have the bill mention a problem that is likely to become more important in the future: drug-related impaired driving. Since we are talking about legalizing marijuana, I should mention that, in some American states where marijuana has been decriminalized or legalized, impaired driving problems have emerged. However, all the bill mentions is blood alcohol tests to detect alcohol-related impaired driving.

If we want to be consistent, we will eventually have to address this issue. When the Liberal government drafts future legislation to legalize marijuana, if it goes that far, I encourage it to include provisions to protect the public. Our existing impaired driving laws are getting increasingly tougher.

As I mentioned, I will vote in favour of this bill at second reading, but I think it needs to be carefully studied in committee, because there is no guarantee that I will vote the same way at third reading. If the minimum sentencing is still in the bill, there is a good chance that I will have to vote against the bill and we will have to find another way, as legislators, to combat impaired driving.

The House takes this issue seriously, and the political parties probably have different philosophies on how to deal with this issue, but we need to find a solution that works, not a solution designed to score political points.

I would like the committee to examine whether random testing is effective, based on facts and evidence. I know that 31 of the 34 OECD countries use random testing, and Canada is one of the exceptions. I have no doubt that there will be studies on other countries' experiences.

We need to look at how these legal defences are being abused, as a way to avoid penalties for drivers who would have otherwise received punishment. We are talking about the safety of our families, neighbours, and communities, as well as the common good.

I urge all members in the House to carefully consider the various measures we could use to effectively combat this issue. The bill provides three lines of attack, so we should be able to come up with others. Most importantly, we should be able to keep the measures that work, not the measures that were proposed by those who share our political views.

● (1745)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague from Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for this excellent bill.

[*English*]

I am pleased to be speaking in favour of it.

I have appreciated the opportunity to hear from the different members speaking to the bill already. It sounds like there is substantial consensus in this House to move the bill forward to the committee stage. I look forward to the continuing debate at that stage.

There are many provisions in the bill that address the significant problem of impaired driving in this country. I want to focus on one of the provisions, in particular, in my remarks today, one of the provisions that I think is the most transformative about the bill. It is the introduction of mandatory screening.

I know there has been some debate back and forth that I have had informally with members around what the provision means, in terms of public safety, as well as in terms of civil liberties. I am going to argue, today, that a policy of mandatory screening does not violate civil liberties. Frankly, even if it did, it would be justified on the basis of the lives that would be saved by requiring mandatory screening.

Just by way of brief introduction right now, of course, the way the law works is that people can be pulled over, they can be asked if they have been drinking, and they can be asked to take a Breathalyzer if an officer feels that there is some basis to believe that they have been drinking or may be impaired.

There are concerns that this requirement for there to be some kind of an indication of impairment beforehand reduces the deterrence factor, reduces the chances that someone will be caught. There are a number of bills that have been proposed to try to address this. There is a bill before Parliament that I think is an interesting measure, as well, that I am inclined to support if it goes part way, in terms of allowing the use of a passive detection device to determine if there is alcohol in the car and, on that basis, to conduct screening.

However, the simplest way of ensuring the greatest possible deterrence, of catching impaired drivers, is through a system of mandatory screening, which says that anybody who is pulled over can be asked to take a breath test and, on that basis, then an assessment can be made as to whether or not they are impaired.

This is clear, it is simple but, yes, it raises some debate around the question of civil liberties. I want to talk about the issues of civil liberties in the context of mandatory screening and, specifically, make three distinct arguments about the value of mandatory screening.

The first argument I want to highlight is that driving is not a right. The definition of civil liberties, and I looked this up on dictionary.com and I think it is pretty good, is that civil liberties are:

the freedom of a citizen to exercise customary rights, as of speech or assembly, without unwarranted or arbitrary interference by the government.

Civil liberties only exist when they are applied to activities that individuals have a fundamental right to.

Inferring some violation of civil liberties in the context of mandatory screening would be to infer that individuals have a right to drive, which, of course, they do not. I think other colleagues have already made the point that there are many requirements we have associated with driving already that would not be permissible if we inferred that there was some kind of a right to drive.

The argument that brings civil liberties into this particular discussion, the implied idea that there is a right to drive, actually has very dangerous implications for various other aspects of the way our public safety system works around driving.

