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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

ENERGY EAST PROJECT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, two petitions about the energy east pipeline have been presented in the House.

One was from Quebeckers who oppose the project because it goes against our values and our interests. The other was from English Canada, and it was in favour of a pipeline to move dirty oil across Quebec without giving us a say in the matter.

Two petitions have been presented. The Quebec one said no to energy east, no to people shoving the pipeline down our throats, and no to a project where we end up with all of the risk and none of the benefit. The other petition said yes to energy east with or without Quebec's consent.

Here is how the Bloc Québécois sees it: nothing happens in Quebec without Quebeckers' say-so. It is for the Government of Quebec alone to decide. It is high time the government understood that.

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[*English*]

NIAGARA WINE FESTIVAL

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not as if one needs an excuse to bend elbows with fellow community members, but I have a perfect one happening this weekend.

Niagara is famous for many things: Niagara Falls, rolling hills, beautiful landscapes, two great lakes, and beautiful beaches. However, only one Niagara speciality gets a two-week celebration every September. If members have not figured it out yet, I am talking about fine Niagara wine.

I often hear fellow members talking about local festivals and fairs, but call me biased for believing that the Niagara Wine Festival takes the trophy as best in class. For over 65 years, patrons have come from across Canada to enjoy beautifully transformed Montebello Park and celebrate a year's harvest of world-class Niagara grapes. With over 29 vintners set up to promote and provide samples of their wine, there is just no comparison to the Niagara Wine Festival.

On behalf of residents, I would like to congratulate organizers and volunteers on another successful year.

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• (1405)

TERRY FOX RUN

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to be part of the Terry Fox Run this past weekend, along with over 1,000 runners and walkers of all ages.

The Barrie Terry Fox Run, which is held annually along the shores of beautiful Kempenfelt Bay, has raised more than \$2 million since its inception, and this has been without the help of any corporate sponsors.

I want to specifically recognize one individual's incredible and tireless advocacy on behalf of cancer research. Local icon, Will Dwyer has singlehandedly collected approximately \$750,000 for the Terry Fox Run over the past 36 years. This unsung Canadian hero is not done yet. He hopes to reach \$1 million before he hangs up his running shoes.

On behalf of the people of Barrie—Innisfil, I want to thank Mr. Dwyer from the bottom of my heart. I hope his story inspires a new generation of Canadians to continue on with his legacy.

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PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize September as Prostate Cancer Awareness Month.

Statements by Members

The month is dedicated toward engaging and connecting with Canadians around a disease that one in eight men will be diagnosed with in their lifetime. Through community fundraising events, public service and research announcements, Prostate Cancer Canada attempts to alert people to the most common cancer in men.

Our riding of Vaughan—Woodbridge will be one of six communities across Canada hosting a breakfast for Prostate Cancer Awareness Month. The last 20 years has seen the death rate from prostate cancer drop by almost 40%, but still an estimated 4,100 Canadian men died from the disease in 2015 alone.

There is still a lot of work to be done to decrease the death toll further, and the increased awareness that comes from Prostate Cancer Awareness Month is a great place to start.

Please join me in attending an event, raising funds, or just sharing information about Prostate Cancer Awareness Month.

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WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, September is World Alzheimer's Month, and today is World Alzheimer's Day. The theme for these events is "Remember Me", and it could not be more appropriate.

Today, we must remember those who are living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers. As a country, we need to be doing everything we can to support our friends, our neighbours and our communities, which have been impacted by this condition. We can do this in a number of ways. Committing to more research, better understanding, and ultimately achieving prevention and a cure are our ultimate goals.

I am sure that everyone in this chamber has been touched by Alzheimer's disease in some way, through our families and friends.

I ask all of us to remember them and to honour them by working together to eliminate Alzheimer's and all other forms of dementia.

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• (1410)

ARMENIA

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we join the Armenian community, in Canada, in Armenia, and around the world, in celebrating the country's 25th independence day.

As chair of the Canada-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group and as an MP for my riding in Scarborough—Agincourt, which represents a vibrant Armenian community, I am honoured to join my colleagues today in celebrating this significant milestone.

Canada and the Republic of Armenia enjoy a dynamic and friendly relationship. As Canadians, we continue to support our Armenian friends, whether it is through our shared values of democracy, freedom, bilateral relations, or through our continued recognition of the Armenian genocide that was successfully established in the House of Commons.

Today, we reflect on the important contributions of the Armenian community in Canada, not only toward our national fabric but also through the demonstration of leadership by showing what it truly means to be Canadian during the Syrian refugee crisis.

I invite all my colleagues in joining me to offer our best wishes to the Armenian community on this important milestone as we continue to look forward to many more celebrations to come.

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[*Translation*]

JEAN-LOUIS BÉLAND

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the irrefutable contribution made by Jean-Louis Béland, a former member of the National Assembly for my riding, a man who is passionately dedicated to his community. With roots in agriculture, he studied and worked in aviculture and silviculture. Mr. Béland has always been a champion of our democracy, and thanks to his convictions, he remains well known in our region today. He is very involved in his community, having served as Ralliement créditiste member for Lotbinière, mayor of Saint-Gilles, founder of the Caisse d'établissement Bellerive in Saint-Romuald, president of the Office des producteurs de bois de Lotbinière, and vice-president of Assurance mutuelle de Lotbinière, as well as serving on numerous boards. He has been a proud Knight of Columbus, 4th degree, for many years, and there can be no doubt that Mr. Béland has made a tremendous contribution to the development of our community.

I am pleased to rise in the House to pay tribute to such a warm man. Thank you, Jean-Louis Béland.

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[*English*]

MAURIL BÉLANGER

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to remember a former colleague and dear friend whose passionate voice and courage continue to resonate within our Parliament. Through his many years of service and throughout his battle with ALS, Mauril Bélangier was, to the very end, a stellar example to all parliamentarians.

Mauril is survived by his dedicated and loving wife and partner, Catherine, and we wish Catherine and their family all our love and warm wishes through this difficult time.

I had the honour of working alongside Mauril for eight years. He was a mentor to new MPs, and none of us will forget his infectious enthusiasm as he shared his latest innovative project to serve constituents. Mauril was a bright light for his community, colleagues, party, and country. This chamber will be dimmer without him.

I thank Mauril for how generously he gave of himself. He is very much missed.

*Statements by Members***BABI YAR MASSACRE**

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the 75th anniversary of the Babi Yar massacre. On this date, in 1941, in Kiev, 34,000 Jewish men, women, children, and infants, were rounded up, stripped of their possessions, shot, and dumped into the Babi Yar ravine by the Nazis. So began the “Holocaust by bullets” in Eastern Europe.

This week, a series of memorial events are being held on this horrific anniversary. The Babi Yar memorial project was spearheaded by the Ukrainian Jewish Encounter, a groundbreaking group founded and funded by Ukrainian-Canadian businessman and visionary James Temerty.

Thousands of forgotten “Holocaust by bullets” sites are deserving of remembrance. One such site is at the ancient Jewish cemetery of Sambir where, on the first day of Passover in 1943, 2,000 Jews were massacred. After seven years of patient and meticulous work, my friend Mark Freiman and I signed a memorandum of understanding with the mayor of Sambir, Yurii Hamar, this September 8 to memorialize this site.

May their souls be bound in the bond of eternal life.

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RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members of Parliament, we are afforded many challenges and opportunities in our daily lives. To help us with these challenges, we are blessed to be able to have staff to help us along the way. I am rising today to pay tribute to one of my staff.

Christine Riske has been in my employment since my first election on January 23, 2006, and before that worked for Dale Johnston, the previous MP, for six years. Christine is retiring at the end of this month, after 17 years of loyal service to the people of central Alberta.

Christine hails from an era where people came to work no matter what. Today, I would like to thank Christine, who is in Ottawa with her husband Duane. I would like to thank her for making sure the office was always open, rain, shine, or blizzard. I would like to thank her for taking call after call from constituents who needed assistance, many of them desperate and at their wit's end. I would like to thank her for making sure the office was fully supplied, that deadlines were always met, that invoices were always paid, and that important tasks were always done. I would like to thank her for her patience, her understanding, her wisdom, and her guidance. I would like to thank her for her friendship. She will be missed.

I wish Christine and Duane good health and a long, fun, and wonderful retirement.

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•(1415)

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Liberal aerospace caucus, I would like to give a warm welcome to the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, which is hosting aerospace day on the Hill, today.

[*Translation*]

The aerospace sector is one of Canada's most innovative, export-oriented sectors. It is made up of 700 businesses, and represents more than 180,000 quality jobs. It contributes over \$29 billion to our GDP and the Canadian economy every year.

[*English*]

The Canadian aerospace industry is a large economic driver in our country. It includes engineering, manufacturing, and in-service support for everything from planes to helicopters to satellites, spaceships, and more.

The aerospace industry is not only a passion of mine, but it is an important part of the innovation agenda and an integral part of Canada's economy.

I thank the AIAC and welcome it to Parliament Hill today.

* * *

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring awareness of the impact that Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia have on Canadians. I know the personal toll that it can have on a family as my mother lives with Lewy body dementia.

Today is World Alzheimer's Day.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, the New Brunswick Alzheimer Society's six resource centres are organizing a week of activities to promote the different programs they offer and to acknowledge the 17,000 families in New Brunswick that benefit from their services, as well as the 3,000 people who will be diagnosed this year. Educational programs such as The Alzheimer Journey, the caregiver support network, and the memory café provide people with hope and help them cope with the black cloud of dementia.

[*English*]

Families struggle every day with the effects of dementia. They struggle to get information, they struggle to get a diagnosis, and they struggle to access services.

Let us all take a moment today to acknowledge their efforts, to recognize their struggles, and to remind them that they are not alone.

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WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Alzheimer's disease is the leading form of dementia, accounting for over two-thirds of dementia cases in Canada. Many of us are justifiably afraid of this fatal disease. There is no cure for it, we do not know exactly what causes it, and we do not know why some get it and others do not. Sometimes, we only talk about it in whispers.

Oral Questions

However, I know this. The more we talk about Alzheimer's and the more knowledge we share, the quicker we will get past the stigma and get to the people affected by this disease the support and the care they need.

Today, in recognition of World Alzheimer's Day, I want to pay tribute to the caregivers, to the service providers, and to the advocates in each and every province and territory across this great country whose work it is to lessen the burden of those who have this disease.

I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

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[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to draw attention to the International Day of Peace. This day of hope was chosen by the United Nations in order to draw attention to non-violence and the end of conflicts.

The International Day of Peace is celebrated on September 21 every year. It is dedicated to peace and, more specifically, to the absence of war. The day is marked by a ceasefire in combat zones and those ceasefires have been observed in many conflicts since the day's creation in 1981.

This symbolic day sends the entire world a powerful message about our aspiration for peace and the hope that peace represents.

Regardless of the conflict, whether it is internal, between peoples or between nations, the message remains the same: let this day when hostilities are suspended be a prelude to a lasting ceasefire. Let this day become the rule and not the exception.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this International Day of Peace, we celebrate the important role women play in peace processes around the world.

[English]

When women's groups are included in the peace process and are at the table as negotiators, mediators, and witnesses to peace agreements, those agreements are far more likely to succeed over the long term.

• (1420)

[Translation]

Last month, I had the pleasure of meeting women in Colombia and Guatemala who actively contribute to building peace in their communities. Their work is further proof that Canada must support women's full participation in peace efforts.

[English]

This year, Canada must ensure that the next national action plan on women, peace, and security includes long-term financial and diplomatic support for women peace builders, not only because it is the right thing to do but also because it is the wise thing to do.

ARMENIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Armenians right across Canada and all around the world a very happy Independence Day. Twenty-five years ago today, Armenians voted in favour of full independence from the Soviet Union after almost seven decades under communist rule.

Canada and the Republic of Armenia share an important relationship. Canada of course is home to a proud and hard-working Armenian community. Canada and Armenia have also signed a number of bilateral trade agreements. Furthermore, in 2006, the Government of Canada recognized the events of 1915 as genocide.

Once again, I would like to extend my best wishes to Armenians here in Canada and around the world. Happy Independence Day.

* * *

MAURIL BÉLANGER

Mr. Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise in the House to celebrate the life of our friend and colleague, the man from Mattawa, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger.

[Translation]

I want to recognize his exceptional work on behalf of cultural communities, especially the Haitian community in the Outaouais and Ottawa.

Following the 2010 earthquake, Mauril Bélanger established two scholarships, one at the University of Ottawa and the other at the Université du Québec en Outaouais, for gifted university students from Ottawa-Gatineau's Haitian community.

The University of Ottawa scholarship reached its goal of \$100,000 in 2015. The UQO scholarship, which will now be known as the Maurice Bélanger scholarship, needs \$30,000 to reach its goal of \$100,000.

These scholarships, like everything Mauril Bélanger was involved in, will continue to improve people's lives.

Well done, Mauril.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome the Prime Minister back to this place called Parliament. I know the economy has not been necessarily his top priority lately, so let me update him.

While he was away, our economy has completely stalled. Unemployment has gone up, and 110,000 energy workers have lost their jobs.

What is the Prime Minister's solution? Raising existing taxes and bringing in new ones, like a new carbon tax and a whopping CPP tax hike. His high tax, high spending plan is not helping, it is hurting.

When will the Prime Minister realize this plan is failing Canadians?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, like all parliamentarians, we were busy all summer meeting with Canadians, talking about their concerns, and talking about the opportunities to grow the economy in meaningful ways. That is why I am so surprised to hear the hon. member criticize the fact that we raised taxes on the wealthiest 1%, so that we could lower them for the middle class.

Not only are the Conservatives so disconnected from their constituents that they did not vote in favour of raising taxes on the wealthy, so that we could lower them for the middle class, but the member continues to suggest that maybe we should not be raising taxes on the wealthiest. That did not work for 10 years, and it will not work now for them.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals confirmed that they are in negotiations on an extradition treaty with China, a country whose justice system has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Our allies, like Australia, the U.S., and New Zealand, do not have treaties of this type with China.

Just last month, the immigration minister said that this was off the table. Has there been a change in China's human rights record?

What exactly changed between now and then, and why is the Prime Minister not being straight-up with Canadians?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the change is that after 10 years of a government that was hot and cold with the world's second largest economy, we have created a dialogue that allows us to deal with difficult issues, and deliver on priorities for Canadians, whether they be consular cases or investment opportunities for Canadian businesses, and small and medium-sized businesses across the country accessing the Chinese consumer market.

The fact is that Canada has extraordinarily high standards for extradition treaties, and those will always be upheld with anyone around the world.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is being shockingly naive about these issues.

The Chinese government has orchestrated thousands of cyberattacks against Canada, and according to CSIS and the RCMP has sent foreign agents into Canada without our permission.

Canadians expect the Prime Minister to act in our national interest. What possible benefit to Canada would an extradition treaty with China provide?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the benefit to Canada is having a high level security dialogue where we can talk about issues that are important to us, and issues that are important to the Chinese government.

Oral Questions

We continue to be strong in our values and principles, and our expectations of anyone we engage with around the world. However, having a strong, robust relationship that allows us to create economic opportunities for Canadians, and make gains on human rights and consular files is what the previous government was unable to do, and it is what Canadians expect this government to get done for them.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently, we learned that the Prime Minister is working with China on an extradition treaty. The Chinese justice system's use of torture is systematic and the repression of human rights is a regular occurrence.

Does the Prime Minister not understand that our openness to China should be about encouraging the country to be more respectful of human rights, rather than violating them? Why is he prepared to make so many compromises when it comes to human rights?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, the Conservatives did nothing to improve Canada's relationship with China, the economy, the development of human rights, or the defence of Canadians. The Conservative Party still does not understand that we need a strong, stable relationship that enables us to talk about real issues, share our concerns, and meet the priorities of Canadians.

Our government will always stand up for Canadian law and Canadians. We have extraordinarily high standards for extradition treaties, and those must be upheld by everyone we work with.

* * *

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been 26 days since the Liberals said they would send Canadian troops on a mission to sub-Saharan Africa, but we still cannot get any straight answers out of them on what exactly the plan is or how it serves our national interest.

This mission will be dangerous and Canadian troops could die. It is clear that the Prime Minister wants a seat at the UN Security Council, and is using our troops as a pawn to achieve his goal. The Prime Minister owes Canadians the facts about this dangerous mission.

What is his real motivation, and are Canadians' lives worth it?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians made it very clear that they wanted a government that re-engages constructively and positively on the world stage not just for a question of moral responsibility, because we are so incredibly lucky here in Canada, but because we can create peace and security that will have positive impacts in Canada and around the world.

Oral Questions

Canada has a role to play, and we take that very seriously. At the same time, we will reflect carefully on how Canada can best engage and welcome all voices to weigh-in on how we are going to hold up Canadian high standards of success, and create the impact we have on the world.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians also thought they were electing a government that was going to respect Parliament. They wanted that change.

Whether it is the Latvian deployment or any future peacekeeping mission, Parliament should be consulted and there must be a vote.

Could the Prime Minister simply explain why he no longer believes that Parliament should have a right to vote on these important issues?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said many times throughout the election campaign and have said since, I have a deep respect for every parliamentarian and their capacity to represent the views of their constituents on a broad range of issues.

I look forward to robust debate on many different issues over the coming months and years as we look at the best way to serve Canadians. That is what Canadians expect, and that is what we are going to deliver.

* * *

● (1430)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): How about a vote, Mr. Speaker?

[*Translation*]

The Minister of Immigration promised that Canada would never sign an extradition treaty with China so long as China still had the death penalty.

However, the Prime Minister is meeting with the Chinese Premier this evening to talk about an extradition treaty. He just confirmed that. He said the government should not blow hot and cold.

Who should Canadians believe, the Prime Minister or his Minister of Immigration? They are both saying exactly the opposite of one another.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have always been very clear. We need to have a dialogue with the Chinese government on many issues that are of concern to Canadians. We are also listening to the concerns of the Chinese government.

We have very high standards regarding the behaviour of any country with which we sign an extradition treaty. We will not sign an extradition treaty in situations where people are facing the death penalty. This is a change that we made after the previous government left office, because we know that Canada must always defend anyone who is facing the death penalty.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, are we talking about people “facing the death penalty” or people “in countries that use the death penalty”? The Prime Minister is trying to fudge the language.

On climate change, Canada has been left wearing the dunce cap. Canadians have had to bear the burden of both the Conservative and the Liberal governments' failure to address this very real global threat.

There was a glimmer of hope that things would finally change, but this government got on board with Stephen Harper's targets. Can the government explain why it is betraying future generations like this?

