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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 30, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)

[*English*]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

The House resumed from September 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to rise today in support of Bill C-22, an act to establish the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians.

The proposed legislation fulfills a key campaign promise of the 2015 election, and represents a thoughtful and long overdue modernization of Canada's security framework.

Allow me to begin by referring to the Prime Minister's mandate letter to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, which unambiguously referenced the overarching goal of "keeping Canadians safe". It reads:

This goal must be pursued while protecting the rights of Canadians, and with an appreciation that threats to public security arise from many sources, including natural disasters, inadequate regulations, crime, terrorism, weather-related emergencies, and public health emergencies.

What we are discussing here today is at the intersection of defence policy, foreign policy, and national security. The rationale behind this mandate is self-evident. We live in a world of new, ever-evolving, and unprecedented security threats. Just this past March, a lone wolf attack on a Canadian Forces recruitment centre in my riding of Willowdale underscored this point. While I am grateful for the incredible bravery and professionalism the RCMP and others displayed in responding to the attack, the fact remains we are largely operating in a brave new world where groups and individuals can pose serious challenges to our safety and security.

Meeting these challenges, while maintaining our respect for the cherished rights and freedoms of Canadians, requires a robust and

responsible parliamentary framework. While the previous government curiously failed to recognize this, something I can assure members I heard repeatedly on doorsteps, it is my belief that Bill C-22 rectifies the obvious gaps within our existing security framework, namely, by establishing a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians. This committee would be provided extraordinary access to national security information and an unprecedented ability to scrutinize federal departments and operations. In doing so, Bill C-22 rejects the notion that we must choose between prioritizing security concerns on the one hand and respecting civil and charter rights on the other. Rather, it establishes a framework that balances both.

The issue of accountability boils down to this. Does Canada have the institutions it needs to protect the safety of Canadians, while at the same time safeguarding our rights and freedoms? Bill C-22 ensures that we can answer that question in the affirmative.

The concept of establishing a parliamentary security oversight committee is hardly novel. The idea can be traced as far back as the 1981 McDonald commission report, while more recent efforts include a 2003 Auditor General's report, recommendations from the 2004 Interim Committee of Parliamentarians on National Security, the 2005 national security committee of parliamentarians act, a 2009 recommendation from the House of Commons public safety committee, a 2011 Senate report, and private members' bills introduced in 2007, 2009, 2013, and 2014, most recently by my Liberal colleagues from Malpeque and Vancouver Quadra.

Over the past decade, these efforts were repeatedly obstructed and denied by the previous Conservative government, despite widespread support amongst experts, stakeholders, academics, non-governmental organizations, and the Canadian public. While there is no making up for this lost decade, I am proud to say that Bill C-22 finally provides Canadians with a modern and meaningful security oversight mechanism.

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In keeping with our government's commitment to evidence-based decision-making, Bill C-22 notably aligns Canada's security regime with accepted international best practices. As colleagues before me have highlighted, Canada is currently the only member of the Five Eyes alliance lacking a security oversight committee that grants sitting legislators access to confidential national security information. In an era in which security threats are increasingly global and interdependent, Canada cannot afford to be an outlier on this issue. This absence of oversight has limited the ability of parliamentarians to examine national security issues in depth. The previous government argued that there was no need for parliamentarians to have access to confidential national security information. On this side of the House, we disagree. Giving parliamentarians access to such information will benefit Canadians who want their government to be open and transparent, including our national security agencies.

• (1010)

As Professors Craig Forcese of the University of Ottawa and Kent Roach of the University of Toronto recently noted in their working paper to modernize Canada's inadequate review of national security, a robust national review framework rests on three pillars.

First is a properly resourced and empowered committee of parliamentarians with robust access to secret information, charged primarily with strategic issues, including an emphasis on efficacy review. Second is a consolidated and enhanced expert review body, a security and intelligence community reviewer or super SIRC with all-of-government jurisdiction, capable of raising efficacy issues but charged primarily with proprietary review. Third is an independent monitor of national security law, built on the U.K. and Australian models, with robust access to secret information and charged with expert analysis of Canada's anti-terrorism and national security legislation and able to work in concert with the other bodies on specific issues.

It is my belief that the bill meets these criteria. Professor Forcese would appear to agree, writing as he did that Bill C-22 represents a good bill. He goes on to say that it creates a stronger body than the U.K. and Australian equivalents and that it constitutes "a dramatic change for Canadian national security accountability".

I believe the legislation is well intentioned, well considered, and well rounded. In particular, I would like to highlight five notable elements of the bill.

First, Bill C-22 allows the committee to analyze and study laws, policies, and operations in real time, increasing the discipline, responsiveness, and accountability of our security framework.