There is not a right to drive. Inferring a right to drive creates problems and, insofar as there is not a right to drive, then it is reasonable to require, as a condition of driving, that individuals be willing to provide a breath sample. That is not a violation of their civil liberties, again, insofar as there is not a right to drive.

The second point I want to make is that the current system presents greater potential inconveniences to drivers than mandatory screening.

Mandatory screening is very clear. It is very predictable. Individuals know that they can be expected to blow and that at a check-stop, individuals will all then presumably be asked to blow, and it is a quick, it is a clear, it is a predictable process.

● (1750)

The current system is more unpredictable, where individuals are asked questions first and it varies depending on what inference the police officer may draw in that particular case. As much as some individuals may not want to have to blow, the inconvenience factor is, I would argue, lessened in a system of mandatory screening because there is a certainty, there is a predictability, there is a process in place that individuals can rely on, and it really maximizes the deterrence factor. Nobody is going to think they can talk their way out of it or that they can avoid being tested in this way, because there is a certainty there. Therefore, it maximizes deterrence and of course public safety.

The third point that I want to emphasize is that lives are very much at stake in this debate. In the last Parliament, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights studied this issue and recommended the implementation of mandatory screening. The reason it did so, in large part, is that countries which have implemented mandatory screening have witnessed a significant decrease in the number of recorded road deaths every year. Since impaired driving is, in fact, the leading cause of criminal death in Canada, this is particularly important.

We are talking about real lives saved and real lives affected. Part of why I wanted to speak to the bill, in particular, is that, while I was door knocking, I had a lengthy conversation with a family in my riding whose daughter was permanently disabled as a result of the actions of a drunk driver. Of course, we all know these things happen, but it brings it home to all of us in a particular way when we have the opportunity to speak to constituents who have had these kinds of experiences.

Simply knowing that a system of mandatory screening could prevent that kind of suffering, not in every case, perhaps, but for some families in the future, makes me feel very strongly about the importance of having a system of mandatory screening. To balance the potential theoretical concerns, but not really concerns, about civil liberties against the concrete idea of human life and happiness at stake here, we should err on the side of protecting human life and reducing suffering instead of this incorrect assertion of a procedural civil liberty.

In general, when we look at the balance of human life and protection of society versus rights, we have to think about the origin of rights. Rights have, in my view, two possible origins. One origin would be nature and the other would be custom. There are certain

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rights that come from the very nature of who and what we are, but there are other rights that are the result of custom and social agreement. We agree to accord certain rights to others on the basis of what is conducive to the happiness and good function of society, and generally speaking, though not in every case, our concept of civil liberties would fall into the concept of having their origins in custom as opposed to in nature.

We have the opportunity to describe and define the contours of these customary rights and I would argue that we should not seek to extend the ambit of customary rights in a way that leads to an increase in human suffering. The way we think about and describe rights that emanate not so much from nature but from custom should be with a view to what is good for society, what is good for human happiness and human flourishing. It would be perverse to come up with a doctrine of rights that we knew led to more human suffering, more loss of life, since the very purpose of rights should be with an orientation toward human flourishing.

These are what I see as the substantive arguments in favour of a system of mandatory screening. There is no such thing as a right to drive. Further, the creation of a right to drive creates additional risks to human life and human happiness. A system of mandatory screening provides additional benefits in terms of convenience and predictability for drivers. Also, fundamentally, lives are at stake. By understanding civil liberties as not precluding mandatory screening, Parliament can make a choice to significantly reduce the number of deaths associated with drunk driving.

● (1755)

That is our job first and foremost. Our job is to think about how we can save and protect lives, and the happiness and well-being of Canadians.

I congratulate my colleague on this excellent legislation. I look forward to supporting it.

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang (Calgary Skyview, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate and thank the hon. member for his commitment to ensuring that Canadians are kept safe and deterred from drinking and driving.

I too believe that we must continue to ensure that Canadians do not drink and drive while protecting them against having to experience what it is like to be injured or lose loved ones due to a drunk driver.

I am also a victim of drunk driving. I sympathize with other Canadians who have lost family and loved ones to drunk driving. In 1972, my father and four other family members and friends were killed by a drunk driver in India. My father was a young successful businessman, who to this day is remembered throughout the country. When he was killed, our family's future was thrown into uncertainty. Our grief was at times unbearable. I had lost one of the most important people in my life. I do not want any Canadian to have to experience this loss and pain. However, this legislation does not do much to address my concerns.