I repeat: the Liberals are on board with the Conservatives' targets.

What is behind this betrayal?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many years now, various governments, including ours, have talked about targets, but nobody has introduced a concrete carbon pricing plan. That is exactly what we are going to do.

All the provinces agree that we need to reach these targets and comply with the Paris agreement. They agree that carbon pricing is part of the solution. The provinces are unanimous on that. We are moving forward because Canadians expect us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister committed in Paris to restoring Canada's credibility on climate change. He cannot download that. He cannot subcontract it to the provinces. Canada signed. His platform says that Stephen Harper's targets are catastrophic. Hmm, no applause.

Now, suddenly, Canadians are expected to look the other way while he hits copy-paste on the Conservative climate plan.

Could the Prime Minister please explain whether his environment minister just got it wrong, or is he offering no other climate change targets than those of Stephen Harper?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Outremont makes a grave mistake when he talks about the Conservative government's plan. It had no plan on climate change. It had no plan on reducing emissions, and that is why we have put in place a concrete and realistic plan to reduce emissions.

The Speaker: Order. I am having trouble hearing the answer. I know all members want to hear the answer.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with the provinces because we know the only way to reduce emissions is to get everyone to agree, just like the provinces agreed that we have to ratify Paris, just like the provinces agreed that we need to price carbon pollution. There is unanimity on that, and that is what we are moving forward on.

*Oral Questions***FOREST INDUSTRY**

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Yes, the climate will balance itself, Mr. Speaker.

[*Translation*]

The issues that people across the country talk to us about are jobs and having enough money to support their families. There are issues that can be dealt with now. Take, for example, the softwood lumber issue. The government promised a solution after 100 days of deliberations and discussions, but nothing has been resolved yet.

Will the Prime Minister please commit today to telling all families who depend on the forestry industry that there will be an agreement that will satisfy Canadian workers?

• (1435)

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is ironic to hear the member for Lac-Saint-Jean saying that because his government did nothing to get the negotiations started. Our government, on the other hand, has been actively negotiating with the Americans from the outset. The Conseil du patronat du Québec even indicated that it “commended the Minister of International Trade, the hon. Chrystia Freeland, for all that she has done in defence of the Quebec forestry industry.”

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is well aware that we do not refer to members in this House by their names, but by their titles, which in this case is the title of minister.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former minister of international trade began the discussions. The negotiations were under way. He began the discussions with our American partners. At that time, the agreement was still valid for another year. That year went by while the current government dragged its feet. It is easy to put all the blame on the former government, but the Liberals are in power. They wanted to be in power. Now, they must make decisions. They need to make a decision on this issue and sign the agreement in the best interest of Quebecers and Canadians.

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former government did not start the process. We took on this issue from the outset and we committed to resolving it. We held consultations. There is unprecedented co-operation with producers, industry workers, and the provinces and territories. We do not want to reach just any old deal. We want a good deal for Canada.

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[*English*]

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister personally signed off on \$220,000 in moving expenses for his own political staff. The chief responsibility of the Prime Minister is to be honest and forthright with Canadians in the House. There are no ifs, ands, or buts about these expenses. They are wrong.

Will the Prime Minister be honest with Canadians and rise today, and tell us which of his friends received these outrageous payouts?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in the House to share with Canadians that we have built a diverse team of passionate, hard-working, extremely qualified Canadians to deliver the change people voted for.

Many people moved across this country with their families and children to serve in Ottawa. As part of this process, some employees received help in relocating.

There have been rules in place on relocation of public servants and political staff since the 1970s. In fact, the current rules for relocation have been in place since 2008, and have applied to every minister's office since.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister personally approved over \$126,000 in moving expenses for one senior aid in the PMO. I am not sure what one can move for \$126,000, but I imagine that it is very fragile.

People in Alberta are struggling and losing their homes, savings, and livelihoods, but the Prime Minister is more concerned with making sure that his friends are compensated. How can the Prime Minister justify to struggling Albertans this absolutely ridiculous waste of money?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for providing me the opportunity to share with Canadians that the party opposite should know what the current guidelines for relocation are, given that it wrote them.

Tens of thousands of Canadians applied to be part of the team for the mandate this government is going to advance. We are proud of the diverse team of passionate, hard-working, extremely qualified Canadians we hired to deliver the change people voted for.

Canadians expect public resources to be used responsibly and economically, and we are committed to living up to these expectations.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, \$1.1 million was handed to Liberal staffers moving to Ottawa for six-figure jobs. The Liberal House leader herself provided over \$70,000 to just one staffer.

The rules say that it is at the minister's discretion. Does the minister think that forking out a million dollars to Liberal political staff is the best use of Canadian taxpayers' money?

• (1440)

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the party opposite that put the rules into place, and the rules were followed.

Oral Questions

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing Liberals use the words “open” and “transparent” in the responses to the million dollar move, which is ironic, given the lack of details provided to Canadians.

If the Liberal House leader is so transparent, can she tell us exactly who she gave this \$70,000 to and what the money was supposedly for?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been rules in place on the relocation of public servants and political staff since the 1970s. The current rules we are following were put in place in 2008, and every minister's office has followed those rules since.

I am taking this opportunity to also share with Canadians that they voted for growth of the middle class, a stronger economy, and a government that works for Canadians. That is the work we are doing, and that is the work we will continue to do.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government was elected with a promise that it would respect indigenous rights and titles. It promised a new nation-to-nation relationship, including the adoption and implementation of UNDRIP. It promised that it would meet its constitutional duty to consult and accommodate. The justice minister is responsible for ensuring that all of these duties are met, but we have seen these promises being broken and the government once again passing the buck on the duty to consult.

Can the Prime Minister confirm that his justice minister has a federal duty to consult?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our commitment to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and everything that means with respect to free, prior, and informed consent. We are doing everything we can, across all government departments and all jurisdictions, to honour the implementation of that commitment, and we will get it done.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am deeply concerned that the justice minister is going to ground on her obligation on the duty to consult and whether or not she believes the government is running roughshod over aboriginal rights with Site C. Her silence suggests that either she, as the justice minister of Canada, like the Liberal member for Winnipeg Centre, does not agree with her own government or she has changed her mind. Either way, it is her duty, as justice minister, to stand in this House and tell us, if she has done the due diligence, whether or not that Site C dam runs roughshod over aboriginal rights and the duty to consult. It is a simple question.

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would note for the hon. member that at the federal level, the processes related to Site C are overseen by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

In the fall of 2014, the former government approved this project, subject to a number of legally binding conditions. The project is now in the construction phase. As was outlined in the interim principles we introduced earlier this year, project reviews are continuing within the current legislative framework and in accordance with treaty provisions. This includes not revisiting projects that have been reviewed and approved and that the proponent, going forward, will need to apply all applicable conditions.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the lack of response from the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons yesterday and today shows that Liberals are unable to defend the indefensible. Spending more than \$200,000 for two moves, including one that cost \$125,000, is a real insult to all Canadian taxpayers.

We will ask the question again because they have a duty to answer.

Who was reimbursed 126,000 bucks to come work for the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have formed a team made up of a diverse group of passionate, hard-working, and very competent Canadians to give the public the change that they voted for.

Many of them had to cross the country with their family and their children to come live in Ottawa. As part of this process, some employees received relocation assistance. Rules for relocating officials and political employees have been in place since the 1990s. All the rules currently in place have been—

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Lévis—Lotbinière.

• (1445)

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Prime Minister's Office that had exorbitant moving expenses.

One of the Minister of Foreign Affairs' staffers spent more than \$119,000 to move to Ottawa. That is a little less than what the Prime Minister's friend spent. However, I doubt that this is more acceptable to Canadian families.

Can the minister tell us whether he authorized this exorbitant expense and whether he thinks \$119,000 in moving expenses is acceptable?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we acted in accordance with all the rules for relocation expenses that were put in place by the previous government in 2008. This is a longstanding policy and we will continue to follow it for now.

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's silence speaks volumes. Over \$150,000 for Liberal staffers to move to Ottawa and take plush jobs is just not fair.

I would like the Minister of Innovation to think about the 39,000 self-employed people who went out of business, last month alone, when he answers this question. Will the minister admit that this payment is wrong, yes or no?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians voted for the growth of the middle class. Canadians voted for a stronger economy. Canadians voted for a government that works for them, a government that they have not seen in over a decade.

Our government is committed to working for middle-class Canadians. Our government is committed to growing the economy. We are proud of the work our government is doing, and we will continue to deliver on our promises.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte voted for transparency. In my riding, the average salary is \$40,000. These are people who actually pay taxes, so when the Minister of Innovation spends 113,000 tax dollars to move a single member of staff to Ottawa, I am speechless.

If the minister cannot admit that this is wrong, will he at least tell us who got the money?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when we came into office, we acted in accordance with the rules set up by a previous government, in 2008, for relocation expenses. This has been a long-standing policy, and we will continue to follow it for now.

Canadians voted for a stronger middle class. Canadians voted for a government that works for them. Canadians voted for and support the investments we have made in budget 2016. These are investments that will create a stronger economy and support the kind of growth his constituents need.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have reached a watershed moment for nuclear disarmament. The Secretary General of the United Nations and several countries want to initiate negotiations to prohibit nuclear arms. Canada shamefully voted against this plan.

The government can still change its mind in the next few weeks.

My question is simple: will the Prime Minister change his position and vote for nuclear disarmament?

[*English*]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is a deliberate oversimplification.

This process failed to bring the states possessing nuclear weapons to the table. As such, it was ineffective. Canada is a long-standing supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Of course, we will continue to work together towards a world free of nuclear weapons in the most effective manner possible.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two reports this week, one from the Veterans Ombudsman and the other from the Canadian Forces Ombudsman, call on the government to make compensation fair for wounded veterans and to fix the system.

Wounded veterans deserve respect. It is a travesty that the government refuses to take concrete action.

Will the minister accept the recommendations in these reports? Will his government work to immediately implement them without dragging veterans into court?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the ombudsman and his staff for their dedicated service and their very good report.

I always value his feedback. The report makes three key recommendations on items in my mandate. In budget 2016, we acted upon recommendations from this ombudsman to increase the disability award, expand access to the permanent impairment allowance, and increase the earnings loss benefit, all measures that the ombudsman was very supportive of.

We will continue to work through the recommendations and make things better for veterans and their families in this country.

* * *

● (1450)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month I had a chance to announce new water and waste water funding in Brampton South through the clean water and wastewater fund.

The minister has been advocating strongly for these kinds of changes that Canadians can see making a real difference, day to day, for families.

Families in my riding appreciate better flood water control, particularly. Can the minister update the House on what kind of things he has been doing to invest in communities like Brampton?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Brampton South, as well as other members from that community, for hosting me there last week.

We announced over \$5 million towards water and waste water projects in Brampton, ensuring access to clean and safe drinking water and healthy rivers and lakes.

We will also be investing in public transit in Brampton to reduce the commute time for Brampton families as well as to improve air quality and strengthen our communities.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of Canadian energy workers have lost their jobs. Our economy is losing billions of dollars in wealth, because we cannot get our oil to markets.

The Liberals have responded by rolling over on Keystone XL's veto, shutting down the northern gateway pipeline with their tanker ban, adding a politicized delay to the Trans Mountain approved pipeline, and letting Liberals, like Denis Coderre, attack energy east without a response.

Enough is enough. When will the government stand up for energy workers, for Canadian jobs, and for the Canadian economy?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, enough is enough of 10 years of failed policies that did not have one kilometre of pipeline taken to tidewater.

The Federal Court of Appeal just told us within the last several weeks that northern gateway was going to be in trouble not because the proponent did not consult, not because the regulator did not consult, but because that member's government did not consult.

We can do a better job. A better job is to travel across the country to talk to Canadians, to have an open mind that will lead, through a better process, to a better decision, a decision that that government could not make.

Hon. Jason Kenney (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservative government, the Alberta Clipper, the Keystone, and the Anchor Loop were all approved and built. Line 9 was reversed, adding \$1.25 billion—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jason Kenney:—1.25 million barrels of capacity a day.

He talks about northern gateway. The government killed it on day one by announcing, through fiat, its northern tanker traffic ban, even though hundreds of tankers come down that route from Alaska, hundreds come into our east coast from foreign countries.

How is the government going to take seriously northern gateway, when it has already shut it down with its prejudicial tanker ban?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on January 27 the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and I announced a set of interim principles that would govern those projects that are currently under review. That will be followed by an entire modernization of the National Energy Board

and other federal agencies, because those agencies under that government did not carry the confidence of Canadians. If we do not carry the confidence of Canadians, nothing will be built.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, late last week, CF Industries cancelled a \$105-million expansion project planned for my riding: 500 construction jobs are now gone, due to the carbon scheme the Ontario Liberals brought in.

That expansion and all those well-paying jobs will be going to Donaldson, Louisiana, where they do not have job-killing carbon taxes.

When will the federal Liberals stop trying to copy failed provincial energy schemes and start keeping jobs on Canadian soil?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that in order to build a strong economy, we have to be serious about protecting the environment, something that the previous government did not understand, and a price on carbon is an essential part of that. It will help us to reduce our emissions, foster innovation, and give business the stability they need to invest, grow, and plan.

Eighty per cent of Canadian already live in jurisdictions with a price on carbon. We spent the last six months working with provinces and territories to extend that throughout the country. Our immediate focus will remain on taking concrete action to reduce emissions and to improve the economy.

* * *

● (1455)

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are becoming acutely aware that this government has completely lost control of public spending.

A massive deficit, a minister who rents limos from her Liberal pal but slams on the brakes as soon as she is caught with her hand in the cookie jar, and a friend of the Prime Minister's who claims \$126,000 in moving expenses.

*Oral Questions***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Canadians are fed up. It has become increasingly obvious that these people are superheroes when it comes to spending money but abject failures at creating wealth.

How does this government plan to create jobs for Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to talk about our plan for improving our economy.

We started with things for the middle class. We started yesterday by cutting middle-class taxes. We voted for that plan. We also introduced our Canada child benefit, which will help nine out of ten families keep more money in their pockets. Over time, our infrastructure investments will boost growth right across the country.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are really starting to worry that the government will not be able to reach a new softwood lumber agreement.

Workers in the industry are really starting to prepare for the worst. In three weeks' time, Canadian forest companies could face huge tariffs on softwood lumber exports. Those tariffs will jeopardize forestry jobs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean and across Canada.

Is the government prepared to help companies pay those new fees? What is the government doing to protect our jobs and support our forestry industry?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, this issue is a top priority for us, as the opposition is well aware.

We are currently in negotiations and working hard on a solution. We have unprecedented co-operation with the industry and with workers. We even went to Saguenay this summer to hear directly from workers and industry representatives, and they appreciate our efforts. We will continue to work hard to reach the best deal possible.

[*English*]

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a priority? The government has had nearly 200 days to come up with a deal on softwood, and it is breaking its promise.

In less than a month, Canadian forestry companies will be hit with new tariffs and unfair trade measures by the United States. There are tens of thousands of Canadian jobs on the line.

Has the minister thrown in the towel? Has she given up on these workers? What is her plan to protect forestry jobs across Canada?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question as well as her work on the trade committee.

Let me remind her and the House that the Conservatives failed to initiate any negotiations or to reach any new agreements.

On the contrary, we have been working hard from the outset to gain the confidence of the industry, to understand the nuances of the Canadian industry from coast to coast. We are working hard at our negotiations and we hope to reach the best negotiated settlement possible.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the UN, the Prime Minister made it clear that he is willing to put Canadians in harm's way to achieve his political desire for a temporary seat on the UN Security Council. Missions in Africa are dangerous by their very nature. Jihadists in the region have declared that killing UN peacekeepers is their highest priority. How many Canadian lives is the Prime Minister willing to risk for his own personal aspirations and political gain?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous government closed its eyes to the atrocities in Africa. It closed its eyes to the fight against disease, basically the root cause that causes the young folks to be radicalized and join those groups. We need to do our part. We will have a whole-of-government approach to peace operations. The Canadian Armed Forces will do their part. They have been proud of their work from previous missions all the way back to Cyprus and the Sinai, and they will be proud of the work they will continue to do in Africa as well.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the consensus is clear. Distinguished general Lewis MacKenzie acknowledged that there is no peace to keep in Africa. Retired general Roméo Dallaire told the Senate that Canadian troops do not like to work for the UN. The former chief of the defence staff, Rick Hillier, said it was almost criminal to put Canadian troops under UN command.

As a decorated veteran, why is the defence minister not listening to these generals and standing up for our troops?

● (1500)

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually applaud and honour the great work that the previous generals have done, but I take advice from my Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, who has exceptional operational experience. I can assure the member that our troops are very proud of their work and will do wonderful work in Africa and make a massive contribution like they have always done in every mission that we have sent them on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, soldiers do not like working for the UN. Those are not my words; retired general Roméo Dallaire said so. There is no integrated command structure, and when things get ugly on the front lines, there is nothing they can do. Still, the government plans to deploy 600 soldiers to Africa, under UN command.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, to him, the Canadian Forces are merely a bargaining chip to help win a seat on the UN Security Council?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have learned from the mistakes of the past. We need to make sure that we have a robust mandate. That is one of the reasons I took retired General Roméo Dallaire with me to Africa, and Madame Louise Arbour as well, to make sure that I have the right perspective on this; to make sure that when we look at a mission we will have the appropriate United Nations mandate with robust rules of engagement, that has the protection of civilians; to make sure that our troops are properly trained and properly equipped so they can actually make the contribution that we send them there for.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the strength and vitality of our official languages are a priority for Canadians and our government. Over the summer, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and her parliamentary secretary travelled across the country to talk to people in preparation for creating an action plan on official languages.

Can the minister provide us with an update on this file that is so very important for our communities?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook for his question.

Our two official languages are a priority, and I am very proud to be part of a government that truly understands that. My parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre, and I held consultations all summer. We visited more than 20 communities, and more than 3,000 people participated in the online consultations. Unlike consultations held in the past, these ones are not held in camera. They are the most open and transparent consultations in our history. We are very proud of the process and we hope that all parliamentarians will participate in it.

* * *

[English]

JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over 140 years, Atlantic Canada has been represented on the Supreme Court. It is a constitutional convention, but it is the appropriate and right thing to do and every prime minister since Confederation has supported it, with the exception of the current Prime Minister.