Second, the legislation before us tasks the committee with the invaluable capacity to monitor classified security and intelligence activities and report findings to the Prime Minister. Rather than reviewing security activities on an ad hoc and siloed department-by-department basis, Bill C-22 provides the opportunity for comprehensive security oversight.

Third, the provisions regarding ministerial discretion on limits to access to information contained within the bill are clearly delineated and follow the best practice models established by the United States, Australia, and others.

Fourth, Bill C-22 guarantees that the government will constitute a minority within the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians, thus ensuring increased accountability.

Finally and perhaps most significant, Bill C-22 represents an important counterbalance to the sweeping powers introduced through Bill C-51. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the bill represents the fulfillment of a key campaign pledge on the part of the government to rein in the excesses of Bill C-51, while ensuring the collective security of all Canadians. The introduction of a committee of parliamentarians tasked with overseeing Canadian security and intelligence represents a much-needed return to accountability.

The bill, however, merely represents one part of the puzzle. Our government has also committed to amending Bill C-51 to better protect the rights of assembly and protest, and to better define rules regarding terrorist propaganda, mandating statutory review of national security legislation, creating an office of community outreach and counter-radicalization, and increased consultations with Canadians from coast to coast on how best to balance security concerns and civil liberties.

This process, both within and outside Parliament, will allow us to strengthen the security and intelligence system of Canada. It will also provide Canadians with confidence that in protecting their safety and security, the government stands firmly behind their rights and freedoms.

I urge all hon. members of the House to join me in supporting the bill.

• (1015)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, earlier the minister said that this committee is to be modelled after the U.K. committee. Clearly in the U.K., the committee members themselves are the ones who get to elect their chair. Not only is the chair appointed by the Prime Minister here, he is appointed with a huge increase in salary and he was appointed long before the committee even exists.

How can my colleague actually expect us to believe that this is a non-partisan committee, when the committee chair is appointed by the Prime Minister before the committee has even been struck?

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the member opposite for raising this significant issue. It is interesting to note that he is acknowledging that there was an absence of a framework in Canada previously.

To rectify the situation, we looked at models adopted by other allies, crucially, the Five Eyes. Of course, it would have been impossible for us to adopt a framework that would simply cut and paste provisions that have been adopted by the other Five Eyes. In this particular instance, obviously there are variations between our framework and those of the other Five Eyes.

What you were speaking of was the issue of accountability. You will note, should you scrutinize the proposed legislation closely—

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The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would remind the member to address his comments to the Chair and not to the member. When you are saying “you”, it should be through me. Thank you very much.

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The member opposite has raised the issue of accountability. I would like to remind the member that in making appointments to this committee the Prime Minister is obliged to both consult with the leaders of the opposition as well as the Senate. In so doing, it will ensure that only four members out of nine will be constituted out of members of the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to this subject on behalf of my Longueuil—Saint-Hubert constituents. International issues such as cultural diversity, global warming, and tax evasion are all serious issues that demand international co-operation. Now, unfortunately, that list includes terrorism and a host of other activities that call for close monitoring.

I am glad that our country will, I hope, follow suit by overseeing our intelligence services. I think that such a committee is essential.

The member opposite said that people need to have confidence and the Prime Minister will do this or that, but I would like to remind him that we are still waiting for changes to Bill C-51.

I would like him to comment on that because, during a committee meeting, a Toronto police officer made it clear that Bill C-51 is like looking for a needle in a haystack and we do not need more hay. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[*English*]

Mr. Ali Ehsassi: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for raising that critical issue.

We think it is imperative that the Canadian public has confidence in this committee. It is significant that the Prime Minister will only make appointments to this committee after consulting with members opposite, with leaders of the opposition parties, and of course with the Senate.

The member brought up the issue of Bill C-51. I can assure him that we also had misgivings about it. For that reason, we introduced 10 amendments at the time, but of course, only three were adopted. What we have sought to do in the proposed legislation is to balance the rights and civil liberties of Canadians with security interests. I think we have struck the right balance.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join this debate on Bill C-22, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians act.

Above all else, governments must be able to ensure the safety and security of the citizens they serve. All of us here in this place share in this duty.

Our public safety institutions take many forms and have different resources to fulfill their different mandates. Day in and day out, the people who keep us safe work to balance national security concerns with the privacy rights that Canadians expect and deserve. They do

an excellent job. They work diligently under challenging circumstances and deserve our gratitude.