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I agree that there needs to be more strategic enforcement and educational campaigns to make sure that we protect Canadians, their families, and friends, but our approach must be based on evidence or we will have done little to prevent future suffering. I am sure that the bill will succeed at one thing, which is that it would put too many Canadians in prison.

I recognize that the bill provides hope to some victims that it will prevent impaired driving. From what I know, the only thing that the bill will provide is hope. It will have little impact on the future prevention of impaired driving.

According to this legislation, the accused would face an automatic mandatory minimum sentence of 30 days imprisonment for a first offence, 120 days for a second offence, one year for a third offence, and two years for any subsequent offences. The bill outlines that these sentences would apply to anyone who is found to have operated a vehicle while impaired in any degree, by alcohol or a drug or a combination of both. The decision for a conviction teeters on the ability to prove a blood alcohol concentration that is equal to or exceeds 80 milligrams of alcohol in 100 millilitres of blood.

I will begin with why the bill is not the solution that we need to protect Canadians against the potentially traumatic outcomes from drinking and driving.

First, the bill proposes persecution of suspected impaired drivers by using mandatory minimum sentences. We must not forget that it is clearly stated in subsection 11(d), "Proceedings in criminal and penal matters" of the charter, that:

Any person charged with an offence has the right:

(d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

The mandatory minimums that Bill C-226 would impose will remove the ability of our judiciary to ensure that the accused is provided with a fair and public hearing by an independent tribunal. Instead, conclusive proof would be taken out of the hands of a judge, and all evidence for conviction will be replaced by outcomes of a breathalyzer and the peace officer or technician who is operating it.

The use of breathalyzers is known to have provided less than 100% proof of impaired driving. A 2011 study in British Columbia found that roadside breathalyzers were wrong in 14 out of 174 roadside suspensions. This would mean under the bill that these fourteen persons would have little recourse, as the device reading would be the only conclusive evidence needed to brand them instantly guilty.

Second, this legislation fails to ensure that the rights of Canadians are upheld according to the charter. The fact is that the Supreme Court of Canada has already ruled that mandatory minimums like those proposed here are unconstitutional and would endanger our justice system.

According to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *R. v. Nur*, on April 14, 2015, mandatory minimums were challenged under Section 12 of the charter, which states:

Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

This is because using mandatory minimums will set the precedent for reasonably foreseeable applications in other cases unrelated to impaired driving that would result in cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

● (1800)

We should be wary of mandatory minimums because, as the Supreme Court stated, "Imposing such a sentence would 'undermine society's expectations of fairness in the administration of justice'".

There is further evidence provided by the Canadian Department of Justice in its study titled "Mandatory Minimum Penalties: Their Effects on Crime, Sentencing Disparities, and Justice System Expenditures" that mandatory minimums are ineffective specifically as a deterrent, especially against impaired driving.

The report states that:

Overall, the evidence in this area holds out more hope for vigorous law enforcement and the certainty of punishment than for tough sentences. Studies indicate that [mandatory minimums] and sanctions of increasing severity do not reduce recidivism rates or alcohol-related accidents.

The proposed use of mandatory minimums by this bill is only a Band-Aid solution that does not take into account the whole picture. Instead of helping Canadians, it would jeopardize the fundamental rights of everyone and do nothing to prevent future impaired driving or recidivism. We should be focusing on bringing impaired drivers to justice through more vigilant oversight and using the most effective means based on evidence.

Through the continued evaluation of legal and social approaches, along with educational campaigns to prevent impaired driving, we can continue to save lives while maintaining justice.

I speak in this House to ensure that we are doing our best for Canada and Canadians. Unfortunately, this bill falls short of our best. I ask my colleagues and fellow members of this House to continue to work together to create evidence-based laws that will bring impaired drivers to justice and ensure a safer future for all Canadians.

After the tragedy in our family in 1972, to this day, I struggle to understand why an individual gets behind the wheel after drinking, to cause enormous suffering for the family and friends of innocent victims. I stand with other Canadians who have had to suffer, but I can support this bill with amendments.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: I invite the hon. member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis for his right of reply. The hon. member will have up to five minutes for his comments.

● (1805)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people who have listened to the debate over the past hour will surely be surprised, I dare say, by its constructive, consensus-oriented tenor. I would like to continue in the same vein by thanking my colleagues from the various political parties who have spoken.