However, my question is not for him. It is for the Minister of Fisheries who has been in the House for 16 years representing New Brunswick. Is he prepared to stand up and do the right thing for New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada? I would like to know.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question and I certainly recognize the importance that appointing the next Supreme Court justice places upon the Prime Minister. That is why I was very proud when the Prime Minister introduced a new process to make it more open, more

accountable, to ensure that we recognize and uphold the highest-quality jurists, recognize the importance of regional representation and functional bilingualism, and look to ensure that we do as much as we can to improve the diversity on the highest court. I look forward to working with the panel to put forward recommendations.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been in power for almost one year and the independent nomination process announced with great pomp by their government is still very much in limbo as the Liberals indulge in selfies, a chronic “construction syndrome”, and spending that is often inappropriate. Seriously, the position of vice-chairperson of broadcasting at the CRTC has been vacant for 15 months and a seat on the CBC’s board of directors has been vacant for almost a year. It is important they they appoint someone to the board of directors who will look out for our broadcaster.

With respect to her consultation, the minister continues to repeat that everything is on the table. Does she not think that some important players are missing at this table?

● (1505)

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question, but I would also like to remind him that the position of CRTC commissioner was posted this summer. Therefore, I invite him to consult the website.

I would also like to say that in the next few weeks, we will be introducing the new consultation process for appointments to the board of directors of CBC/Radio-Canada. This process is open and transparent in order to maintain the independence of the corporation’s board members.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Raj Saini (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, antimicrobial resistance has become one of the biggest threats to global health. All around the world, including here in Canada, many common infections are becoming resistant to the antimicrobial medicines that treat them. Global leaders are meeting today at the United Nations to discuss this threat to human health. Will the Minister of Health inform the House what our government is doing to address this very serious threat?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Kitchener Centre for this very important question. Antimicrobial resistance is a serious global public health threat, and Canada is taking action.

We are taking a one-health approach to strengthen surveillance, to build laboratory capacity, and to support the development of new treatments, diagnostics, and preventative measures and systems. We are working closely with the provinces and territories and are coordinating efforts across human and animal health and the agrifood sectors to prevent and control antimicrobial resistance.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians learned yesterday that the Liberals' ill-advised quest to normalize relations with Iran has notched up now to the ministerial level. The minister tweeted that in his first meeting with the regime's foreign minister at the UN, bilateral issues were discussed in the context of the Middle East. As an afterthought, the tweet said they "Discussed consular cases".

There was not a word about Canada's concern over the illegal detention, isolation, and abuse of Canadian Professor Hoodfar in Tehran's Evin prison. Why not?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's severing of ties with Iran had no positive consequences for anyone—not Canadians, not Iranians, and not our allies, such as Israel.

The first meeting the hon. member referred to between the foreign ministers touched on pressing regional issues and consular cases, further emphasizing the value and the need for engagement. Diplomatic solutions for humanitarian and security challenges depend on our regional dialogues and on open conversation with one another. Our strategy of cautious engagement is a tough path. It is much more difficult than a policy of retreat and isolationism.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Mr. Speaker,

[Member spoke in Inuktitut]

my question is for the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities. The minister is aware that Nunavut has very limited base infrastructure and a huge infrastructure deficit. The government committed to improving the way of life in the north and strengthening our northern communities in a joint statement on Arctic leadership by the Prime Minister and President Obama.

I would like to ask the minister what his plans are for infrastructure funding in Nunavut on projects like the Manitoba-Kivalliq road. Specifically, what is the status of funding for the Grays Bay road and port project?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that over the summer months we concluded our bilateral agreements for infrastructure investments with all provinces and territories, including Nunavut. We have announced more than \$92 million in federal funding for projects in Nunavut in the last few months.

As far as the Grays Bay project is concerned, it is not at a stage where it can move forward. I will continue to work with the Territory of Nunavut to make sure that—

[Translation]

The Speaker: There have been discussions among representatives of the parties in the House, and I understand that we will now have tributes to our late colleague, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HON. MAURIL BÉLANGER

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mauril Bélanger, a colleague and friend who was taken from us too soon.

August 16, 2016, was a sad day for our parliamentary family. That day, we lost one of our own, following his courageous battle with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

It is not easy to summarize the tremendous contribution that Mauril Bélanger made to society over the many years that he sat in the House of Commons, but when I think about Mauril and who he was, these are some of the things that always come to mind: he was a fervent advocate for his community, a champion of equality, a proud Franco-Ontarian, a passionate parliamentarian, a respected member of the party, and, above all, a man who was devoted to his family.

Today, I would like to take a few moments to talk about how Mauril exemplified these qualities every day through his actions and his way of approaching life.

• (1510)

[English]

As the MP for Ottawa—Vanier since 1995, Mauril was an ardent defender of his community for decades. A staple at local events and much beloved by all who knew him, Mauril understood the importance of connecting with people on a real personal level, and he always made sure that their voices were heard.

It is for these reasons that he was elected for the seventh consecutive time this past October. Over 36,000 of his neighbours cast their votes for him. Make no mistake: it is not a testament to the party he represented; it is a testament to the man himself. A pillar of the Ottawa—Vanier community, Mauril was a tireless advocate for the people he represented. I know he will be sorely missed by all of them.

No one in the House can deny that Mauril was frequently the voice for the underdog. He believed in fairness and justice for all, and championed inclusion and equality at every turn. Whether pushing for francophone rights, advocating for Canada's co-operatives, or fighting time and time again for a gender-neutral national anthem, Mauril Bélanger was often the first to jump in and point out that we could do better.

[Translation]

Last summer, the Montfort Hospital awarded Mauril the Médaille du 22 mars, a symbol of determination, tenacity, and pride. This medal recognizes his efforts as a tireless defender of the rights of francophones across the country. A proud Franco-Ontarian, Mauril never missed an opportunity to remind me that, no matter how proud I am to be a Montrealer and Quebecker, I was born in Ottawa and I am technically a Franco-Ontarian.

One of Mauril's top priorities was the duty to serve. Throughout his career, he carried out that responsibility with pride and determination. Whether it was as a member of the government under prime minister Paul Martin or as the deputy House leader, Mauril listened to Canadians and was always ready to serve them.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

He never let his parliamentary responsibilities cloud his commitment to his constituents. He made it to the barbecues, the town halls, and the community events with a tireless enthusiasm, an enthusiasm that would never fade with time.

Mauril was also an important fixture within the Liberal Party of Canada. He always challenged us to do better and to be better. When I was just starting out as an MP, he was a close ally, teacher, stern warner of things to come, and, ultimately, an extremely close friend.

In March, Mauril took the Speaker's chair for an emotional and moving round of question period. While it is easy to get caught up in the rough and tumble adversarial nature of politics, on that day our parliamentary colleagues rallied together to honour a great man.

[Translation]

The last time that Mauril was here with us in the House was to vote on the final stage of his private member's bill to make our national anthem more inclusive, a bill that he had introduced and reintroduced a number of times during his career. I think that, for him, that was the best way to end his parliamentary career: by fighting for his convictions and demonstrating strength and courage up until the very end.

To his dear wife Catherine and his family: we are with you during this difficult time and we hope that you will take comfort in the indelible mark that Mauril made in the House.

To our dear Mauril: I already miss your sense of humour, your courage, and your compassion. I will never forget our friendship and the moments that we shared.

Rest in peace, my friend.

● (1515)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the Prime Minister and all members of the House in paying tribute to our colleague and friend, Mauril Bélanger.

During his two-decade long, distinguished career as a parliamentarian, Mauril touched and inspired many people with his humility, his determination, and his dedication to serving his constituents, who returned the favour by re-electing him eight consecutive times.

[English]

He worked quietly, often behind the scenes and across party lines, on behalf of his many cherished causes, among them the rights of Franco-Ontarians and Canada's relationship with Africa.

Mauril in fact was seated across from me in the last Parliament, and though exchanges across the floor here can be heated, I always appreciated his deep and abiding respect for this institution.

[Translation]

Today we also remember the immense courage shown by Mauril this past year in his fight against ALS.

He battled this terrible disease openly and with dignity, determined to continue working on behalf of his constituents. His courage set an example for all members of this House.

To show our esteem for our beloved colleague, the House managed to come together last March, despite our usual divisions, to give him the unprecedented honour of presiding over us for an afternoon in the Speaker's chair.

[English]

As a dedicated parliamentarian with a great love for our democratic institution, the speakership was a long-held aspiration tragically taken from him by ALS. That is why all of us in our party were proud to provide support for his day in the chair.

On this day, I ask the Prime Minister to join me in calling on Canadians to once again join the fight against ALS. It is a terrible disease that first took Mauril's voice, then his tremendous energy, and finally his life.

In 2014, many of us participated in the Ice Bucket Challenge, an experience we will all remember. Although that campaign did raise \$20 million for research and \$6 million for support programs, we must continue to do more to find a cure.

We have seen how this disease can take people in the prime of their life and career, how it can take a colleague and a friend who was so close to reaching a long-held dream.

[Translation]

Very few Canadians have had the honour of serving as a member of the House of Commons, let alone eight times, as Mauril did.

For those of us who have had the honour of serving here, Mauril's distinguished career and immense courage have taught us to cherish this great Canadian democratic institution that we are all part of.

On behalf of our caucus, I would like to express our sincere condolences to Mauril's wife, Catherine, his son and grandchildren, and all his colleagues and friends in the House.

[English]

We will all miss him.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to pay tribute to a great parliamentarian on behalf of all members of the New Democratic Party.

I want to begin by expressing our most sincere condolences to his wife, Catherine, and all the members of their family. Everyone here knows the sacrifices that are made when one has a life in politics. It is always important to thank those who were always there for Mauril.

It has been mentioned many times, but everyone acknowledges that Mauril was a great champion of Franco-Ontarian rights. Even though it was a collective and community effort, we can say that Mauril Bélanger saved the Montfort Hospital, and that is to his great credit. The Montfort was the only francophone hospital here in Eastern Ontario.

He was also an ardent defender of co-operatives. He won awards and earned praise for his work around the world. In these two examples, saving a hospital for his Franco-Ontarian community and working for co-operatives, we see the very essence of a man who loved helping people more than anything else. One of my colleagues who was part of the 2011 cohort explained earlier that it was Mauril who was in some way in charge of preparing for the arrival of this very large number of new members. He told them that they would never get through all the work on their desks and to not even try. He told them to take care of their health above everything else. He knew what he was talking about.

He also made his mark on the international stage. He was one of the co-founders of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, where he built strong relationships. He advocated passionately for good governance, democracy, and the rule of law.

He believed in equality and inclusion. The English version of our national anthem will be a testament to that forevermore.

• (1520)

[*English*]

Mauril was a fighter, an idealist, and even when he knew his time here was limited he graced us with it, bringing us together as Speaker in a historic moment that allowed us all to rise above the fray. He united the House and Canadians in respect for his profound dignity and commitment to public service.

[*Translation*]

Mauril brought all of us together as Speaker in a historic moment in this House that none of us will ever forget.

Mauril once wrote: “We should be partners, not enemies, collectively invested in making Parliament work for the benefit of Canadians.” This epitomizes the core values of a man of profound dignity.

[*English*]

He will be remembered as a great parliamentarian and a great Canadian. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. He was a great friend to many of us in the House.

While it is a small consolation in the face of such a tragedy, his legacy will live on as an example to us all.

O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.

[*Translation*]

Rest in peace, Mauril. We miss you terribly.

Mr. Rhéal Fortin (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois and my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would also like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of our colleague, Mauril Bélanger.

We were all devastated by the death of Mauril Bélanger, who left us far too soon this summer. His passing leaves a great emptiness both here in the House and in his Ottawa—Vanier community.

Routine Proceedings

It is impossible to overstate his involvement in the great Franco-Ontarian and French Canadian struggles of his 20 years of public service. His career started off with a bang as he fought for the Montfort Hospital, the only hospital that provided services and training in French to more than half a million Franco-Ontarians. At the end of his career, he was leading the movement to make Ottawa bilingual.

A man of his people, Mauril Bélanger was as connected to them as he was proud of them. He was also proud of his culture and a tireless advocate for it. In short, he was a Franco-Ontarian through and through.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would once again like to extend my condolences to his family, his loved ones, his Liberal Party colleagues, and his entire community.

• (1525)

The Speaker: I thank the right hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for Outremont, and the hon. member for Rivière-du-Nord for expressing what we all feel.

I invite hon. members to rise and observe a moment of silence in honour of our esteemed colleague, the Hon. Mauril Bélanger.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the 2016 annual report, “The State of Canada’s Forests”.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. James Maloney (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources entitled “The Future of Canada’s Oil and Gas Sector: Innovation, Sustainable Solutions and Economic Opportunities”.

Hon. Jason Kenney: Madam Speaker, I have given notice to the other parties that I will be seeking unanimous consent to put the following motion: that the House agree that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria is responsible for 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, utilizing rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war and enslaving women and girls, and 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.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): There is no consent.

* * *

● (1530)

PETITIONS

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present an electronic petition, number e-263, which is signed by 3,662 Canadians.

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

I also have two written petitions on the same issue. The petitioners in both of these are calling on the Government of Canada to provide protection for health care workers and institutions, and protection of children under 18 from physician-assisted suicide.

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to table an electronic petition concerning the Line 9B reversal project. The petitioners are opposed to this pipeline because it transports tar sands oil and shale oil, a fast-growing source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Expert opinion states that there is a 90% likelihood of a significant Line 9B spill in the first years of operation.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to review Line 9B under a new pipeline regulatory process; acquire the consent of all indigenous communities in Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta; and create and implement a national plan to transition the economy to a renewable energy future.

[English]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to table electronic petition 103 on behalf of the residents of my riding of Parkdale—High Park. The issue of rail safety is a critical one in my riding and is front of mind for all Canadians. No one will forget the tragic derailment in Lac-Mégantic in 2013. I have met with many groups and individuals in Parkdale—High Park who want improved rules and regulations for rail safety so that Lac-Mégantic never happens again. This petition calls for just

that. It seeks better safety technology, improved volatility standards, and stronger guidelines surrounding the transportation of goods.

None of this would have been possible without the determination of two important advocates in my riding, Helen Vassilakos and Patricia Lai, whose leadership and vision helped gather 627 signatures for this petition. They are leaders on the issue of rail safety in my riding. I look forward to continue working with them in the future.

ARVA FLOUR MILL

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have petitions that keep coming in. This one is signed by hundreds of people about Arva Flour Mill, a historic building in my area, that had a Canadian labour law audit conducted upon it.

This petition is about the closing of that mill. It has had no health-related claims in 197 years. It is an operating museum. It is the only one in Canada. The petitioners ask the minister to fix it by giving it an exemption from the Canadian Labour Code.

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition calling upon the government to reject the trans-Pacific partnership. We have a lot of petitions that are coming in from across Canada. People are concerned that Canada is giving up too much in this deal, such things as good Canadian jobs. They fear that this could lead to income inequality growing even more than it already is in Canada. They fear the cost of medications and that it could be a barrier to a national pharmacare program. There is a fear of easing the path for foreign takeovers. Also, it contains measures that would stifle Canada's innovation sector.

They also mention that the TPP empowers corporations to sue and obtain compensation from Canadian governments for regulating in the public interest.

I present these petitions and the petitioners are asking for the government to reject the trans-Pacific partnership.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Madam Speaker, I present a petition today from 46 of my constituents in support of Motion No. 43.

The petitioners are asking the government to ensure that the Canada Revenue Agency treats taxpayers fairly. They are also asking the government to support Motion No. 43.

Government Orders

●(1535)

HOUSING

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a housing crisis in metro Vancouver, as well as in British Columbia. I have here today an electronic petition signed by 11,461 people who are calling upon the government to take immediate action on this issue. They are concerned about seniors being driven out of their homes, young professionals being driven out of the region, and people not being able to continue their lives and to age in place.

The residents who have signed this petition would like financial transactions that are flagged as suspicious to be reported, to have the real estate council and lawyers disclose information about buyers and sources of incomes, and to study restrictions on foreign investment in place in other jurisdictions, such as Australia, U.S.A., Hong Kong, and England.

This is an urgent issue that is affecting many thousands of people in Vancouver and the metro Vancouver region, so I urge the government to take immediate action to address this petition.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition that represents thousands of signatures from the riding of Langley—Aldergrove in the Fraser Valley. It highlights the fact that at the special joint committee for assisted suicide witnesses almost unanimously called for the protection of conscience of health care professionals who did not want to participate. The Canadian Medical Association confirmed that conscience protection would not affect access to assisted suicide.

The petitioners are, therefore, calling upon this Parliament to enshrine in the Criminal Code the protection of conscience of physicians, health care professionals, and institutions, from coercion or intimidation forcing them to participate in assisted suicide or euthanasia.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition is from a group called Families for Justice. It is a group of Canadians who have lost a loved one to an impaired driver. They believe that Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime to be called what it is: vehicular homicide. They also want mandatory sentencing for vehicular homicide.

PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED DYING

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have five petitions that deal with the concern about conscience involvement of those who perform physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia. A number of my constituents have signed this petition. It is somewhat dated, but it still is important to table the petitions on behalf of my constituents.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I ask that all other notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2015 ACT, NO. 1

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.) moved that Bill C-5, An Act to repeal Division 20 of Part 3 of the Economic Action Plan 2015 Act, No. 1, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to engage the House on an important decision the government has made for employees of Canada's public service, their unions and for all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The decision is as follows: the government will not use the powers in division 20 of Bill C-59, the Harper regime's anti-union legislation that currently enables the government to bypass negotiations with unions and unilaterally impose a sick leave system for federal employees.

As we have already told all bargaining agents, we will repeal this law.

●(1540)

[*English*]

This decision is in keeping with our government's commitment to bargain in good faith with public sector unions and to look for opportunities to modernize the sick leave and disability management system.

The Conservative government gratuitously disrespected the public service repeatedly. This time it did so when it decided to take the issue of sick leave off the negotiating table and give itself the power to unilaterally implement a plan of its own choosing.

Government Orders

Public servants were justifiably angry. They felt the previous government did not respect them and did not respect the collective bargaining process, and they were right.

From the beginning, our government has been committed to restoring a culture of respect for and within the public service. We have immense respect for our public service and the unions that represent them. We recognize the important roles they play.

During last year's election campaign, our government was clear in its opposition to Bill C-59 and other Harper government anti-union pieces of legislation. We understood that the changes made to the collective bargaining rights in both Bill C-59, division 20, and certain provisions of omnibus budget bill, Bill C-4, were neither fair nor balanced.

[*Translation*]

We pledged to introduce a bill this fall to restore the public service labour relations regime that was in place before the former government amended the legislation in 2013. In the meantime, we took steps to make current rounds of collective bargaining easier.

When we took power, our goal was to change the tone, to repair the relationship with public service employees, and to cultivate greater collaboration with the unions representing them.