The bill being considered here today would create a statutory committee of parliamentarians appointed by the executive branch and housed within it. In Canada, the executive branch is the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office that supports it. This would be a committee of parliamentarians and not a parliamentary committee. The difference is important because one is able to decide its mandate while the other cannot. A parliamentary committee is the master of its own affairs and has standing orders and practices. The members of a parliamentary committee are named by each member's whip and not by the Prime Minister. The chair of a parliamentary committee is elected by its members.

This new national security and intelligence committee would have none of that. According to the government's press release, the committee would have a mandate to scrutinize any matter related to the national security of Canada. Unfortunately, the fine print is not as generous concerning the responsibilities that the committee and its members will have.

Under the bill, the Prime Minister and his ministers will be allowed to withhold information requested by the committee if they consider that the disclosure of the requested information would negatively impact national security. However, while the responsible minister would be expected to provide the committee with the rationale on his or her decision to hold back information, in practice this will not work. We cannot ask for something if we do not know it exists. If we are told that something exists but we cannot see it because of national security concerns, the entire point of having a committee to reinforce the oversight of Canada's security apparatus disappears. A member, or anyone for that matter, cannot be expected to work with only partial information.

As prescribed in the bill, the committee would be a creation of the executive branch and its dealings would be kept secret. Therefore, it is difficult to identify what resources the members of the committee would have at their disposal if they were dissatisfied or frustrated in their role.

Furthermore, if members of the committee have a major concern with the information they receive in testimony or through a brief, they can only report their concerns to the Prime Minister or the minister responsible. Presuming that the Prime Minister does not share the same security concern, he does not have to act on it, and members cannot bring their trepidation to the elected House of Commons, or to anyone for that matter, because they have been sworn to secrecy.

The way that this committee would be set up makes me think of the philosophical thought experiment of “If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?” If members cannot speak about what they have been briefed on, does it even matter that they have been briefed?

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While it may be premature to speculate on what the committee will actually do, it is no stretch to imagine that the committee will meet semi-regularly and be given access to documents and testimony that an already existing parliamentary committee would receive and members could access via access to information requests. Assuming that the committee finds itself in agreement on recommendations, the government will review the committee's report before it can be tabled in Parliament.

If the purpose of the committee is indeed to provide elected members of Parliament with a greater role in overseeing Canada's national security institutions, then I do not understand why the inputs and the outputs of the committee will be screened by the Prime Minister.

Given how the government is proposing to structure this committee, I am unsure of whether the Prime Minister believes that elected members of Parliament can be trusted to steward the information they receive with care and discretion.

● (1020)

If the Minister of Public Safety is truly intent on creating a national security oversight committee, then the committee should have real oversight over our national security agencies. Unfortunately, as it is being set up, the national security agencies would have oversight over the work of the committee.

The Prime Minister or minister would also have the responsibility to name the chair of the committee. This is problematic, as we have already heard during this debate. It reinforces the impression that the committee is just a PMO working group. It is understood that a chair of a committee plays a critical role as the spokesperson for the matters that are directed to the committee, and committee reports are published through the chair. In order for the committee to be successful and have legitimacy, I believe that the chair must be chosen by members of the committee.

I understand that in a majority government situation, as we find ourselves in right now, the members of the governing party will never select an opposition member as their chair. Interestingly, while we are debating the bill, the Prime Minister has already appointed the member for Ottawa South to chair the committee. That is a clear sign that the government is unwilling to compromise on this specific aspect of the legislation.

Taking this into consideration, together with the bill before us, more than anything the committee appears to be a make-work project for members of Parliament and a way for the Prime Minister to deflect any criticism on his action, or inaction for that matter, on national security matters.

I would like to conclude by making a few remarks about the role of members of Parliament and how the legislation fits into a disturbing trend that I have observed over the past 11 months.

Members, even if they were elected as members of the governing party, have not been elected to serve the government. The legislation serves to reverse this relationship by making members work for the government. While members of the governing party argue that the government is giving parliamentarians access to more information, Bill C-22, in its current form, makes it difficult to believe. The real test of whether the committee would have any teeth and impact on

policy would be on whether it can freely report its findings with the weight of Parliament behind it. Again, the bill ensures that this simply would not happen because the prime minister and his ministers would be able to read any report from the committee before it is made public, if it is made public at all.

Ultimately, the bill's stated purpose is to empower members of Parliament. Therefore, I sincerely hope that the government will take the advice and concerns of members from all parties, which have been seriously raised, into consideration as we move forward.