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First, as you know, I had the opportunity to work with my colleague from Durham in his riding. He delivered a moving personal account, but he also recognized, and we see it today, that it has become socially unacceptable to be intoxicated and get behind the wheel, and that it is important for us to take steps as a Parliament.

[*English*]

I would like to thank the former police chief of Toronto, the member for Scarborough Southwest, for having spoken brilliantly to the bill. It is certainly inspiring to have such a skilled and renowned chief of police of such a large force supporting the bill. I appreciate that, and I thank the member for that.

[*Translation*]

In addition, the member for Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques told us bluntly that he was nearly hit by an impaired driver. This shows the importance of improving the effectiveness of roadside spot checks. This is, in fact, one of three measures in the bill. The idea is to improve roadblocks through systematic testing, relieve pressure on the courts and introduce minimum sentences to reduce the incidence of accidents caused by impaired driving.

My colleague from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan eloquently demonstrated that those who have strong convictions that could be described as libertarian can support the bill, because people's rights are protected. There is the constitutional opinion of Justice Hogg, but beyond that, as my colleague said, driving is a privilege that comes with responsibilities. That is what the bill is intended to ensure.

I thank the member for Richmond Hill, who told us how his father lost his life because of an accident involving a drunk driver. Clearly, there is a need.

I think that today we have shown that we can work together. There is still work to be done on the bill, I am aware of that. That is why I want the bill to go to committee for a clause-by-clause review and I want us to be able to discuss it constructively. There was a suggestion about including mandatory alcohol-ignition interlock devices. That would help people with certain addictions protect themselves. Those are things we can study in committee.

I would like to remind my Quebec colleague from Rimouski that there is already a bill in the House dealing with alcohol sensors. Clearly, other suggestions were made, but it is important to keep in mind that it is a private member's bill that already covers a lot of territory.

I would simply like to express my appreciation to the members of Parliament for agreeing to study this further in committee. I would also like to thank the people who helped me prepare this bill: Minister MacKay at the time, the member for Langley—Aldergrove, the people who handle road safety in Quebec and elsewhere, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Families for Justice, and the people of my riding for their initiatives.

I would like to thank the members for their statements, and I hope that we can continue to move forward in a constructive way to pass a law that will save lives in this country.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

(Motion agreed to, 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.

• (1810)

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Erin Weir (Regina—Lewvan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the original question that prompts this adjournment debate was about the procurement of F-35 aircraft. I think it is worth remembering that in the last Parliament, it was the NDP that raised serious questions about the suitability of this aircraft for Canada, so we proposed an open competition whereby different fighter aircraft could be compared.

In the last election campaign, the Liberal Party latched onto this and committed not to buy the F-35 while at the same time holding an open competition. That was clearly very effective as political rhetoric, even though it is kind of a contradiction to say there is an open competition if it excludes one of the main contenders right off the bat.

Then after the election, the new government paid millions of dollars to keep Canada in the F-35 consortium. I asked why the government would do that if it were not planning to buy the aircraft. Since then, Liberal policy has taken more sharp turns than the next generation fighter aircraft.

Just a few days ago it was reported that the government missed a payment to the F-35 consortium. It is proposing that it will continue to pay into the consortium supposedly to receive industrial benefits, although it is important to note that the consortium does not guarantee any industrial benefits or jobs to Canada. It simply has us in the mix of countries that may or may not receive such benefits. Therefore, it is not nearly as effective as actually negotiating specific and concrete benefits as part of an actual contract.

The sharper turn that has been taken is the reported decision to buy the Super Hornet through a sole-source contract. I just returned from a meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates that concluded less than an hour ago at which we were told by officials that in fact no decision has been made, that the government has not even provided any parameters for the purchase of new fighter aircraft, and indeed does not have any kind of a process in place to replace the CF-18.

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What I would say is that whichever story one believes, what is clear is that the Liberals are not keeping their promise to run an open and transparent competition for these aircraft. If they decided to buy the Super Hornet through a sole-source deal, that obviously is not an open competition. If they have not actually started any sort of tendering process or competition in the seven months since the election, that is clearly a failure as well.

I would tend to conclude where I began on the theme of having an open competition to pick the aircraft that is going to best meet our defence requirements, while at the same time, providing the best value for Canadian taxpayers.