[*English*]

That is because we value the important role that federal employees play as a force of positive change for Canadians. Every day, these public servants work for the sound governance of our country. They promote Canadian values and defend our interests within Canada and around the world. They deliver thousands of high-quality programs and services to Canadians. From operating icebreakers in the high Arctic to inspecting aircraft, from protecting our borders to peacekeeping abroad, from delivering employment insurance to issuing passports, from geologic research in the field to approving drugs for human use, from maintaining our national parks to preserving historic sites, our federal public service does all of this and much more.

[*Translation*]

Federal employees work hard across Canada and around the world.

[*English*]

We have seen the effect of their work as Canadians came together to welcome and settle some 25,000 Syrian refugees. That was a tremendous achievement that our public servants, within multiple departments, achieved working together.

This goes beyond just appreciating our employees and the work they do. We believe Canadians can achieve great things when we all work together. Indeed, our promise to work collaboratively with Canadians was a key cornerstone in our election platform.

Canadians want change in the way that governments treat and engage citizens. They want change in the way we work with unions and the labour movement, the way we work with members of Parliament, the media, indigenous peoples, the environmental community, all levels of government, veterans, business leaders,

and so many others, all of whom want to contribute to building a better Canada.

[*Translation*]

By repealing division 20 of Bill C-59, the government is working with unions.

● (1545)

[*English*]

I would like to speak about the importance of rebooting our relations, broadly, with Canada's labour movement, but specifically with our public sector. It is really important to reset those relationships.

What we are doing here today is not simply a matter of demonstrating respect for and recognizing the importance of labour relations in governance. It is part of what we are doing as a government to work in partnership with the labour movement to achieve a better and more prosperous Canada.

One of the first things I did, after being named president of the Treasury Board, was to reach out to Robyn Benson, president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Debi Daviau, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, Ron Cochrane, co-chair of the National Joint Council, and other public sector leaders. I told them I wanted to restore a culture of respect for the public service, and respect and civility in labour relations.

The National Joint Council was among the first organizations I met with upon taking my responsibilities.

[*Translation*]

I want to send the following message: we will respect the collective bargaining process and negotiate in good faith. We are committed to reaching agreements, including on sick leave modernization, through collective bargaining.

[*English*]

This approach is crucial to the government's agenda. Canadians gave us a strong mandate to implement an ambitious and progressive agenda for change, to create jobs and grow the economy. However, we cannot get that done without an engaged, motivated, and respected public service. We need to bargain fairly, and in an environment of respect.

[*Translation*]

We know that we can accomplish more by working with one another than by working against one another. Collaboration is the only way to move forward together.

[*English*]

Real change of the type we envision for Canada can only happen when we work together, when we work collaboratively. Public servants are from diverse backgrounds. They work in communities across the country, and they work together to build a better Canada. We have backed up our commitment with actions.

Government Orders

[Translation]

In December, I made a commitment to the public service unions to go back to the bargaining table to negotiate in good faith. That is what we have done. We are looking for ways to modernize the sick leave system and reach agreements that are fair and reasonable for employees and Canadians.

[English]

We also committed that we would not exercise the powers given to the government to unilaterally implement a disability and sick leave management system. On January 21, we confirmed that we would be repealing that legislation, and on February 5, we introduced Bill C-5 to do that.

With the threat of Bill C-59 removed, we can have a genuine conversation with unions representing the public service on how to modernize the sick leave system in the public service. The current system can, for example, fail employees who have recently entered the public service and who have not accumulated a large bank of sick days. This is of particular concern to our government, and it is of concern to me, given our desire as a government to see the public service attract more young people to its ranks, attract millennials to the public service.

The fact is that the average age for new hires within the public service today is 37. We would like to see the federal public service do more to attract and retain millennials, who represent Canada's best and brightest generation and prospects for the future. However, we cannot do that if we do not have a system of sick leave that recognizes their importance. That is one of the changes we want to make.

Also, our current system fails employees, in our view, who suffer from mental health challenges and other chronic medical conditions. These are some of the important reasons that we are committed to a modernized system.

In terms of working together, we understand that wellness and productivity go hand in hand. Workforce wellness generates higher levels of employee engagement, which, in turn, leads to better-performing workplaces. We understand that workplace wellness means mental, as well as physical, health issues. As the country's largest employer, we have to tackle this challenge in our own ranks. To that end, we will be working to create a welcoming environment for free and frank discussion of mental wellness and mental health issues.

The fact is that our country is enriched and strengthened by different perspectives from the government, federal employees, and unions.

- (1550)

[Translation]

What is more, we know that we cannot provide Canadians with quality services if federal employees are not healthy, empowered, and involved. There is definitely a good dynamic for dealing with these problems and a general interest in doing so. By working with the unions, we are going to make real progress.

[English]

I want to recognize the excellent work done in this area of mental health by the joint task force on mental health, and the crucial work of the Public Service Alliance of Canada in advancing this agenda. The joint task force established a positive and collaborative partnership between representatives of the employer and from an equal number of bargaining agents. That is why we are consulting with employees on the federal public service workplace mental health strategy.

With this strategy, we are committing to exploring aspects of mental health with our employees, and to listening and responding to their needs. The strategy will evolve over time, and improvements will be based on research, good information, and employee feedback. This is an important step in helping to improve the psychological well-being of our employees. It is a great example of what we can achieve when we work together with the unions to make a real difference and to achieve important change for their members.

We are committed to taking further action, together with the public service unions and with the public service broadly, to strengthen our public service and to restore civility to our negotiations. I want to reset the relationship with our employees and their unions, and move responsibly and fairly to build the public service that Canadians need.

If we are going to meet the real challenges we face as a country, from improving economic opportunity and security for Canadians to settling thousands of refugees, we need to maintain a motivated and engaged public service. We have a wonderful opportunity here. From bargaining in good faith to open accountable government, to the utmost care and prudence and handling of public funds, we can continue to build a high performance public service for Canadians.

We need to work constructively and collaboratively to do it. Let me be clear. That does not mean that we as a government will always agree with the unions representing the public service on every single issue. Sometimes the union leaders will change our minds and sometimes we might even change their minds on something. However, if we are engaged collaboratively, we can disagree without being disagreeable, and we can work together to come together to build a stronger public service and better government for Canadians. Ultimately, we can learn from each other. We can negotiate in good faith to reach agreements that are fair and responsible for all parties.

In closing, Canadians know we find ourselves in a challenging fiscal situation and a slow growth economy. We were elected on a strong and progressive plan to grow that economy. If we are to implement our agenda to invest, to create jobs, and strengthen the middle class, we will need to be prudent, and it will take sound and responsible fiscal management and real collaboration.

Government Orders

As part of that, we have committed to fair and balanced labour laws that acknowledge the important roles of the unions. That is why we will resolve issues at the bargaining table in a way that is fair and reasonable for the public service and all Canadians. We will not be bargaining in public. We will be bargaining at the bargaining table, and that is where we ought to be bargaining, with the utmost respect for our public servants and understanding the importance of us working together.

The best is yet to come for Canada. The only way to ensure that we as Canadians achieve what we are capable of and that Canadians will benefit from all of this important work is to work together collaboratively, all of us as Canadians, members of Parliament, public servants, provincial, federal and municipal governments, the business and environmental communities, and indigenous peoples. We have a lot of work to do in this country and we need to work hard together to achieve our full potential.

Members of our public service play an important role with respect to not only our plan as a government but also achieving our potential as a country.

I look forward to this debate and hope that all hon. members would join me in supporting this piece of legislation.

● (1555)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister is responsible for the federal public service labour laws in this country as the President of the Treasury Board.

Could he tell the House if he believes federally-regulated workers, public sector or private, should have the right to vote in a secret ballot as to whether or not their bargaining unit is represented by one union or another?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, what the member is referring to is legislation brought in by the previous government that would actually change labour laws in Canada, not just for public servants but broadly.

The way the previous government did that was actually very disrespectful of the labour movement in Canada. It did not engage the labour movement in discussions leading up to that, and in fact gratuitously toxified labour relations, not just with the public service but broadly.

Our government, on the other hand, believes that we can negotiate in good faith. We can build a partnership with the labour movement, but also with the business community, and we can achieve great things on behalf of Canadians.

It was very clear that the legislation brought forward by the previous government was unbalanced, and was very much an anti-union approach that the union movement across Canada uniformly condemned.

As President of the Treasury Board I am part of a government that is committed to working with our public servants in a respectful way. Our minister of labour and Prime Minister, and our entire government are absolutely committed to restoring a culture of respect in terms of the way we work with the labour movement nationally, within the public service but also more broadly.

I can assure the member that at the same time we are going to be working with the business community and, broadly, society to achieve positive outcomes and growth for the Canadian economy and the middle class.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and I commend him for reversing the shameful decision that the Conservatives made.

While they were at the bargaining table with the public service, the Conservatives introduced a new sick leave system in a bill, when that system should have been negotiated in good faith with the public service. The Conservatives made a decision without even negotiating with the public service.

What I am wondering right now is whether the President of the Treasury Board is proposing a new sick leave system at the bargaining table, because obviously the unions are wondering about that. They are wondering whether their existing sick leave system is on the table, whether it will be changed, whether the government has already made up its mind in that regard, whether the government will really negotiate in good faith or whether the issue has already been decided, and whether there will be a real negotiation or whether a new sick leave system will merely be imposed.

● (1600)

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate this question.

First of all, once again, re-establishing a culture of respect for Canada's public service remains a priority for us. We will continue to negotiate issues like the sick leave system and continue to have those discussions.

I am sure my colleague understands the importance of negotiating at the bargaining table, and not in public. We will continue to respect our unions and our public service, and we will continue going back to the bargaining table.

I remember seeing the previous government attack our public service right here in the House, and it was unacceptable. It also tried negotiating in public, which is something we will not do. We will continue to negotiate at the bargaining table because that is the right thing to do.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things that I have always appreciated is the fine work that our public service does as a whole. If we were to canvass other civil services, we would find that there is an immense amount of respect for the manner in which the men and women in our civil service carry themselves in such a professional manner, and the things that they are able to accomplish. The member and I have both had the opportunity to travel abroad, and we often found a great deal of interest in how Canada's civil service operates and a great deal of admiration for the men and women in it.

Could the President of the Treasury Board share his insights and thoughts with regard to how Canada's civil service and the fine work that it does is not only acknowledged within Canada but also abroad?

Government Orders

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, we have an exceptionally strong professional public service in Canada. The men and women provide us fearless advice and loyal implementation which is important. For example, I have had two opportunities as a minister to work with public servants, previously in what was the department of public works and is now Public Services and Procurement Canada in Paul Martin's government, and more recently in my current role at Treasury Board.

I have been so impressed by public servants. Ministers will sometimes sit down with public servants and feel that they know exactly what needs to be done and in the course of discussions, they will change their mind. Sometimes in the course of discussions, the ministers will be able to change the public servants' minds. The honest and frank discussions we have with an engaged and motivated professional public service is absolutely essential to our democracy and to good governance.

I could never understand how sometimes in the House the previous government would gratuitously pick fights and attack the public service. I understand there may have been some politics to that in terms of playing to a base, but a government cannot move forward its agenda without the partnership of a motivated public service. A government cannot crap on people in public, and expect them to work with it in private. It is just basic common sense that we have to work with people.

All members of Parliament in the House of Commons, Conservatives, NDP, know on a daily basis the importance of our public service. We know in the House of Commons how we are served by exceptional people committed to helping us do our jobs and to govern the country better.

We all know. Take the politics out of this. We are well-served as Canadians by our professional public service.

● (1605)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board failed to answer my earlier question. My question was whether or not he believes in the right of an employee to vote in a secret ballot on whether his or her bargaining unit is represented by a union.

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, the previous government brought in legislation that created an unbalanced and anti-union position that damaged labour relations. We have already had bad generals fight yesterday's battles, and that is what the hon. member is doing.

We have reversed some of those regressive changes. We have restored and continue to restore a culture of respect for not just the public sector unions but broadly the labour movement in Canada. We will continue to do so in partnership with labour, business, and Canadians.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board has just accused me of being a general waging an old battle. I rise today to say that the right of working people to chart their own destiny through the use of a secret ballot, though an ancient right, will never get old. That is a basic, fundamental freedom upon which this august chamber is based and by which every real democratic decision is ultimately and finally made: the right of the deciders—that is, the people—to go into a

secret place and mark their preference free from intimidation or scrutiny by those who have authority over them. The hon. member might consider that to be “regressive”, a word that he chose himself, but it is the methodology that allowed him to be here in the first place.

I do not know if the member is going to rise in the question and comment period to claim that he should not have been elected by those means, but instead should have been allowed to go around his community and ask people to elect him through a petition system, whereby they, standing right in front of him, would be asked to put their name beside his name or the name of his opponent. Imagine if Parliament were chosen in such a truly regressive way. Unfortunately, prior to the later days of the previous government, that is how many federally regulated workers in the private and public sector had the decision of unionization imposed upon them.

Furthermore, this is not yesterday's battle. Currently, the government has legislation before Parliament that would strip away the recently won gain that workers enjoy to vote secretly on whether to unionize their bargaining unit. That legislation is before the Senate and it is not simply one bill. There are two bills related to that right. One broadly speaks to the right of workers in the federal sphere; and the other speaks specifically to the right of RCMP members who, due to a Supreme Court ruling, will soon be granted the right to organize and collectively bargain in their workplace. We know from the unfolding controversies related to the union drive of multiple organizations seeking to represent the Mounties as the bargaining agent that RCMP personnel would benefit from the right to decide that by secret ballot, rather than under the watchful eye of either the employer or a prospective bargaining agent. The reason that a secret ballot is so primordial is not just to protect the worker against intimidation by a prospective bargaining agent or union, but also to protect the employee from intimidation by an employer. On this point, I would like to spend some time.

When I asked the President of the Treasury Board this, he said he wanted to develop a balanced legislative framework between business and unions. He totally forgot the primary stakeholder. The primary stakeholder in labour laws is not business or unions; it is the worker. It is worker that all of our laws and all of our rules should be designed to serve.

This is not a battle for yesteryear. It is a debate that is alive and well today. I would suggest that he, as the President of the Treasury Board, has an opportunity to rethink his position and that of his government and come around to the position that workers should have the right to vote. By the way, that is the policy in five of ten Canadian provinces. Jurisdictions governed by various different political parties give this right to provincially regulated workers in their jurisdiction.

● (1610)

This is not an extreme or exotic concept. It is broadly practised in jurisdictions not only in Canada but around the world. We merely suggest that in the federally regulated sector, that right should continue to exist.

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I represent the riding of Carleton. It neighbours on the community of Barrhaven, which was formerly part of my riding. Members will find the headquarters of the RCMP there, an organization that will face union drives as the Supreme Court's ruling permitting its personnel to unionize comes into effect. It is my duty as a member, and the duty of all members in this place who do represent RCMP personnel, to stand up for the right of those who put their lives on the line every day and, through the use of a secret ballot, make their decision free from intimidation.

I will depart ever so temporarily from the subject at hand just to point out that the approach of the government on the secret ballot vote for workers on the question of unionizing workplaces is consistent with its opposition to a referendum on the subject of electoral reform. For some reason, the government seems to be against voting. A government that was put in place by such means opposes those very means. The Liberals seem to have an inherent bias against allowing the people affected by decisions to make the final decision themselves.

On those points, I strongly disagree with the early direction of the current government with respect to labour relations. However, I do have faith that the President of the Treasury Board will change his mind, and perhaps he is changing his mind right now as he listens to these words.

On the subject of sick leave, the President of the Treasury Board has introduced legislation and has committed to the House of Commons that he will work with bargaining agents to come up with an improved sick leave system—and, hopefully, a short-term disability system to augment it—that will serve both taxpayers and public servants. On this point, I think both parties are broadly in agreement. It seems to me that the President of the Treasury Board and the government of the day are trying to work with the bargaining agent to find a solution to the ongoing problem that exists in a whole host of workplaces and to single out the best way to deal with sickness and injury for employees.

One of the problems that I have identified, not only as a member of Parliament and Treasury Board critic but also as a representative of the Ottawa area, is that 60% of public servants do not have enough banked sick days to get them to the full period required for eligibility for short-term disability. For the majority of public servants who fall seriously ill, they cannot cover the span between the day they leave work and the day they become eligible for short-term disability, because they have yet to accumulate enough sick days to fill that gap.

Some 25% of employees have accumulated fewer than 10 days. Many employees, especially the new and the young, have no sick days accumulated at all. Meanwhile, some long-tenured workers, many of them executives, the best paid and compensated workers, have far more banked sick leave days than they will ever use. This is through no fault of their own. It is the result of the fact they have diligently gone to work every day and, as a result, their sick-leave allocation has just accumulated and stacked up year after year. This is a sign of a responsible, diligent employee, but it does not address the problem of roughly 14 million accumulated sick days banked in the system right now, many of which are out of reach of the majority of public servants who are younger and, therefore, have not had such an opportunity.

● (1615)

I know that the President of the Treasury Board shares the objective of the previous government to find ways to get sick and injured public servants well and back to work as quickly as possible. I believe that the negotiating mandate he has with his officials reflects that goal as well.

Therefore, I would encourage him to continue to work toward the mutually supportive goals, first, of protecting taxpayers and, second, of ensuring that public servants have a sick leave and short-term disability system that protects them when they need it and helps them get back to active, productive lives as quickly as possible. That is the sweet spot that we are all attempting to reach and I wish the President of the Treasury Board well in his endeavours to achieve it.

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member and I may not agree on everything, but based on his comments, I think we have a desire to have a sick leave regime within the public service that will ensure that public servants receive the support they need when they need it.

He has identified an issue that I alluded to as well, that people who have not been in the public service for a particularly long time and have not necessarily accumulated time in the public service, young people in particular, and who may have some form of long-term or chronic illness, are not well served by the current system. We view this as important to address, and we are addressing it now in negotiations with the public service unions. It is one of the things that we need to change if we are going to attract more young people to the public service. It is only one.

As for other things, we are told that the hierarchical nature of decision-making within government is an issue. There are even issues around the hiring processes, and also the ability to develop an idea within a department or agency of government and to share it with somebody else in government and to work together to achieve it.

The hon. member was a minister in the previous government and is just a bit younger than me, so I would appreciate his thoughts on what we need to do as a government to attract more young people to the public service and to give them the opportunity to paint on a larger canvas and make a difference in the lives of Canadians.