Defence procurement has been shrouded in secrecy. There have been all sorts of cost overruns associated with these sole-source contracts and it is very apparent that the only way to know that we are actually getting the best deal, the only way to make a proper evaluation of the different options, is to have an open competition where we review those options in a coherent way.

Thanks very much for the time and I look forward to hearing the government's response.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's time and attention on yet another jet replacement speech. It does seem to be the issue du jour these days.

I would like to thank the hon. member for his inquiry. The program that he referenced is actually a program that stretches back to 1997. It is a 19-year-old program, and during that time the Government of Canada and all Governments of Canada over whatever number of governments have happened since 1997 have invested something in the order of \$309 million. I urge my hon. colleague not to read too much into the fact that a payment was missed in the last day or two; that payment will be made. Our investment in this program represents about 2% of the non-recurring costs, but it does keep us in the entire industrial mix with respect to how this F-35 will ultimately be developed.

As the member knows, procurement tries to achieve three main objectives. The one that the hon member is referring to is leveraging the economic, industrial, and technological benefits. Thus far, the \$300-million-plus investment has generated about \$743 million worth of industrial benefits from a variety of companies that have developed an expertise over those 19 years. Canada will continue to meet its obligations under the memorandum of understanding.

However, an important point for the hon. member is that remaining in the partnership does not commit us to buy the F-35. It is a case of being able to walk and chew gum. We can participate in the program, but we are not obligated to actually purchase the airplane. The debate has often been about replacing the CF-18, rather than what the brand of the CF-18 should be. However, this government is committed to replacing the airplane.

Interestingly, in 1982 we took the first delivery of the CF-18s. Ironically, and the hon. member will appreciate this, that is also the year of his birth. The CF-18 is the only airplane that has been owned by the Government of Canada defence department since he was born. In 2003, they were set to retire by industry standards and of course they have undergone extensive structural repair. I do not think

the hon. member is in need of extensive structural repair, unlike these airplanes, but we do anticipate that ultimately they will finish their life expectancy by 2025.

The minister has been talking about the anticipated capability gap. As the program unfolds, of the 77 airplanes a number of those will either not be able to be refurbished or the program might well be late, at which point the number of airplanes available for operations, whether NORAD or NATO or expeditionary operations, will be stretched. We do not want to be stretched to the point where we actually do have a capability gap, and that is something that the hon. member and all the rest of us need to be concerned about.

No decision has been made, and any statement by anyone to the contrary is simply speculation. The government will inform all as to when a decision is made and what form the replacement of the jet will take.

• (1815)

Mr. Erin Weir: Mr. Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood talked about a lot of things. He tried to guess what year I was born. There are a few key things, though, that he did not tell us.

He mentioned the fact that staying in the consortium does not oblige Canada to buy F-35s. However, he did not say that the government would not buy F-35s either, which of course was the Liberal Party's election promise. He did suggest that no decision had been made about which aircraft to buy, but he provided no explanation as to why the government has not even started a competition process to pick what aircraft it will buy. If we want to have a good competition, we should allow as much time as possible, which means starting as soon as possible.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood also mentioned that he thought the CF-18s would be good until 2025, but that notion is not really consistent with the government's claim that there is an urgent capacity gap that needs to be filled by buying the Super Hornet right now. I am left with more questions than answers.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, it appears that the hon. member did not quite understand what I was saying. I will take this opportunity to repeat it.

We can continue to participate in the program regardless of what the replacement jet appears to be. To assume there has been no work on how to decide the replacement process and what ultimately might be the product of that replacement process is entirely in error and is an unwarranted presumption on his part.

The agreed-upon point, I hope, is that this jet needs to be replaced. The CF-18 needs to be replaced so that we do not actually face a capability gap.

If the hon. member does not understand that the 77 airplanes, which is our present complement, will start to cease to have their capability, then I do not know what else I can say to explain it to him. We are facing a capability gap, and that needs to be addressed.

• (1820)

WINE INDUSTRY

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it being 6:20 p.m., it is a great time to talk about Canadian wine.

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What a lot of people in the gallery who are listening tonight might not realize is that, if they buy a bottle of wine that is labelled “international Canadian blended” or “cellared in Canada”, the content of that wine might not be entirely Canadian.

A lot of our Canadian wine producers take issue with this labelling standard. This labelling standard was designated as an interim measure in 1994. This was a period of time in which Canada's wine industry was actually coming to the forefront.

The North American Free Trade Agreement had just been signed. There were a lot of provisions put in place in order to see some of our producers rip up old labrusca varietal vines and plant vinifera vines. Some of the producers at that time said they were going to have an inventory gap for a while. They wanted to stay competitive. They asked for an interim designation of country-of-origin labelling that allowed them to bring in wine from other areas and label it as such, until some of their vines got up and going.

It is more than 22 years later, I believe, and this interim measure is still in place. This is a great source of consternation for a variety of wine producers. The wine industry in Canada now is over \$6 billion. It has a huge economic impact. Canadian producers are not just producing a quantity of wine, but they are also producing international award-winning wines.

What I have heard, when I was in government as minister of state for western economic diversification, and am still hearing today is that people do not think that this interim designation is fair. They think it should change. There is a lot of industry division on this.

When I was minister, I funded a project that was to look at competition and ways to make the industry in B.C. more competitive. One of the recommendations coming out of this project, I believe, was looking at this particular designation.

Some of the smaller producers in Canada say that the larger wine industry lobby groups are not advocating for a change in this. The larger producers generate a lot of revenue off this, and there certainly is a demand for lower priced wine that comes from the international blends. There is no question about that.

However, the smaller producers are saying that maybe we should not have this designation anymore. The larger producers are saying that maybe it should just be promulgated and this designation should be made permanent.

What I would like to see, as someone who does not think this is a particularly partisan issue, is a parliamentary committee study on this. I do not think this issue has been adequately addressed at the public service or bureaucratic level. I know that the minister has been very open to having a parliamentary study of this particular concept.

My question to my colleague is very simple. What is the government's intention on this? I know some in the industry would like this issue to just go away. They would not like to have a parliamentary committee review this. I really think it is important, because the industry is asking for other things, like a tax exemption for capital equipment investments for wineries. I do not think we can even look at that issue until we address the “cellared in Canada” issue.

My question is very simple. Will the government commit to a parliamentary study of this designation, and can it tell us the status, if it is considering actually promulgating this interim measure into law? I certainly think there are a lot of producers in Canada who would not support that.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question, but I will give her more than just a bare-bones answer.

The food label is one of the most important and most direct ways for consumers to get information about a product. Food labels help consumers differentiate between individual foods and brands so that they can make informed choices.

All food sold in Canada, including wine, must be labelled and advertised in a manner that is truthful and not misleading. In Canada, there are country of origin requirements on many products, including imported canned fruits, meat, cheese, and wine.

All standardized wine sold in Canada must clearly indicate the country of origin. This applies to wine whether it is domestically produced or imported in whole. The country of origin information must be in English and French. It must appear on the main display panel, which in the case of wine is an area on the bottle that can be seen without having to turn the container.

For wines that are a blend of origins, the origin statement identifies the Canadian contribution, such as “cellared in” or “blended in” and that the wine has imported content. For example, the label could indicate that the wine was cellared in Canada from a blend of imported and domestic wines.

For wines that are blended in Canada from a single country, the country of origin statement could also be provided in various ways. For example, “Blended in Canada from Italian wines”, can be used if all the wines come from Italy. Other specific statements such as “cellared” can also be used on the label to indicate the Canadian value added.

This labelling approach is consistent with the current Product of Canada guidelines. Companies can use a “Made in Canada” claim with a qualifying statement on a food product when the last substantial transformation of the product occurred in Canada, even if some ingredients are from other countries. If the “Made in Canada” claim is used, it must also include a qualifying statement to indicate that the food product is made in Canada from imported ingredients, or a combination of imported and domestic ingredients.

As I mentioned earlier, some products, like wine, must indicate the country of origin on the label. For products that do not require such labelling, companies can choose to voluntarily make claims about the origin, or Canadian value added, of a food or any ingredient in the product. Again, the information provided must be truthful and not misleading.

*Adjournment Proceedings**[English]*

Hon. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, for my colleague's benefit, this is what happens in Canada right now. Essentially if an individual were to buy a bottle of Canadian wine and it said "cellared in Canada", it is like wanting to buy a can coke that is filled with no-name cola, but it has the coke label on it. That is what happens when we label Canadian wines as Canadian, but they are not Canadian. British Columbia has no requirement to have any Canadian content in the wine whatsoever to have it called "cellared in Canada". That is crazy.