● (1620)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his reference to my age. When I was first elected, a member told me that my youth was an illness that would be cured little by little each day. Since that time, gray hairs have been sprouting and, slowly but surely, I am curing the flaw that I had.

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I appreciate the member's giving me the opportunity to comment on attracting young people—younger than me—to work in the public service. I think that the number one thing we can do to attract more young people is to make the public service as entrepreneurial as possible. The millennial generation is all about getting it done. We see that through great innovations like Uber, and through communications via social media and the ability of young people to acquire information rapidly and to solve problems almost instantaneously without following all of the bureaucratic steps that older people like me still go through. It is phenomenal to see how solution-focused young people are.

Unfortunately, government at all levels and in all places in the world tends to have an attitude that an operation was a success and the patient died. We follow a whole series of procedural steps, and even if we do not achieve any result, it is regarded as a success because we ticked all the boxes. We need to transform government at all levels to become more results driven, more entrepreneurial and more dynamic so that we focus on getting things done. That will be the best way we could possibly attract the young millennial generation, whose desire is to get in, make things happen, and to achieve things.

Ms. Cheryl Hardcastle (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard such intriguing discussion from the hon. member with regard to his vision of the fundamental right of public service workers to be free of intimidation. Does this mean that this member thinks we should be moving quickly in other areas to restore the fundamental right of a public service worker to refuse unsafe work conditions?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I think we all agree that workers should have the ability to protect themselves in unsafe working conditions where there are extensive regulations that protect employees, both private and public sector and federally and provincially regulated, and I think we all want to see those rules employed and respected.

My point was regarding an equally important right, which is the right of collective self-determination of employees in a given bargaining unit and their right to choose, through a secret ballot, whether to be represented by a union.

That is a right that exists for provincially regulated employees in five different provincial jurisdictions and is one that continues to exist in Canada at the national level because of a bill passed in the previous Parliament.

Unfortunately, that right is currently in jeopardy because of legislation the current government has introduced that would effectively abolish the secret ballot for union certification.

I am asking the government to reconsider that approach. I think it is very reasonable, moderate, and sensible to expect that workers would be able to choose their own destiny without intimidation from either the proposed bargaining agent or the employer.

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I applaud my colleague's attempt to let us know what the true picture is in our public service.

I have been consulting a lot in the private sector lately about the need for productivity and to create more jobs and to make sure that the government spends money wisely.

Many of the small and medium-sized business people in my riding said that they want to make sure that there is productivity in their workplace.

We can look at all the benefits public servants are getting. They are banking all those sick days, 114.7 million sick leave days. Those will be paid, and have been paid, by private sector taxpayers.

How do you justify having only the public sector benefiting and reaping all the good benefits while the private sector is sacrificing?

• (1625)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just remind the hon. member to address the questions to the chair.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Madam Speaker, I thank the member, the former minister, for her question.

I think this is the balance the previous government and the current government are trying to strike, which is between respect for taxpayers, that is, the private sector, as the member refers to it, and public servants in delivering a sick leave and short-term disability program that is there for public servants when they need it and is affordable for the taxpayers who are paying all the bills.

I am hopeful that the President of the Treasury Board continues with a mandate for his officials to achieve that balance, because there are better ways. We have right now a system in which younger public servants, or those new to the federal public service, do not even have enough sick leave days to get through to a short-term disability plan if, God forbid, they fall terribly ill.

Our previous government had attempted to rectify that problem by extending short-term disability through a fairer, balanced, and affordable regime. I think the current government has picked up that approach and hopefully is making progress with its partners and the bargaining agent to achieve something that will work for both taxpayers and employees.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Drummond, Official Languages; the hon. member for Saskatoon West, Indigenous Affairs.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to talk today about this important issue. Bill C-5 is one step on a long road to recovery for Canadian public service workers, and more generally, for the rights of all Canadian workers.

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The previous government's concerted assault on the rights of Canada's public service workers, on the value of the important services they provided, and by extension, on the rights of every hard-working Canadian have really negatively impacted our ability to attract new talent to the public sector and has seriously deteriorated the services the Canadian government is able to deliver to all Canadians. The result is costly. It is costly to the economy, to the Canadian way of life, and to the well-being of public servants, plus it creates gaping holes in our social fabric, which sadly means that particular segments of the Canadian population are left behind or are underserved.

The previous government's Bill C-4 showed little regard for basic business principles, willful ignorance of common and elementary knowledge about sickness in workplaces, and zero concern for the well-being of other people. In this day and age, there is no good reason to demand that a person go to work sick.

The previous government's trampling of workers' rights was shortsighted and unwarranted and has left a negative impact on the public sector and the Canadian way of life. Repealing the bill is obviously the right thing to do, but we can do better.

My NDP colleagues and I ask the current government to continue to stand up for workers' rights and to immediately repeal the previous government's Bill C-4, which interferes with free collective bargaining, infringes upon workers' rights to a safe work environment, and restricts the right to strike. The government should move immediately to repeal each section of this bill that undermines the constitutional rights of public service employees.

Under the previous government, we witnessed a major dismantling of important public sector departments. This made many Canadians uncomfortable, so uncomfortable, in fact, that some even wrote songs about it, which is partly why we have a new party in power today.

Many of these public sector departments provide the information, research, and analysis necessary for a government to make informed decisions. Being informed when making any decision is a key factor in making good decisions, whether that decision conforms to preconceived ideas or not.

Dr. Peter Wells, a former public servant and environmental scientist, said in an interview with the National Observer that the previous government was quite "simply anti-science, anti-evidence, and anti-informed policy and decision-making.... More than 2,000 positions and people were lost, many in my field [of environmental science], resulting in a loss of a generation of skills, knowledge, and capacity that were there to serve the public".

"There to serve the public" is the important part here. It is there to serve the public good, not the good of a single political party or the agenda of a small group of ideologues. The public service is essential to a functioning democracy. They ensure that we live under the best conditions with the best resources and the best information available anywhere in the world. The health of our public sector plays a crucial role in whether we lead the world or fall behind. The public sector is essential to every Canadian's well-being and safety. In short, the public sector deserves respect, and public sector employees should be treated with respect.

Canadians want a Canada that trusts its public servants, because frankly, our public service workers are not the enemy. Canadians trust their public servants to show up to work every day and to diligently serve Canadians in what are often highly challenging and demanding situations. Canadians also understand that these same public servants should not show up to work sick. Passing on illnesses to co-workers and taking longer to get better only reduces productivity.

• (1630)

Trust is key in any healthy relationship. The Government of Canada is not a babysitter and should not babysit the people it is elected to serve. That is not the role of government. A government should trust the people who elected them, because unless we have forgotten, many of these people are our neighbours. Despite our many differences, we must respect our neighbours' right to freedom of speech, to health and well-being, and to a safe workplace. We must respect our neighbours' right to make their own decisions, to learn, and to have the space and resources to grow, because every single Canadian benefits when each of us has the opportunity to prove our potential.

Governments should provide leadership and vision, not micro-manage public servants and certainly not abolish rights that will endanger the safety and well-being of public servants and ultimately the people they serve.

Moreover, our government should be working to build, not destroy. A government should protect and not harm. A government should not steal rights but respect them and provide opportunities for exercising those rights. That same government should also trust public sector workers to carry out the important work necessary to maintain the daily operations of the Canadian government.

Every day, thousands of our neighbours go to work to ensure that our food and borders are safe, that our pension cheques are delivered, and that the best of Canada is represented abroad. All of these workers make us proud, and our government should reflect that.

With any system, there is potential for abuse of that system by its users. There is always someone who will try to manipulate situations to their own perceived advantage, often at a cost to everyone else. That can be said of many systems. It can be said of governments, government services, and even representatives of governments themselves. However, like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, the previous Bill C-4 of the previous government declares everyone guilty until proven innocent, and, in the process, smashes the entire structure to pieces so that little usable remains.

Moreover, a parliamentary budget officer report from July 2014, requested by the former member for Ottawa Centre, shows that the previous president of the Treasury Board and the justification for this poorly thought-out bill misrepresented the level of sick leave taken by civil servants. It clearly shows that the use of sick leave in the federal civil service imposes no significant cost on the government or taxpayers.

The PBO report states:

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the incremental cost of paid sick leave was not fiscally material and did not represent material costs for departments in the [core public administration].

That means that most employees who call in sick are not replaced, resulting in no incremental cost for departments.

Likewise, and this is important, the PBO also confirmed that the use of sick leave by public servants is in line with the public sector. However, creating a problem where none exists to advance an ideology was the previous government's MO.

The previous government's Bill C-4 does absolutely nothing positive for Canada or Canadians and has paved the way for unenlightened ways of forcing Canadian public servants to go to work sick. Likewise, it sets a precedent that negatively impacts the whole of the Canadian working population.

Organized labour, like any professional association, is designed to look out for the well-being of its members. That is a simple fact. Every similar organization, whether it is a professional association, a chamber of commerce, or a taxpayers federation, does the same. Even pro athletes have their unions. In fact, that is the reason they organize. It to present strength through co-operation, to protect one another's rights, and to fight for more rights.

Organized labour, like other professional organizations, has provided leadership in our society. Its members have endured hardship and even ridicule while standing up for better working conditions. Their hard-won gains have benefited all Canadians, and many of these gains are taken for granted by many of us today: weekends, overtime pay, vacation pay, parental leave, health and safety regulations, and even sick days.

Creating a standard for all Canadian workers, unionized or not, to be treated with respect has led to all of us having the basic rights of association and freedom of speech and the right to a workplace that is safe. As small as it might seem, organized labour also helped set a precedent that if one is sick, one can stay home and not lose a day's pay or one's job. Despite what the previous government thought, this makes great business sense, and it has become a standard across the country and across sectors.

● (1635)

Today, these benefits are what helps an organization, private or public, attract top talent. It is also what helps keep that talent because measures such as sick leave ensure a modicum of decency between employer and employee, positively influence staffing efficiencies and stability, and express a confident statement regarding the well-being and health of an organization's or business's workforce. Given all the benefits that a happy, healthy workforce brings, it did seem strange that the federal government as an employer chose not to, or did not want to be a leader.

For example, Shift Development, a forward-thinking development company in my riding, pays a living wage to all its workers. Its CEO, Curtis Olson, says he pays all his employees a living wage rather than the minimum wage because he cannot afford not to. He said, "For me, as a business owner, the cost of employee turnover is a huge cost". Mr. Olson knows the value of and relationship between high employee morale, health and stability, and increased returns from productivity, efficiency, and success. He said, "If I take care of my employees and help meet their financial and lifestyle needs,

they'll take care of the company and the growth of the company". The Canadian government should learn from our business leaders' successes and start valuing and trusting their employees because without them the government cannot deliver a single service to Canadians.

The previous government's Bill C-4 was unenlightened and primitive. It pushed labour relations and standards back decades and set precedents that were regressive and reached far beyond the confines of the public service sector. It is incomprehensible to many Canadians why the previous government would want to erase rights that took decades and in some cases many generations to earn, rights the Conservatives wiped out in massive undemocratic omnibus swaths and a sweeping ideological mugging of Canadian rights and freedoms. These transgressions were made without consideration for the consequences for the Canadian working person, the economy, or the future Canadian workforce, our children.

Today, we are debating a return of only one of those rights. In the coming days, months, and years no doubt a great deal of time and energy will be lost to rebuilding what was destroyed by the previous government. Thanks to that government, we must move backward in order to move forward. Instead of debating a national living wage, which would increase the health and well-being of our local communities and economies, the previous government left us in the sorry state of debating the reinstatement of sick leave to public servants. If news reports about the current negotiations are accurate, the Liberal government has not lived up to all of its election promises about respecting the public service. It is all very good to promise to negotiate fairly and to bring a renewed respect to its dealings with public service workers, but if they are serving up some of the same offers as the previous government, it is not real change.

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I urge the government to keep its promises and not break faith with the public service. It is my hope that the new boss is not the same as the old boss. Let us work to fix what is broken, including a pay system that has left thousands of workers unpaid or underpaid, the full effects of which are not yet to be seen. Let us get this bill passed now and move on to creating and implementing things such as a national housing strategy, which would save Canadians billions of dollars in health care and correctional services costs. Let us work on pressing issues such as quality affordable childcare, improving access to health care, and tackling climate change. Let us focus on improving the lives of families and seniors, and creating brighter futures for our young people. I know for a fact my riding would benefit from discussion on all of these issues, and I am sure my riding is not the only one in the country.

● (1640)

As such, while I support Bill C-5, more needs to be done to restore the numerous and hard-earned rights of Canadian workers, especially those in the public sector.

I urge the government to commit to repealing all the regressive changes made to labour law in the former government's Bill C-4. The previous government's Bill C-4 undermined the constitutional rights of federal public service employees to collective bargaining, including the right to strike. It also offered government negotiators an unfair advantage at the bargaining table. Unions, of course, fought against the changes throughout those legislative processes.

Happily, with collective bargaining about to resume in a new process for several tables of large unions, the government has the opportunity to make a gesture of good faith by committing to repeal provisions of the previous government's Bill C-4 affecting collective bargaining. That would be a start, because there are some seriously questionable aspects of that bill.

In fact, the Public Service Alliance of Canada asked the court to immediately declare that division 20 of Bill C-59, which is part of Bill C-4 of the previous government, is in violation of its members' charter rights because it denied the right of employees to good-faith bargaining by giving the employer the unilateral authority to establish all terms and conditions relating to sick leave, including establishing a short-term disability program, and modifying the existing long-term disability program; it allowed the Treasury Board to unilaterally nullify the terms and conditions in existing collective agreements; and it gave the employer the authority to override many of the provisions of the Public Service Labour Relations Act.

In short, the previous government's Bill C-4 gave the government unbridled authority to designate essential positions. It eliminated the public sector compensation analysis and research functions that had previously allowed the parties at the bargaining table to base wage offers and demands on sound evidence and facts.

The previous Bill C-4 also changed the economic factors that could be considered by a public interest commission or an arbitration board, which placed the employer's interests ahead of its employees and tipped the scales, shamelessly, in the employer's favour.

The NDP has stood with the public service workers and the public sector unions every step of the way, while right after right was stolen from them by the previous government. During and after the last

campaign, the NDP proposed a comprehensive suite of reforms that would help ensure that the relationship between public service employees and government is responsible, reliable, and respectful, now and into the future. These measures include protecting whistleblowers, empowering the integrity commissioner, introducing a code of conduct for ministerial staff, and reining in the growing use of temporary work agencies at the expense of permanent jobs. We remain committed to taking these important steps forward.

However, beyond changing specific policies, what is really needed is a change of attitude. Our public service workers have been neglected, undermined, and abused by brutal cuts and restrictive legislation, under both Liberal and Conservative governments and administrations. It is time we revisit our thinking.

What do any of us know about what is possible until we change the way we have been thinking and try a new road, a road that respects the independence of public servants, that respects the important work they do, and that shows that respect by honestly and fairly coming to the bargaining table? The current government must commit to restoring capacity in the public service so that essential services for Canadians can be delivered.

The Liberal government has said it is a friend of labour, both during the election and in government, but sometimes its words and actions do not line up. Its exclusion of such important issues as staffing, deployment, harassment, and discipline from the collective bargaining process for the RCMP staff is one such disappointment.

Another is Bill C-10, which made the layoffs of 2,600 Air Canada and Aveos workers permanent by allowing Air Canada to ship aircraft maintenance jobs out of the country. The Air Canada Public Participation Act required the air carrier to keep heavy maintenance jobs in Montreal, Mississauga, and Winnipeg. In a unanimous ruling, the Quebec Court of Appeal recognized these obligations. However, instead of respecting the court's ruling, the present government decided to side with Air Canada, at the expense of workers.

● (1645)

I hope the government will stop saying one thing and doing another. I believe it is time it makes good on many election promises. I urge the government to make a commitment to repeal the previous government's Bill C-4.

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Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Saskatoon West for her remarks and for her support for Bill C-5, which we are discussing today. I can assure the member that the Liberal government is committed to restoring a fair and balanced approach to labour relations, and ultimately, to building a strong, robust economy. It is important to have a positive relationship with labour and civil servants, both for moral and equity reasons, and also to accomplish the objectives of the government, which is to build our economy and improve the lot of the middle class.

Bill C-5 is a step, but it does not end there. I want to assure the member that this government is committed to repealing other hurtful legislation and will do so this fall.

In talking about the positive aspects of restoring a culture of respect for and within the public service and the sense of value that the government has in the unions and civil servants as a force for positive change, how does the member see the kind of change that this government has committed to through repealing Bill C-59 and other hurtful legislation helping to attract millennials and the younger workforce into the civil service, to bring their talents and bright ideas to the big challenges, some of which she named, such as climate change and health care, and to provide the services that Canadians depend on?

• (1650)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, it is a first step for the government to tell the world, either new employees or current public servants, that there is a different feeling in the workplace. That the government is looking to respect workers and their skills and treat them fairly and humanely is a very important first step in attracting younger people to public service. I think a lot of young people will want to work for the federal government, because its jobs help people and make a difference in people's lives.

There was one point in my speech where I perhaps sounded like I was sharing some disappointment. In terms of attracting younger workers, the government missed an opportunity. Actually it has not missed the opportunity, it could still do it. The government should take the opportunity to really boldly look at the legislation that the previous government brought in and get rid of all of the anti-union and anti-worker legislation that I spoke of. That type of legislation was telling people that there was a problem where there was not one. It said that too many people were taking sick days and it was costing a lot of money, all of which was not true.

We need to send a different message to young people saying that there is a new boss in town who respects them and wants to be partners with them. I guess I am asking the government to take a very bold step forward and repeal the legislation that I spoke of in my comments.

Ms. Tracey Ramsey (Essex, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the labour critic in the NDP, for her fantastic speech and critique of where the government could potentially be going for working people in Canada. As a union member for 20 years, I know there is nothing more fundamentally important than the right to collectively bargain and the right to strike. Unfortunately, we do not see this being addressed in Bill C-5.

When we look at former Bill C-4, it is a direct threat to collective bargaining rights and the right to strike. Unions such as PSAC, PIPSC, and CAPE recognize this importance. It is the foundation of their ability to protect their rights in the workplace. We need to move collective bargaining back to where it was before the Conservative Harper government created Bill C-4 and essentially took that right away.

Could my hon. colleague give us her thoughts on why the government is not recognizing this and moving immediately to restore free and fair collective bargaining for public service workers in this country?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her comments, her passion, and for sharing what is important to her and our brothers and sisters in the union movement and those who work in our neighbourhoods.