This summer wineries from across the country will be placing petitions in their tasting rooms, where thousands of Canadians and tourists will sign petitions asking to have this particular designation removed. This is happening already.

I would ask my colleague opposite to go beyond his talking points that were provided by his bureaucrats and admit the fact that this labelling designation is not a standard country of origin labelling designation. It is an interim measure that was put in place over 22 years ago when the wine industry was very young, very nascent.

We are now making award-winning wines. Now we are putting the Canadian brand on wines that do not come from Canadian content. Many Canadian producers, who invest so much time and effort into that production, are not getting their fair due.

Will the government consider a parliament study of this 22 year, out-of-date "interim" measure? Many winery producers are listening to this tonight.

• (1830)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude Poissant: Mr. Speaker, the government is looking at food labelling regulations, including origin labelling on wine, through the food labelling modernization initiative.

The objective of the initiative is to put in place a more modern and innovative food labelling system that balances consumer expectations and industry needs.

The initiative will examine changes needed to allow the industry to effectively market their products, while communicating to consumers through labels. As we move forward with food labelling modernization, we will continue to engage with stakeholders.

Canadians want to know about the products they are buying for themselves and for their families. We are committed to modernizing food labelling to give them the information they need.

[English]

JUSTICE

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up a conversation we were having, maybe a couple of months ago now. I am hearing from a broad range of constituents who are confused by the government's messages on marijuana regulation, and so are the judges.

Justice Selkirk of the Ontario Court of Justice found a man guilty on several charges but refused to accept his guilty plea on marijuana possession. The judge said:

Okay and I don't know what to do about the possession of marijuana. I recall distinctly the Prime Minister in the House of Commons saying it's going to be legalized. I'm not going to be the last judge in this country to convict somebody of simple possession of marijuana.... You can't have the Prime Minister announcing it's going to be legalized and then stand up and prosecute it. It just can't happen. It's a ludicrous situation, ludicrous.

I want to go through an eight-part list of people I am hearing from in my riding who are affected by leaving marijuana regulations in limbo.

First are the thousands of mostly young people who are going to have criminal records for the rest of their lives for something they thought was not going to be illegal anymore after the election. If the Prime Minister had respected his promise they might not have been so caught.

Second are taxpayers, because the government is spending \$3 million to \$4 million annually prosecuting simple possession cases. Many New Democrats believe it is irresponsible to allow police and court resources to be wasted and to create new criminal records for something the government imminently plans to legalize.

Third are the commercial producers, and I have a big one in my riding. These are people who are operating under the marijuana for medical purposes regulations, or MMPR. They must follow the most stringent regulations, which they have willingly accepted, around audits by Health Canada inspectors and RCMP, security personnel clearances, audits, record keeping of all activities and inventories, physical security measures, and substantial capital investments made in good faith. However, now without information on the government's plan about what is going to come next, they are operating in a bit of an uncertain business environment. Whether they expand or more deeply invest is unclear.

Fourth are personal production licence holders. These are individuals who are allowed to grow marijuana for medical use under the medical marijuana access regulations, or MMAR. They are left in the same state of limbo. While the courts have required reasonable access to a legal source of marijuana for medical purposes when authorized by a doctor, the federal government has not really given us a clear indication if it is going to allow these two parallel streams, the commercial industrial type and then this much more small-scale type. Again, the licence holders are not sure whether they should make more investments, or what their status is.

There is another group affected by illegal dispensaries, not licensed under the local law. Local governments are scrambling to address the jurisdictional hole left by the lack of federal leadership. There are also a couple more that fall into this category.

We are hoping that the government can inform the House and the many Canadians affected by leaving marijuana regulations in limbo what the timeline is on which the government will proceed. With whom is the government working? Who will be appointed to its expert panel to untangle this uncertainty in our country?

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1835)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nanaimo—Ladysmith for her question and the opportunity to provide some clarity on a number of issues she has raised.

First, I want to be very clear on something that is terribly important. It is irresponsible to suggest that the law changed as a result of a campaign promise prior to an election and a statement of the government's intent to bring forward legislation.

The law, with respect to marijuana, is not in limbo. It is in effect. It is currently a scheduled drug under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. I have tried to make it very clear in the House on numerous occasions that the law remains in effect. The law should be obeyed, it should be upheld, and it should be enforced. I hope that is clear. I would urge all Canadians to obey all the laws of this land to avoid any legal jeopardy.