It is important to me that we continue to believe in the government moving forward, being more supportive, and protecting the rights of working men and women. Sooner rather than later the government needs to do more walking than talking when it comes to the anti-worker, anti-union, and health and safety rights that were removed from public sector workers by the previous government. The government needs to talk about those issues and move forward quickly.

If we are going to go through all the things the previous government did to remove rights from working people and unions, we would be here until the cows come home as we continually look at one thing at a time. I would ask the government to look at it holistically, provide that leadership as a new, positive force in labour relations in the government, and move quickly to repeal those that are still on the books.

• (1655)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think all of us in the House today agree that we value the work of our public service workers.

Could my colleague name one small, medium, or large company in her riding that could continue to operate with the kind of sick leave benefit system we have today, which was implemented 70 years ago? Does she not agree that there needs to be positive change to make it more fair for workers in all sectors across Canada?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, a lot of times people create problems where they do not exist. I commented on the parliamentary budget officer's reports around sick leave and the cost to taxpayers. They were not, as the government suggested, out of control and costing us millions and billions. That is just not the case.

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I brought up in my remarks a small, medium-sized business in my community that was attracting young, talented people by offering good benefits and a living wage. Sometimes we assume, because we are trying to create a problem in order to make decisions, such as cutting budgets and what not, which I do not always agree with them. However, we create a problem that really is not there.

We need a public sector that is supported, valued, and given the skills and resources to do a good job, and that includes good benefits. If we really want to see our government, our democracy, and our country grow, to attract people to those jobs, we need to make public sector jobs ones that people would strive for and want to make a career in.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I disagree with the member's assessment. Our government has established a new attitude in its approach with unions. It is one of mutual respect. Whether it is Bill C-4, Bill C-7, the current legislation, Bill C-5, or the Canada Post potential strike and the negotiations around that, I wonder if she could reflect on those initiatives and at the very least acknowledge that in a very short period of time we have come a long way in establishing that new relationship.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Madam Speaker, the government has made a good start, but there has been more talk than action. I will give credit where credit due. I support the bill and I have supported other bills the government has brought forward if they are a step in the right direction. However, I do not want to deal with things on a one-off basis, over and over again, for a long time. I would like the government to be much more bold in its actions.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak today in support of the government's Bill C-5, one of a number of actions that the government has taken to restore the trust and confidence in our collective bargaining system in our country.

The bill goes to the heart of what we, as a government, believe in, which is collaborative, constructive relations with bargaining agents. It is a bill that highlights our belief that a balanced system of labour relations is the best one in a fair democracy.

[*Translation*]

This bill will repeal Division 20 of Bill C-59, passed in 2015.

Bill C-59 was the last omnibus budget bill introduced by the former government. It gave the government the power to circumvent the collective bargaining process and to unilaterally impose a new sick leave regime on public servants.

[*English*]

To be more precise, it gave the Treasury Board the legal authority to do the following in the core public administration: first, establish and modify the terms and conditions of employment related to the sick leave of employees despite the content of the Public Service Labour Relations Act that was negotiated in good faith in bargaining agreements; second, establish a short-term disability plan; and third, modify the long-term disability programs.

In other words, it gave the government the authority to ignore the existing Public Service Labour Relations Act in order to put in place a new sick leave and short-term disability program without the support or agreement of the bargaining agents representing public service employees. That is what we have been speaking about in this debate. It serves to undermine the good faith that government needs to earn in its bargaining with its public servants and their representatives.

• (1700)

[*Translation*]

As members may know, the Public Service Labour Relations Act was initially passed in 1967 to give public servants the right to unionize and to negotiate collective agreements.

It is vital that the parties work collaboratively and that the ability of the public service to serve and to protect the government be enhanced. That is obvious.

Bill C-59 sought to give the government the power to unilaterally impose a short-term disability plan if an agreement was not reached.

Unilateral measures are not collaborative measures. They do not foster good will or respect.

[*English*]

That is why we objected to these measures when they were introduced, and that is why we are here today repealing the legislation tabled by the previous government.

Federal employees are Canadians like us, who, each and every time they come to work, do so in service to Canada and Canadians, with the goal of improving or protecting the lives of their fellow citizens. They are the people who protect the integrity of our ecosystems by collecting the data and science that is needed to make the decisions, the people who issue our passports when we travel, who inspect high-risk foreign vehicles to ensure our ports stay safe and our waters clean, who work in the local post office, who ensure the safety of our food and the security of our borders.

[*Translation*]

However, in the past decade, a good number of fundamental labour rights that were hard won by workers and unions have been rolled back.

We need only look at Bill C-377 and Bill C-525, which make union certification more difficult and decertification easier, and which would require unions to comply with demanding requirements for financial reporting.

These bills were passed without the usual consultation of employer, union and government when labour relations legislation is amended.

[*English*]

These are some of the measures the members opposite have been speaking about that we are committed to repealing.

Government Orders

The previous government did not follow the negotiation process and made it much more difficult for unions and employers to bargain collectively in good faith and work collaboratively in the interest of Canadians. In contrast, we believe in negotiations to achieve settlements that are both fair for public servants and for taxpayers. Threatening bargaining agents through a bill is not a basis for constructive negotiations.

[*Translation*]

We started by introducing a bill to repeal Bill C-377. That bill created unnecessary red tape for unions, requiring them to submit detailed financial information to the Canada Revenue Agency, including on non-labour relations activities. We also introduced legislation to repeal Bill C-525, which made it more difficult for employees to organize and negotiate collective agreements.

The President of the Treasury Board also committed to repealing the unfavourable provisions of Bill C-4, another omnibus budget bill passed in 2013, which sought to limit the ability of unions to represent their employees.

These are the important measures we have taken to restore fairness and balance in Canada's labour laws.

[*English*]

Let me sum up our responsible reasons for introducing Bill C-5. The bill would repeal the law that gives the government the power to unilaterally impose a new sick leave system on federal employees without collaboration or consultation.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, we committed to restoring fair and balanced labour legislation that recognizes the important role of unions in Canada.

We respect the collective bargaining process and we will bargain in good faith. We will work to negotiate collective agreements that are fair and reasonable for both public service employees and Canadians.

We want to restore balance, so that neither the employer, who represents the public, nor the union, which bargains for employees, has an unfair advantage in labour negotiations.

[*English*]

That is the system that best serves a just society. That is the system that will attract young millennials into our public service. That is the system in which we all exercise our responsibilities to ourselves, our communities, and to others. That is the system that best serves Canadians.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to clarify a statement that my hon. colleague made earlier. She referred to “some useless measures” that were implemented by the previous government and then she went on to talk about measures such as giving union members the right to know how their union dues were being spent. In addition to that, she referred to the right of union members to have a secret ballot when they voted. To me, the secret ballot is one of the hallmarks of democracy.

I wonder what the member opposes in terms of creating an environment of democracy for our union members that is similar to what enables each one of us to serve here in this Parliament.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question by the member opposite, who was part of a government that did not see the value that workers bring to the table and the importance of unions that look after and champion workers across the country.

What his government did is buried in omnibus budget bills, critical pieces of legislation that reduce or undermine the fair power and opportunities of unions to bargain on behalf of government employees.

In terms of the specific point the member mentioned, the secret ballot, his government forced the secret ballot to be the only option by passing a law that took off the table other options that may be more appropriate in certain circumstances. The board was not able to have a choice. It was a matter of one option being shoved down their throats.

With new leadership in his party, I would really invite the member to join us in thinking about how we can have a positive, constructive collective bargaining atmosphere. Join the President of the Treasury Board in this effort to change the atmosphere and have a success rather than having the unions feel they have to walk out and not participate, particularly as so many things were done to undermine the rights of their members through these omnibus bills.

Join us. The member now has new leadership. He is now no longer obligated to participate in that kind of divisive, hurtful, and anti-worker change that was brought in by the previous government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this talk about new approaches, but they have to walk the talk, of course, as one of my colleagues said.

What worries us is that, even if the government changes the law, the fact remains that the negotiator has not changed and the same offer may make its way back to the table. Ultimately, even if what the government says sounds good, can it truly guarantee that there will actually be an offer that is in keeping with its purported newfound respect for workers?

I like the expression “lip service”. It is all well and good for the federal government to say it respects workers, but if it presents public servants with an offer that does not reflect that respect, we are back to square one regardless of the legislation before us.

Can the parliamentary secretary guarantee that the forthcoming offer will truly reflect this new intention to negotiate in good faith and respect workers' rights and interests?

Government Orders

● (1710)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, the work we are doing reflects the good faith of the bargaining process. We remain committed to working with the unions to reach agreements that are fair and reasonable, both for employees and for all Canadians. However, I would like to add that negotiations between the employer and public service bargaining agents are currently under way. We will not discuss the details of those negotiations anywhere but at the bargaining table.

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to begin by commending the parliamentary secretary. I have known the hon. member for quite a long time, since I was a federal minister and she was a provincial minister in B.C. We have worked together over the years. She has a lot of experience on key files of government. In her work, both provincially and federally, she has demonstrated great regard for our public servants.

The hon. member has referred to the importance of attracting millennials to our public service. One of the most important issues to millennials is the environment and Canada's response to climate change. One of the areas in which we can contribute to the efforts against climate change is what we do as a government in greening up government operations.

The hon. member, as parliamentary secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, is helping to lead the charge within our government on the greening of government. I would like her to reflect on some of her ideas and some of what we are looking forward to doing as a government to lead as a national government in the fight against climate change within our country and globally.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the President of the Treasury Board for shining a spotlight on the critical nature of the challenges facing this country and our government.

Climate change is a global challenge and our government is stepping up to do its share. To do that we need the civil service, the scientists, and the members who are assisting with policy. We need the broad civil service to be on board and excited. I can assure the president that the clear commitment of our government to acting on climate change is very motivating to the civil service.

I recently attended a consultation with a hundred civil servants, including a panel on which there was an environmental leader. The purpose of the consultation was to allow the civil service to consult with the public and groups that represent the public, something they had not been asked to do for 10 years. How demoralizing is it when one has a personal conviction that something is important, but instead is just asked to do what one is told and not consult with the public? This whole event was about the civil service relearning how to consult the public.

It was very exciting and motivating for the young people in the room that they now had a government with leadership. They have a President of the Treasury Board who is committed not just to having a renewed public service, but also a public service with a renewed ability to do the job that Canadians need it to do.

● (1715)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Speaker, I want to follow up my colleague's statements about the ineffectiveness of a secret ballot and its undermining of workers' rights. She referred to possible more appropriate methods than a secret ballot. Could she outline what these more appropriate methods of electing their leaders could be than a secret ballot?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member giving me another opportunity to invite him to have a different approach. As I said, he was part of a leadership that had very little respect for unions and took many actions unilaterally changing the ground rules of collective bargaining.

As the member is well aware, the secret ballot remains an option. The government is not eliminating that option. It was his government that narrowed it down to a single option for collective bargaining. The Conservatives' own secret studies were put on a shelf and not publicized, studies that showed that a secret ballot would skew collective bargaining against civil servants and their representatives.

It is a new era and new opportunity to have a positive tone in negotiations with civil servants. It is one in which we show our respect for the job they do and our understanding of how critical they are to accomplishing the objectives of economic growth, a stable middle class, and making sure that the environment and economy go hand in hand.

Join us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to talk to this particular bill, because labour legislation is not new to me. When I was first elected as a parliamentarian back in 1988, some of the most controversial pieces of legislation that we debated, with the possible exception of the Meech Lake constitutional reform package, was labour legislation, and the final offer selection in particular. I have a little bit of experience that I would like to share with the House and maybe give a different perspective on that.

First, I would like to acknowledge that we have seen a change in attitude toward labour and management, and the importance of having the freedom of collective bargaining and so forth. We have seen it right from the Prime Minister's Office and in the speech by the President of the Treasury Board and the comments by the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board on the public service.

I think it is very important that we recognize that our government wants to promote harmony and a better way of dealing with Canada's public service, and not only for our public service but also to encourage that same sort of goodwill and bargaining process even in the private sector, where we can carry some influence.

In my earlier question to the President of the Treasury Board about the importance of Canada's civil service overall, I referred to the perception of our civil service that goes far beyond the borders of Canada.

Government Orders

I have had the good opportunity, as I know many members have, to travel and meet politicians and bureaucrats abroad. They often cite Canada for the type of leadership we have provided and look to the professionalism of our civil servants. We often get groups from different levels of government from all around the world coming to Canada to get a better understanding of our system. I believe that is because of the fine work that our civil servants, thousands strong, perform day in and day out in providing a wide spectrum of services to all Canadians. I think we should all take immense pride in just how professional our civil service is and realize that it is not only recognized within Canada but also far beyond our borders.

I started by commenting on my experience. I have witnessed over the years that labour legislation issues are used as political fodder. I remember back in 1988 when we had a change in government in Manitoba, from the NDP administration of Howard Pawley to the Progressive Conservatives of Gary Filmon. The first thing on his agenda was to repeal what they called “final offer selection”. Final offer selection was widely respected and accepted by both the private and public sectors as a positive change to the labour laws in the province of Manitoba—but yes, it could have used some modification. The Conservatives at the time were determined to get rid of the legislation. They had no room whatsoever to accept the legislation. They made it very clear when they were in opposition that they would repeal it. To them it was one of those wedge issues.

It was an interesting debate that took place, and I say this because as we get into the discussions on Bill C-5, that is really what the bill is doing: it is rectifying some problems from the previous government. Indeed, I witnessed in committee a government that was determined not to improve legislation or the law, but rather to fulfill a political desire based, I would suggest, on a wedge issue.

• (1720)

We sat in committees until 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning for endless presentations, and so forth, and ultimately the Liberal caucus at the time proposed a series of amendments. If the amendments had passed, ultimately the final offer selection would have remained in the province of Manitoba. We had support from both labour and management.

At the time, it was a minority situation, and unfortunately, the New Democrats and the Conservatives chose to defeat the amendments, choosing, in particular with the New Democrats, to kill final offer selection as opposed to saving it and, ultimately, I would have argued, improving it.

Why do I say that? When I look at the number of pieces of labour legislation that we have before us, there are a few thoughts that come to mind. One of them is with respect to a private member's bill that is being brought forward. That private member's bill is being sponsored by the New Democratic Party. It is a bill that I would encourage members not to support as it proposes anti-scab legislation. I remember that legislation when it was being talked about in the province of Manitoba. The NDP members said no, they did not want—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member for Beloeil—Chambly has a point of order.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Madam Speaker, there seems to be a lot of flexibility here on the issue of relevance. The member is talking about the excellent bill sponsored by my colleague from Jonquière, but I do not think that is the bill currently before the House. I think he is probably more proud than that of his government's bill, so he should stick to that subject.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): As the member mentioned, there is a lot of flexibility in these discussions. Accordingly, his intervention is not really a point of order, but rather part of the debate. I therefore encourage the member to rise and ask a question, if he so desires, during the question period on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is absolutely relevant and if the member stays tuned, he will find out why it is so relevant.

The legislation members are proposing, the opposite of this legislation, is trying to change ideas that came forward from the Conservative Harper government, that ultimately threw labour relations off balance. This is exactly what the New Democrats are proposing to do in the private member's bill. Like the Conservatives, they did not do their homework with respect to that private member's bill. There is a process which all of us should actually respect.

New Democrats would agree with me on the point that the labour legislation that the government has brought in, in many ways is repealing legislation that the Conservatives brought forward. We made reference, for example, to former private members' bills C-377 and C-525. Those were bills that, I would argue, were brought through the back door of the House of Commons through private member's where there was no due process, no real consultation that had taken place, but it met a political agenda. It was not sensitive in terms of the labour movement, in particular, but many different stakeholders were not properly or adequately surveyed and the question was not put to them.

It is the same thing with regard to both political parties. I believe we witnessed a new attitude toward the way in which government is treating labour laws and Canada's public service. All one needs to do is to take a look at some of the things we have done in a relatively short period of time.

Today we are talking about Bill C-5, which is a piece of legislation that would deal with a change that the former Conservative government brought in, in the form of an omnibus budget bill, where it changed sick leave requirements. There were no consultations. It was the government's position and it was interfering. It upset a great number of people.

Private Members' Business

When we were in opposition, we cited the reasons why we had a difficult time, let alone that the change was packaged in a budget bill. We believed, at the time, that it needed to be changed and voila, today we have Bill C-5. It is rectifying a mistake made by the Conservatives. I have made reference to the two private members' bills which dealt with issues such as the certification and other issues related to public disclosure. Again, we witnessed no consultation that actually had taken place. We had Bill C-4 and Bill C-7 brought in by this government in order to balance the scale.

I believe that this government has successfully portrayed that it is not only a government that wants to see a different attitude but has been very effective at implementing it. We hope things continue to go well with regard to Canada Post. I remember talking to postal carriers with respect to the former government, and saw an attitude of distrust in the government of the day in terms of having an arm's-length approach. That government was prepared to take certain actions even if it meant going against Canada Post workers. Our government brought forward legislation like Bill C-4 and Bill C-7 to deal with the issues of our RCMP, and allow collective bargaining in order to allow the RCMP to become unionized.

• (1725)

These are all very strong, positive measures that have been taken in a relatively short period of time. The morale of our civil servants is so very important. That is one of the reasons we are seeing that new shift in attitude, and we will see dividends coming from that.

I had an interesting discussion not that long ago with a constituent who was reflecting about how the morale is, in fact, changing within our civil service. They look to Bill C-5.

I see you are trying to stand up, Madam Speaker. I believe I will be allowed to continue when the debate next continues.

• (1730)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The member will have six-and-a-half minutes remaining in his speech, as well as 10 minutes of questions and comments.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS

The House resumed from June 15, consideration of the motion.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Friday, June 17, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 43 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

The Speaker: I am going to ask the hon. members for Richmond Hill and Calgary Skyview, one at a time, to indicate how they wish to vote because they appear to have voted both ways.

The hon. member for Richmond Hill.

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Mr. Speaker, I apologize for the confusion and would like to clarify that my vote for Motion No. 43 is nay.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Skyview.

Mr. Darshan Singh Kang: Mr. Speaker, I also apologize and want to clarify that my vote was nay for Motion No. 43.

• (1815)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 105)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Ambrose
Arnold
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Brassard
Calkins
Chong
Clement
Deltell
Doherty
Finley
Généreux
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Kelly
Kent
Kmiec
Lebel
Lobb
MacKenzie
McColeman
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paul-Hus
Raitt
Ritz
Scheer
Shipley
Sorenson
Strahl
Sweet
Trost
Van Loan
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Wong

Albas
Allison
Anderson
Barlow
Berthold
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boucher
Brown
Carrie
Clarke
Cooper
Diotte
Falk
Gallant
Genius
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kenney
Kitchen
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert
Lukiwski
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Nater
Nuttall
O'Toole
Poilievre
Richards
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Stubbs
Tilson
Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Zimmer— 84

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
Angus
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Beech
Benson
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boudrias
Bratina
Brison
Caesar-Chavannes

Alleslev
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barsalou-Duval
Beaulieu
Bennett
Bittle
Blair
Boissommault
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brousseau
Cannings

Caron
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Choquette
Cormier
Dabrusin
Davies
Dhillon
Donnelly
Dubé
Duclos
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Easter
El-Khoury
Erskine-Smith
Eyolfson
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fortin
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Garrison
Gill
Goodale
Graham
Hajdu
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Jolibois
Jones
Jowhari
Kang
Khera
Lametti
Lapointe
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
McCallum
McDonald
McKay
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)
Monsef
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Ramsey
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rudd
Rusnak
Sajjan
Sangha
Sarai
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Stewart
Tan

Carr
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Christopherson
Cuzner
Damoff
Dhaliwal
Di Iorio
Drouin
Dubourg
Duguid
Dusseault
Dzerowicz
Ehsassi
Ellis
Eyking
Fergus
Fisher
Foote
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Grewal
Hardcastle
Harvey
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Johns
Joly
Jordan
Julian
Khalid
Kwan
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Malcolmson
Marcil
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCrinmon
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Qualtrough
Rankin
Robillard
Rota
Ruimy
Saini
Samson
Sansoucy
Schieffe
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tabbara
Tassi

Thériault
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Virani
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Tootoo
Vandal
Vaughan
Weir
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 210

Private Members' Business

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

SAFE AND REGULATED SPORTS BETTING ACT

The House resumed from June 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-221, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sports betting), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Friday, June 17, 2016, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-221, under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

● (1825)

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

(Division No. 106)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Allison
Arya
Aubin
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaikie
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boudrias
Brassard
Brosseau
Cannings
Carrie
Christopherson
Clement
Damoff
Deltell
Diotte
Dubé
Dusseault
Easter
Erskine-Smith
Fergus
Fisher
Fortin
Garrison
Gerretsen
Gladu
Gourde
Hoback
Hughes
Johns
Julian
Kenney
Khalid
Kmiec
Laverdière
Liepert
Lobb
Lukiwski

Albas
Angus
Ashton
Badawey
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Berthold
Bittle
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boutin-Sweet
Bratina
Brown
Caron
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Di Iorio
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Ellis
Eyolfson
Finley
Fonseca
Fraser (Central Nova)
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Hardcastle
Housefather
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Kelly
Kent
Kitchen
Kwan
Lebel
Lightbound
Longfield
MacGregor

Private Members' Business

MacKenzie	Malcolmson	Philpott	Picard
Marcil	Masse (Windsor West)	Poissant	Qualtrough
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)	Rioux	Robillard
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman	Rodriguez	Rota
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Rudd	Ruimy
Moore	Mulcair	Rusnak	Saini
Nantel	Nater	Sajjan	Samson
Nicholson	Obhrai	Sangha	Sarai
O'Connell	O'Toole	Schiefke	Serré
Ouellette	Paul-Hus	Shanahan	Sheehan
Pauzé	Peterson	ShIPLEY	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Plamondon	Poilievre	Sidhu (Brampton South)	Simms
Quach	Raït	Sohi	Sorenson
Ramsey	Rankin	Spengemann	Strahl
Richards	Ritz	Tabbara	Tan
Sansoucy	Saroya	Tilson	Tootoo
Scheer	Schmale	Trost	Van Kesteren
Sikand	Sopuck	Van Loan	Vandal
Sorbara	Stanton	Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Stewart	Stubbs	Virani	Wagantall
Sweet	Tassi	Warawa	Warkentin
Thériault	Trudel	Whalen	Wilkinson
Vecchio	Watts	Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Waugh	Webber	Wrzesnewsjy	Young
Weir— 133		Zahid	Zimmer— 156

NAYS

Members

Albrecht	Alghabra
Alleslev	Ambrose
Anderson	Arnold
Arseneault	Ayoub
Bagnell	Bains
Baylis	Bennett
Blair	Block
Boissonnault	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Calkins	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Chen	Chong
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Doherty
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Dzerowicz	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Eyking
Falk	Finnigan
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gallant
Genuis	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Harder
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
LeBlanc	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Leslie
Levitt	Lockhart
Long	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Momeau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
Nuttall	Olfiphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Paradis	Petitpas Taylor

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[*English*]

LIFE MEANS LIFE ACT

The House resumed from June 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-229, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts (life sentences), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Friday, June 17 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-229.

● (1835)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 107*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultouf	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Ambrose	Anderson
Arnold	Barlow
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Block	Boucher
Brassard	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Falk	Finley
Gallant	Généreux
Gladu	Godin
Gourde	Harder
Hoback	Jeneroux
Kelly	Kenney
Kent	Kitchen
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb

Lukiwski
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Nater
 Nuttall
 O'Toole
 Poilievre
 Richards
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Stubbs
 Tilson
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Zimmer — 81

MacKenzie
 McColeman
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Nicholson
 Obhrai
 Paul-Hus
 Raitt
 Ritz
 Scheer
 Shipley
 Sorenson
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Trost
 Van Loan
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Wong

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
 Angus
 Arya
 Aubin
 Badawey
 Bains
 Baylis
 Beech
 Benson
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Boudrias
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Choquette
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Davies
 Dhillon
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duclos
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Garrison
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Joly
 Jordan
 Julian
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie

Alleslev
 Arseneault
 Ashton
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Barsalou-Duval
 Beaulieu
 Bennett
 Bittle
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Christopherson
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Drouin
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Dusseault
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fraskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Genuis
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hussien
 Iacono
 Jolibois
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 LeBouthillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt

Private Members' Business

Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Marcil
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 Mathysen
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
 Monsef
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Pauté
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Qualtrough
 Rankin
 Robillard
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saini
 Samson
 Sansoucy
 Schiefke
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Tootoo
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Weir
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskij
 Zahid — 211

Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Maloney
 Masse (Windsor West)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 Mendès
 Mihychuk
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Rioux
 Rodrigue
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

EXCISE ACT, 2001

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-232, An Act to amend the Excise Act, 2001 (spirits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-232, under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

● (1845)

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

*Private Members' Business**(Division No. 108)*

YEAS

Members

Aboutaif
 Albrecht
 Ambrose
 Angus
 Ashton
 Barlow
 Beaulieu
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Block
 Boudrias
 Brassard
 Brown
 Cannings
 Carrie
 Christopherson
 Clement
 Davies
 Diotte
 Donnelly
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Duvall
 Finley
 Fortin
 Gallant
 Généreux
 Gill
 Godin
 Hardcastle
 Hoback
 Jeneroux
 Jolibois
 Julian
 Kenney
 Kitchen
 Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)
 Lebel
 Lobb
 MacGregor
 Malcolmson
 Masse (Windsor West)
 McCauley (Edmonton West)
 McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
 Moore
 Nantel
 Nicholson
 Obhrai
 Ouelletle
 Paupé
 Poilievre
 Raitt
 Rankin
 Rioux
 Sansoucy
 Scheer
 Shipley
 Sorenson
 Stewart
 Stubbs
 Thériault
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vecchio
 Warawa
 Watts
 Webber
 Wong

Albas
 Allison
 Anderson
 Arnold
 Aubin
 Barsalou-Duval
 Benson
 Berthold
 Blaikie
 Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
 Boucher
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brosseau
 Calkins
 Caron
 Choquette
 Clarke
 Cooper
 Deltell
 Doherty
 Dubé
 Dusseault
 Falk
 Fisher
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Garrison
 Genius
 Gladu
 Gourde
 Harder
 Hughes
 Johns
 Jordan
 Kelly
 Kent
 Kwan
 Laverdière
 Liepert
 Lukiwski
 MacKenzie
 Marcil
 Mathysen
 McColeman
 Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
 Mulcair
 Nater
 Nuttall
 O'Toole
 Paul-Hus
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Ramsey
 Richards
 Ritz
 Saroya
 Schmale
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trudel
 Van Loan
 Wagantall
 Warkentin
 Waugh
 Weir
 Zimmer — 136

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
 Arseneault
 Ayoub
 Bagnell
 Baylis

Alleslev
 Arya
 Badawey
 Bains
 Beech

Bennett
 Blair
 Bratina
 Brison
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Cuzner
 Damoff
 Dhillon
 Drouin
 Duclos
 Dzerowicz
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Eyking
 Fergus
 Fonseca
 Fragiskatos
 Fry
 Gerretsen
 Goodale
 Graham
 Hajdu
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hussen
 Iacono
 Jones
 Kang
 Khera
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Leboutillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Maloney
 May (Cambridge)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinity
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendicino
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Morneau
 Murray
 Nault
 Oliphant
 O'Regan
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Poissant
 Robillard
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saini
 Samson
 Sarai
 Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Simms
 Sorbara
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Vandal
 Vaughan
 Whalen
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

Bittle
 Boissonnault
 Breton
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Cormier
 Dabrusin
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Dubourg
 Duguid
 Easter
 El-Khoury
 Erskine-Smith
 Eyolfson
 Finnigan
 Foote
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fuhr
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Grewal
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Hutchings
 Joly
 Jowhari
 Khalid
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 LeBlanc
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacKinnon (Gatineau)
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKay
 Mendès
 Mihychuk

Morrissey
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 Oliver
 Paradis
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Qualtrough
 Rodriguez
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sajjan
 Sangha
 Schiefke
 Shanahan
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Sohi
 Spengemann
 Tan
 Tootoo
 Vandenbeld
 Virani
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid — 156

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being 6:45 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]

CRIMINAL CODE (PASSIVE DETECTION DEVICE)

The House resumed from May 5 consideration of the motion that Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (passive detection device) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I would like to remind hon. members that we are continuing business, and the hon. member for Victoria will be speaking shortly, so if you have anything to say, would you mind either saying it very quietly or maybe just moving into the lobby or to the sides and we can continue with House of Commons business.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Victoria.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to address Bill C-247, a bill that would add ambient air alcohol sensors to the arsenal of tools that our police officers use to detect impaired drivers and to keep our roads safe. All of us in the House have lost far too many friends and others in our communities to impaired driving. As a country we have been losing ground in this fight for over a decade.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving estimates that impaired driving kills three to four Canadians every day. It also injures 175 more each day. That is more than 1,000 Canadians killed each year and more than 60,000 injured. As shocking as these statistics are, I know each of us in the House also knows, in our own communities, at least one story that puts a face on these tragic numbers.

For example, early one morning last April in the greater Victoria area, an impaired driver got behind the wheel of his pickup truck. He was speeding through an intersection when he struck a police cruiser driven by Constable Sarah Beckett. Having joined the RCMP at age 21, Constable Beckett was just 32 when she died last year leaving behind a husband and two young children.

Charges were filed against the driver last week, and I hope that justice will be served. While we know that nothing can make Constable Beckett's young family whole again, we must do everything to prevent the next tragedy, and that means deterring the next impaired driver from getting behind the wheel. Today's bill offers police one more tool with which to do that.

As it stands today in the Criminal Code, officers must have "reasonable grounds to suspect that the person has alcohol in their body" before they can demand a breath sample. That suspicion can be formed in many ways, from the smell of alcohol to slurred speech, or simply by an admission from the driver. The front line officers I have spoken with are good at their job, but they know that impaired drivers still slip through, and the research bears this out.

A 1999 study in the United States found that officers there missed 9 out of 10 drivers in the range from 0.05 to 0.08. That is high enough for roadside penalties in most Canadian provinces. That same study found that officers still missed half of the drivers over the criminal limit of 0.08 blood alcohol content. Detection rates have improved over the last 15 years and I, for one, tend to believe that Canadian police would outscore their American counterparts, but still a 2009 study by our Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights concluded as follows:

—current methods of enforcing the law lead police officers to apprehend only a small percentage of impaired drivers, even at roadside traffic stops designed to detect impaired driving.

One solution proposed by Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and used in other jurisdictions is to provide officers with passive or ambient air alcohol sensors to help them screen for impairment. There are benefits beyond just increasing the detection at roadside checkpoints. As we know from other debates on this issue, the evidence on what makes an effective deterrent is clear.

What deters the next impaired driver, what saves lives is not the fear of a crash or a jail sentence or getting caught, instead it is the perceived risk of being pulled over. The publicity surrounding the introduction of a new tool to detect impairment will no doubt increase that perceived risk of detection, and may make some people think twice before getting behind the wheel after drinking.

The front line officers I have spoken to, in Victoria, Ottawa, and elsewhere, have insights that deserve to be heard by Parliament as we study this bill. Four to five million drivers are stopped each year. Less than 1% of those give breath samples, but each test creates delays for drivers and risks for officers. In the winter, drivers are sometimes asked to exit their vehicle, so that the test can be done inside a police vehicle. Police are rightly concerned about the safety of drivers when these tests occur on the shoulder of a busy road.

● (1850)

In other words, any tool that can increase the detection rate and reduce false positives not only has the potential to deter impaired drivers and save lives but also has the potential to make roadside stops safer and more streamlined for drivers and officers alike. With that in mind, I find it difficult to argue against dedicating time at committee to study this bill in more detail.

There are questions about police resources, questions about the accuracy of these new sensors, and of course, questions about whether the use of this new tool might be challenged under section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These are important questions that deserve further discussion and study. Therefore, I am pleased to support this bill now, in principle, and hope that the appropriate committee will soon be able to give it the study it deserves.

I feel compelled to say, as I did when we debated a related proposal from my hon. colleagues in the Conservative Party, that there is a tremendous need for action on this file on the government side of the House.

Private Members' Business

Successive federal governments increased the penalties for impaired driving offences in 1985, 1999, 2000, and 2008. At first, stiffer penalties sharply reduced the rate of impaired driving offences. However, progress has been stalled since 2000, despite two rounds of increased penalties.

Six years ago, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights completed its study on impaired driving. It showed that in 2006, the latest year for which data was then available, more Canadians were killed by impaired driving than in any year since 1998, and it was the third consecutive annual increase in fatalities.

That report stated as follows:

...impaired driving remains the number one criminal cause of death in Canada...
...despite our collective best efforts and intentions, it is apparent that the problem of impaired driving is worsening in Canada and we are losing ground in our efforts to eliminate the problem.

Those words remain equally true today.

More recent data available to us now shows that the problem continued to worsen after 2009.

Using data up to 2011, Statistics Canada reported this:

The rate of impaired driving increased for the fourth time in five years...and was at its highest point in a decade.

The evidence is clear. We need more than just harsher penalties. We need an approach that is evidence-based and focused on prevention, on saving lives. This means better training and support for our police officers. It means smarter investigative tools so that families are not denied justice by a technicality. It means taking a clear-eyed look at which penalties work and which ones do not. It means collaboration between the federal government and the provinces and territories on public education and best practices, and it means assessing the latest technology to detect drug-impaired driving.

We have been losing ground for a decade in the fight to end impaired driving. We have lost far too many lives in our communities, and we urgently need real action from the federal government. I hope that action is forthcoming.

Let me assure those on the government benches that when their plan is brought to Parliament, they will always find support and help from New Democrats. However, as we await government action on the fight to end impaired driving, I am happy to support further study of this proposal from my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville. I want to thank him for his work on it, and I look forward to seeing the results of committee consultations very soon.

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak in favour of Bill C-247. Impaired driving is an issue that affects all communities.

I am sure all members, on both sides of the House, know of a neighbour, family member, or one of their constituents who has been affected by a tragedy caused by impaired driving.

As I rise and address the House today, I am thinking of the hundreds of stories involving impaired drivers who caused accidents that killed or seriously injured someone in my riding.

I cannot help but support a bill whose aim is to prevent impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel, a bill that recognizes the moral responsibility of drivers when they are facing justice.

It is a complex bill that I believe merits the attention of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, for it is important to take the time to understand all the implications associated with this change to the Criminal Code. This is an important step in putting an end to drunk driving. While the bill may not be perfect in its present form, its objective deserves to be examined in committee.

Under the current legislation, the Criminal Code does not grant the police the authority to obtain bodily samples from drivers unless the police officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that a driver has alcohol in their body. A passive detection device can detect alcohol in the ambient air, which would allow officers to use a non-invasive procedure to test for the presence of alcohol by simply placing the device near the driver's face when he or she is talking or breathing.

● (1900)

[*English*]

I am hopeful that this new method could not only empower police officers to better identify impaired drivers but would also have a deterrent effect and play a major role by reducing the number of drunk drivers that are choosing to take to the wheel night after night despite the laws and deterrents that are already in place.

My riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges is one of the fastest growing ridings in the country in large part because of the thousands of young families choosing to settle in the peaceful and safe environment that it offers. Even so, the roads our children play on, put their basketball nets on, play street hockey on, and use to ride their skateboards and their bicycles are still filled with those who make the decision to take the wheel while under the influence of alcohol. As such, I strongly support the principle behind a bill that would empower police officers to make our streets safer for our children through a non-invasive procedure.

Private Members' Business

This does not only apply to my own community. As Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Youth, I am particularly aware of the shocking number of young victims of road accidents across the country that are caused by drunk drivers. There are far too many unfortunately to recount here today but I can tell the House this. In my own riding I have in mind for example a young jogger who was struck by an alleged drunk driver in the municipality of Hudson in the summer of 2015. The driver of the car was only 23 years old. The victim was in some respects lucky, because she survived. Even though she survived and she shared her story as a warning to other young people, she has had to endure 15 operations to date and could be waiting years before getting the hip replacement that she needs to continue her progress. She currently uses crutches to walk and has since had to abandon her dream of becoming a police officer. The driver of the car is facing multiple criminal charges.

Examples like this show why we need more deterrents. The deterrent effect of the detection device as proposed in Bill C-247 could have prevented this accident, because as long as impaired drivers believe that there is still a chance they will not get caught they will continue to take a chance, get behind the wheel, and risk their own safety and the safety of other drivers and pedestrians.

[Translation]

As a result of a successful public awareness campaign, it is clear that most, if not all, drivers know that it is against the law to drive under the influence of alcohol.

Progress has been made in the past 30 years as a result of better laws, harsher penalties, enforcement measures, and awareness campaigns launched by Éduc'alcool, Operation Red Nose, and the Call 911 campaign run by Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada.

Despite these initiatives, drivers continue to get behind the wheel. In the the Vaudreuil—Soulanges RCM alone, more than 340 drunk driving incidents are reported annually. Every year, between 1,250 and 1,500 people are killed and more than 63,000 people are injured in collisions caused by impaired driving. This means that alcohol and drugs are responsible for 43% of all injuries resulting from motor vehicle accidents.