I also want to be very clear on the government's intention with respect to marijuana. We have been very explicit in our statement to the Canadian people and through this Parliament of our intention to legalize, regulate, and restrict marijuana. We are working diligently, and I will provide some additional information about some of the processes we will undertake in order to do that.

I also want to be equally clear that marijuana is not a benign substance. It represents a significant risk to certain segments of our population, most notably children. Therefore, our first public interest priority is the protection of our kids.

Canada currently has the highest rates of marijuana usage of any developed country in the world. Therefore, our efforts are to restrict access that children have to marijuana that puts them at risk. There is a significant body of scientific evidence that marijuana poses a significant health risk to the developing brain. Therefore, we need to do a better job of protecting our kids.

From life experience in dealing with organized crime, organized crime profits in the billions from the illegal trafficking of drugs generally in the country, but in particular of marijuana. Therefore, another very important public purpose aim of our government, through the legalization and regulation of marijuana, is to take that profit centre away from organized crime, away from street gangs, and away from those who would victimize and, through violence, terrorize so many of our communities.

We believe we can do a much better job of controlling the production, distribution, and the consumption of marijuana that is currently available to us under the existing law, but this is a complex task. This is going to take a great deal of work. There are important questions to be answered.

To that aim, our government has undertaken to form a task force. It will consult with expertise from the science, health, and justice communities, from law enforcement, and speaking to officials in both our provincial and territorial government, to work out a system which we believe will be comprehensive and responsible to control the production, distribution, and consumption of cannabis products across this country.

The government has been very explicit, and the ministries of justice, health, and public safety have been working very collaboratively together in the development of a framework for regulation. That framework will be informed by the work of our task force.

I anticipate in the not too distant future, and, frankly, an announcement is for my minister and not for her parliamentary secretary to make, that my minister will be informing the House and the Canadian people about the membership. I will also tell members that the membership of that task force will be made up of well-recognized experts from the fields of science, health, justice, and law enforcement.

Through that broad consultation, which is so important, and the collaborative work among three ministries, we are confident we will be able to bring forward a system of regulation that will do the job of protecting our children, of making our communities safe, and protecting all Canadians from the threat of organized crime, the violence and victimization it perpetuates in our communities, and at the same time ensure all Canadians of our commitment to their health.

This is not going to be an easy task. We are committed to doing it, but we are committed to doing it right. We are working as expeditiously as possible, and we are moving forward as quickly as we are able, but we are committed to ensuring that all of these important areas of public policy are addressed.

• (1840)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's answer and I certainly did not mean to say that because of an election promise, the rules have changed. However, I imagine the member will agree with me that there is a significant expectation and a great deal of confusion. Not everybody knows how slowly things move.

We have more people who are wondering and scrambling. We have customers who believe they are reliant on an illegal dispensary supply. They are scrambling when there are police raids, which do happen, and they feel that their prescribed medical supply is interrupted. On the other hand, there are neighbouring businesses, and I am hearing this from the chamber of commerce in my region, asking, "Who let that guy move in next door," where there is a completely different group of customers smoking outdoors. It is a mess, honestly.

There is a fantastic employer, Tilray, in my region. It has 140 employees, with an operating impact expected to grow from \$13 million to \$88 million in my region. If it knows what the next step is going to be, it can move forward with confidence. Therefore, I would really appreciate hearing from the member opposite what the timeline is. When can we expect to get clarity?

The difficulty we are in is that the government has told the country where we are going, but it has not said how fast we are going to get there or how we are going to get there. I would appreciate more detail.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to bring some clarity on this issue.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would simply remind the member opposite that on April 20 of this year, at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drugs, the Minister of Health announced the government's intention to bring forward new regulations for the control and restriction of the production, distribution, and consumption of cannabis products in Canada in the spring of 2017.

Therefore, it is our intention and commitment to fulfill the Minister of Health's promise to bring those regulations to the House. We are hopeful and even confident in the commitment of all members of the House to thoroughly examine this issue, because it is an important piece of public legislation. We want to give the House that opportunity.

The task force, as I have said, will be set up very shortly. It has an enormously important bit of work to do. We have established some timelines so that it can report in a timely way to inform the creation of those regulations to be brought before the House in the spring of 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:43 p.m.)

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