According to MADD Canada, impaired driving causes almost twice as many deaths as all other homicides combined. Deaths and injuries resulting from impaired driving are even more tragic because they are caused by a crime that is completely preventable. Why do so many drivers drive under the influence of alcohol? That is a good question. They know that they will not be caught.

[English]

Bill C-247 is largely supported by stakeholders across the country, including Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada, which has endorsed Bill C-247, citing the benefits of passive alcohol sensors.

Also, according to the 2009 report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, “although the threshold for suspicion is not high, there is research indicating that many impaired drivers are able to avoid a demand for a breath test when stopped by the police because the officer does not detect the smell of alcohol or symptoms of impairment”. This goes to show that despite the initiatives and the progress achieved in the last decade, the ability for police to use

passive alcohol sensors could have a great impact on reducing the number of alcohol-impaired drivers on our roadways.

Bill C-247 also renames the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular homicide. This change would denote greater moral culpability for the impaired driver. A conviction should reflect the risks that accompany the decision to get behind the wheel, while preserving judicial discretion for judges. Because of this, this bill needs to go to committee. That is why I support the passing of the bill: to place it in the committee's capable hands. I hope everyone can support this. I recognize the need for the committee to assess the practical implications of this change to the law to ensure that the bill achieves its policy goals and to ensure clarity in the Criminal Code.

I believe that an initiative that would increase the safety of our roads through a non-invasive procedure should move forward. I support moving Bill C-247 to committee in order to address the scope of the law and ensure we have not only concrete laws against impaired driving, but also practical and effective ways of implementing those laws.

The adoption of Bill C-247 represents that important step in making our roads safer for our communities. This is an objective that every person in the House should be behind and should make a priority.

• (1905)

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, my colleague and my friend, for his advocacy in the community and his advocacy around community safety and road safety.

We have come a long way in Canada since 1921. That is when Canada first recognized impaired driving as a criminal act. Despite a sizable drop in impaired driving rates since the mid-1980s, impaired driving is still the leading cause of criminal death in Canada. Impaired driving continues to be a problem for governments and for communities and that is why we have a multi-pronged approach that has brought forward our justice system, community organizations, and the general public.

Through education, awareness, enforcement, and penalties, we have made great strides. The number of impairment incidents from 1985 have dropped significantly, by over 50%. In 1985 there were approximately 600 incidents per 100,000 of population. They dropped to less than 300 impairment incidents per 100,000 twenty years later. However, today, what we are seeing is that the rate of incidents is starting to grow. We need to have a new approach. It has to come from community organizations such as MADD, and I am glad that it is supporting this bill, Bill C-247, the passive detection device bill. These deterrents have been able to bring the rates down, and now it is up to us as a government to enact legislation that will help continue that trend.

Private Members' Business

The alarming fact, though, is that to see those rates start to decline we need to do something. We have some evidence that rates are starting to climb, especially with young women, and many of those rates continue to be in our 20- to 35-year-old grouping.

Young people have come a long way. Today, I know here in Ontario we have graduated licences so that as drivers become better drivers and have more education, they are able to make better judgment calls. One thing, though, for young people or anybody who has been out drinking or had a drink or two and who may make the poor judgment of getting behind the wheel, is the deterrent factor. It is knowing when they go out that there may be a RIDE program in place.

In the RIDE program, when drivers are pulled over the police officer will ask where they have been and whether they have had a drink or two. Many people have been to events and they say they will just take some breath mints or ensure they just use some freshener in the car to disguise the smell of alcohol. However, the passive detection device would make it much easier for police to detect whether there is alcohol in the car and be able to then move forward to doing a Breathalyzer test or to look for impairment. It will help the police with their jobs, but it is also a deterrent. When that awareness is there, those people out having a drink are able to make the right decision and not get behind the wheel of a car and drive.

The devastation has just been terrible. I know that many of us in our communities have spoken with families and friends and others who have been affected by people who have been seriously injured or lost his or her life in a car crash. This is just devastating. We have to think about it. Young people have to know how they can be affected by jail time, the heavy fines, a suspended licence, having an ignition interlock device put on their cars—all of these things. However, none of that really matters to the life that they will have to lead going forward if they have caused a serious injury or death, knowing that they were the cause.

I am so glad that the hon. member has brought forward the proposal of renaming the offence from “impaired driving causing death” to “vehicular homicide as a result of impairment”.

●(1910)

The average car weighs about 4,000 pounds. That is a weapon. It is four thousand pounds on the road, travelling at 50, 60, 120, or 150 kilometres an hour. When that hits a person, it is a weapon. That is homicide. That will create a great deal of devastation in the community for so many people, so many families. I am so glad the member would like to have the name changed through his bill, Bill C-247. His advocacy will make a real difference in our country.

As I said, we have a commendable record. We have seen those rates drop. Now they have plateaued and have started to go up. We need a renewed initiative. Bill C-247 will help as a deterrent to bring those rates back down even more, because one death or one serious injury is just one too many.

I will be supporting Bill C-247. I want to see it go to committee so we can have a robust discussion and get into the meat of it so that we can do much better for our communities.

Again, I want to commend the member for all his hard work and advocacy for what it will mean for our communities, not only today but for many years to come.

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I would like to thank my colleagues for their contributions to the discussion and their thoughtful insights.

Before discussing the bill, I would like to mention the human aspect.

In 2015, during the campaign, I heard that a teacher in my riding had lost his life at the hands of an impaired driver. Shortly after being elected, a constituent of mine asked me to do something about this.

The second part of the bill is called Kassandra's law and was formerly introduced by my colleague, the member for Langley—Aldergrove.

Unfortunately, Kassandra, too, lost her life at the hands of an impaired driver. I had the pleasure of going to British Columbia and meeting Kassandra's parents. They are working with Families for Justice. They have collected over 100,000 manual signatures in support of ending drinking and driving.

As we can see, this is a real concern of Canadians across the country.

To speak to the first part of the bill, on the passive alcohol sensor, for the most part, this device is already at the disposal of peace officers. It is a device they have. It can be used in conjunction with their sensors or as a complete alternative, but it will help establish the reasonable grounds we need at a higher accuracy rate, especially when it comes to the RIDE program.

The second part of the bill is called Kassandra's law. It is asking that the Criminal Code be amended so that the offence of impaired driving causing death is called vehicular homicide as a result of impairment.

This may seem innocuous, but I believe it sends a strong message that parliamentarians believe that we should call this what it is, which is homicide. That is why I implore all parliamentarians to support the bill, because we know that the criminal offence of impaired driving is still the leading cause of criminal death in Canada.

Once again, I would like to thank my colleagues. I look forward to any suggestions the committee may have.

●(1915)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota) Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 28, 2016, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be following up in the House today on the question I asked during the previous Parliament about a complaint by, among others, my former colleague from Acadie—Bathurst, Yvon Godin, who worked very hard for his constituents and for Acadia and the Francophonie as a whole.

There were some key moments in people's busy lives when they had trouble getting service in French from the RCMP outside Parliament. There were complaints, and not just from Mr. Godin. Private citizens also spoke up, and the Commissioner produced a report.

According to the report, the complaint was admissible, and the RCMP had failed to fulfill its obligations under the Official Languages Act. Corrective action was called for because the RCMP did not fully comply with part IV of the Official Languages Act, communications with and services to the public.

Consequently, the commissioner called for improvements, insisting on two key recommendations. The first recommendation was that the RCMP draft and implement a procedure that requires biannual reminders of official language obligations to be made to all officers assigned to Parliament Hill security so that they understand the obligations set out in part IV of the act. It was simply a reminder for all officers that they have obligations and that they must respect these obligations. It is very simple, but very important. Reminders are always a good thing.

The second recommendation was extremely important. The RCMP was to establish a monitoring mechanism available at all times on Parliament Hill by August 31, 2016. The deadline has passed. This is the first week the House of Commons has sat after the recess. I am pleased to be back and to ask my colleague, who is here today, the question about official languages. Can he confirm that a

Adjournment Proceedings

monitoring mechanism that is available at all times on Parliament Hill was established by August 31, 2016?

I am pleased to see that the parliamentary secretary responsible for official languages is here with us this evening. As such, maybe he can tell us about this oversight mechanism, what it refers to, and how we can access it. Members of the public who lodged this complaint want to be sure that they can receive services in both official languages from the RCMP and our security officers when they come to the House of Commons or take a stroll on the Hill. It is also extremely important for the members, for the people who work on the Hill, and for all those who provide this service to the public.

I hope that we will get an answer soon. I wrote a letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons to get an update on this matter. I was told there would be news soon.

As such, I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell me whether any information on this oversight mechanism has been made public and whether he can confirm that the service is now available at all times on Parliament Hill in both official languages.

• (1920)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we continue, I would remind hon. members that they are not to allude to the presence or absence of anyone in the House. I know that sometimes this happens rather quickly, but it is just a reminder. I know that after a summer away we are still getting back on track.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to once again be here in the House for this session.

I thank the member for Drummond for his question.

We are aware of the complaints about the service offered by RCMP officers on Parliament Hill. Those complaints have been brought to our attention and we are taking them very seriously.

We have also taken note of the preliminary report of the Commissioner of Official Languages and the two recommendations he made in that regard. I would like to assure my colleagues that we will pay due attention to this matter.

[*English*]

Our government believes in encouraging and promoting the use of two official languages throughout Canadian society, particularly in our federal institutions, agencies, and departments. It is important to remember that official languages affect all federal institutions. The Government of Canada is committed to mobilizing all federal departments and agencies to give our official languages the importance they require.

Let me assure the member opposite from Drummond and all members of the House that respecting official languages and ensuring the safety of Canadians on Parliament Hill is a priority for our government.

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[Translation]

We firmly believe that it is important to provide federal services in both official languages across the country. We will work with the federal departments and agencies, including the RCMP, to ensure that our institutions can communicate with Canadians in the official language of their choice.

With regard to questions and issues related to the compliance of federal services with the Official Languages Act, we are working closely with the President of the Treasury Board to ensure that all federal services are delivered in compliance with the Official Languages Act.

The Government of Canada promised to go further and promote French and English through linguistic duality-themed programs and activities.

Right now, we are also focusing on preparing, by 2020, new multi-year official languages action plans that will be in effect until 2023. We are proud to report that we have already held 20 roundtables across the country this summer. We will hold two additional roundtables and one with all the leaders in the country.

Three thousand people answered our official languages questionnaire on the Government of Canada website. That is 50% increase in participation compared to last time.

We are in the process of building a serious pan-governmental approach, a real government action plan on official languages, and the services offered to people on Parliament Hill are part of that.

We take our official languages responsibilities very seriously. We are working hard to ensure that all federal departments and agencies comply with the act.

• (1925)

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his response.

I would like to thank him for his hard work related to filling the official languages commissioner position. Unfortunately, the current official languages commissioner will be leaving the position soon, and we must not be without an official languages commissioner for any period of time. May I reiterate the importance of beginning the search for someone to fill this upcoming vacancy as soon as possible. I know he is working very hard on it, but he will have to work even harder.

I asked him a very simple question. One of the recommendations was for a monitoring mechanism. I looked everywhere yesterday and today, but I found nothing about a monitoring mechanism, which should have been in place as of August 31. Maybe I did not search thoroughly enough.

I would like the parliamentary secretary to tell me where that monitoring mechanism is and make it public. It should be in keeping with the Commissioner of Official Languages' recommendation.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his second question.

Our government believes in the importance of promoting and encouraging the use of the official languages in Canadian society.

Canadian Heritage works closely with the President of the Treasury Board on matters and issues pertaining to compliance of federal services with the Official Languages Act to ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to guarantee full compliance with the law.

We agree with the Commissioner of Official Languages who said, "The time it takes to provide service in the language of the minority and in the language of the majority must be comparable in order to provide service of equal quality for the members of both official language communities."

[English]

We expect that both the RCMP and the Parliamentary Protective Service meet these recommendations. Bilingualism is a fundamental element of our Canadian identity, and our government is proud to promote both official languages.

[Translation]

Our government must appoint a new commissioner of official languages, and we are working on that.

[English]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on April 15, I asked the government to prioritize the issues of indigenous youth and mental health, two separate but related issues. On May 28, the government announced a renewed focus on indigenous policy, but sadly, it was too late for many. The urgent need from last spring to address these issues continues. The time has come for the government to stop reacting to issues and instead start addressing them proactively.

I think we can all agree that suicide is a last resort. It is the final cry of someone who feels hopeless. This begs the question of why an individual would feel hopeless about their future in a place as wonderful and full of opportunity as Canada.

This January the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the federal government had been discriminating against aboriginal children by providing them with inadequate access to services. It called for immediate relief, but the government has chosen to continue to study the issues rather than to act immediately. It is situations like these that feed a narrative of hopelessness in indigenous communities, as the federal government actively chooses to ignore its obligations and promises.

Just last week the tribunal issued a second compliance order to force the government to take immediate action and rectify the funding shortfalls to ensure that first nations children, who primarily live on reserve, have access to public services on the same terms as all Canadian children.

When will the government recognize and dismantle the systemic discrimination embedded in our country's policies toward aboriginal peoples?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mental health is too often spoken about in a manner that homogenizes an individual's experiences. The common discourse places people in subgroups with labels, removing agency from the way they are feeling. Aboriginal peoples are often subjected to the same treatment. The experiences of one group become generalized into the national narrative as the experiences of all aboriginal peoples or communities.

This past March, three Saskatchewan first nations declared a state of emergency after four people died in one day. Three of the deaths were attributed to prescription drug overdoses. Ted Quewezance, senate chair with the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, said in response to this tragedy that "A normal person goes to about seven to 10 funerals in his lifetime, and you know what? I've been to 400 funerals in my three communities".

The government's passivity in addressing the state of mental health in aboriginal communities is simply unacceptable. While its promise of more permanent health care workers for communities identified as high risk does address the immediate concerns, it is a Band-Aid solution that fails to address the root of addiction and mental health issues.

Ryan Jimmy of Saskatoon recognizes the intersectionalities that aboriginal people are battling while trying to receive proper access to service. He has created a hub at the University of Saskatchewan consisting solely of aboriginal focused research. It is aimed at the experiences of depression, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder, with an explicit acknowledgement of the long-term affects of residential schools and the sixties scoop on aboriginal people today.

When will we see the government taking an active stance and creating groundbreaking, long-term, sustainable programs, like the hub at the University of Saskatchewan, instead of the same old solutions that maintain the status quo?

With meaningful investments and the simple fulfillment of our obligations to indigenous communities, I hope my community and our country will see fewer funerals of our youth and more high school graduations.

There are steps that the government can take immediately. Will the government commit now to working with indigenous communities and their agencies to use the money where it can make the most difference?

• (1930)

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous peoples to make progress on the issues that they have identified as being more important to them, including health and mental wellness.

Earlier this summer, the Minister of Health met with the Assembly of First Nations Youth Council to discuss life promotion. This was a great opportunity to hear from first nations youth on their holistic views about what would make a difference in their life.

They have published a report entitled "Calls to Action on Life Promotion for First Nations Communities", which provides a path

that clearly shows health services as important, but also that many other dimensions are critical if we want to achieve wellness.

Among the things asked by the Assembly of First Nations Youth Council are investments in culturally-safe prevention, health promotion, and mental health treatment services. This is what we have initiated this summer with the announcement of a number of interim mental well ness measures.

The minister also attended the launch of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami's "National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy" in Kuujuaq. This strategy was developed by Inuit partners, which proposes a wide range of culturally and evidence-based interventions. This was an opportunity to confirm federal support to the strategy at the same time that it was made public. This is partnership.

In response to mental health and suicide crises in some communities, the Government of Canada announced an investment of \$69 million over the next three years for immediate interim measures to support first nations and Inuit communities.

Funding is being used to increase the number of mental wellness teams in communities from 11 to 43, and to support 4 mental health crisis intervention teams in regions located in Ontario, Manitoba and Nunavut, which were identified as having the greatest need. I am pleased to say that the work is under way with partners to enhance services available and support through the communities.

These measures also provide \$9 million in funding for Inuit-specific approaches to mental wellness to address the unique needs of this population and to establish a culturally safe, 24-hour crisis support line.

These are also complementary to the range of health programs and services funded and supported by Health Canada. The department is investing approximately \$2.7 billion in first nations and Inuit health. Of this amount, we are investing over \$300 million in mental wellness programs and services, with the goal of providing first nations and Inuit individuals and communities with culturally appropriate mental wellness services and supports that are responsive to their needs.

This includes \$13.5 million annually for the national aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy, which supports 138 community-based suicide prevention projects in first nations and Inuit communities.

Our government is also investing an additional \$8.4 billion over the next five years to improve socio-economic conditions of indigenous peoples and their communities, as highlighted in budget 2016.

Our government remains committed to working with indigenous leaders to ensure we have strategies that are grounded in culture, based on evidence, and where first nations and Inuit play a central role in defining the goals, planning the approach and managing the services.

• (1935)

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for outlining the investment and the leadership the federal government making. I encourage that to continue. It sounds like large numbers of investments, but I want to remind her, it is a big issue.

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Suicide rates are five to seven times higher for first nations youth than for non-aboriginal youth. An indigenous child born in Saskatchewan is 13 times more likely to end up in care. Only a third of these kids will graduate high school. They will be six times more likely to be murdered than the national average.

No province has a higher on-reserve HIV rate. In fact, some Saskatchewan first nations have HIV rates equal to African nations, and there are calls to declare a state of emergency.

There is a mental health crisis, and I hear my colleague echoing that they agree, faced by our indigenous youth and the government's response needs to equal the scope of crisis I have outlined.

Canada's future and our children deserve no less.

Ms. Kamal Khera: Mr. Speaker, providing mental health services is a shared undertaking by first nations and Inuit communities, and federal-provincial-territorial governments.

For its part, Health Canada is supporting culturally appropriate mental wellness programs and services that are responsive to the needs of first nations and Inuit individuals and communities.

Our government also recognizes that investing in the early years of a child's life leads to greatly improved long-term health outcomes. To this end, Health Canada is investing over \$102 million this year in programs and services that support healthy pregnancies and births, and healthy child development for first nations and Inuit.

Moving forward, we will look at ways to strengthen mental wellness programming with our partners toward more coordinated and effective approaches to better meet community-specific needs. I look forward to working with my colleague opposite in making that happen.

[*Translation*]

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

[*English*]

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

(The House adjourned at 7:38 p.m.)

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