● (1025)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there will be two senators and three members of the opposition who will be given access to classified material. The Prime Minister's ability to filter the information is limited to ensuring that classified material does not get out. How is this not accountable?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, as we have seen with events around the world, we definitely cannot take our security for granted. It is not difficult to understand why the disclosure of sensitive information may put the lives of the very good men and women who protect us at risk. However, we cannot provide oversight of an organization if we are not given the oversight and the information to do that. Heavily redacted documents and briefings being offered to a panel of members of Parliament will not make Canada safer. For this committee to work, the Prime Minister cannot filter the committee's activities.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, my question goes back to the previous Parliament. With what the member has described as being needed as an oversight committee, I share some of the same reservations about what the Liberals are proposing and would probably support what she is talking about. However, my question is, when her previous government introduced Bill C-51, why did it not include an oversight committee? Why did you not do what you are talking about today at the time that Bill C-51 was introduced?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member to address the question to the Chair, and I can tell the member that I am not the one who did it.

The hon. member for Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, ensuring the safety and security of our country's citizens has always been a top priority for the Conservative caucus. We understand it is important that our national security agencies have the tools they need to do their job, which is to keep us safe. That was the purpose of Bill C-51.

The legislation we have before us is unrelated to Bill C-51. As is, this legislation will not make Canadians safer, nor will it increase Parliament's oversight of Canada's national security agencies.

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•(1030)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am wondering if the member opposite could expand a little on the fact that unlike some of our allies like the U.S. and New Zealand, the government members will actually be in a minority position on this oversight committee, and whether she thinks that contributes in any amount to more accountability.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, we know that with the committee structure as proposed in the bill, it is clear that there will be seven members from Parliament and two members from the Senate. The chair has already been chosen. I have to suggest, in answer to that question, that if the mandate of the committee and the practice that is set out in legislation do not provide for the committee to do the work that it needs to do, it does not matter who is sitting on the committee.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for her nice oversight on this legislation. As this is being formed as a committee of parliamentarians where the chair has been appointed by the Prime Minister, this is already a sign of no accountability whatsoever, and probably the committee will be powerless. Does the hon. member believe that is a fact?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, as has been mentioned many times before, we know that the Minister of Public Safety was in the U.K. touting that this committee was going to be modelled after the United Kingdom where its committees elect their chairs. However, here we are debating the bill, and the member for Ottawa South has already been appointed. In fact, he was appointed back in January. How did parliamentarians find out about this appointment? They found out through the media.

The bill has not been open to consultation by the members of the opposition, and I think that speaks volumes when it comes to the role of this committee.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question was specifically about whether the member opposite felt that there would be more accountability because of the fact that there would be minority Liberal representation on the committee. I did not really get an answer to that, so I can only assume that she agrees that there would be more accountability.

It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-22, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians act. This bill is of incredible importance and is part of this government's larger plan to rectify the Harper Conservatives' flawed attempt at anti-terrorism legislation, which infringes upon our most basic rights in a bad attempt to make Canadians safer. I am happy to see this piece of legislation, which was promised in the last election and which I believe an overwhelming number of Canadians support, before the House.

I am proud to represent the riding of Kingston and the Islands and have always enjoyed engaging with constituents on matters of importance to them. A common concern raised in my riding was with regard to flawed Bill C-51. My constituents were concerned about their rights and freedoms and how they would be affected by it.

Although it is true that the government must be equipped to adequately meet the security challenges of the day, it must never lose sight of its responsibility to be accountable to Canadians.

This bill begins to deal with many of the concerns raised by Canadians with respect to Bill C-51. The government has listened and is delivering on this important promise. I believe that this legislation ensures faithful compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and is in line with what Canadians elected this government to do.

In my opinion, Bill C-22 is required to establish accountability and to ensure that Canadians' rights and freedoms are respected. Reforming the flawed provisions enacted by the Harper government is crucial in protecting Canadians' rights and freedom of expression, which is of the utmost importance in a healthy democracy. Bill C-51 set the course to erode this most fundamental right, a right that should never be taken lightly and should always be guarded with the utmost respect.

Canadians pride themselves on living in a democratic country, and they deserve their government respecting their rights and freedoms, period. The legislation before us sets the stage for ensuring that those rights and freedoms are respected while at the same time Canadians are protected from the changing reality of the serious threats posed throughout the world.

I am proud to stand with a government that does not use the politics of fear. I am proud to support a government whose policies are based on evidence and fact. It would be much easier to scare Canadians into believing that certain measures were paramount for their safety, as the previous government did, even if the measures meant infringing upon their most basic rights and freedoms. This government will not do that. It will not use fear to advance its political agenda, as we have seen in the past.

What we see before us today is the proper way to establish safety and security while respecting the rights of Canadians. These changes are long overdue, and I am glad to see this government fulfilling a promise to Canadians: to protect Canada's national security and rights and freedoms while at the same time protecting us from the realities of a changing world.

I listened carefully to the debate in the House throughout this week and heard concerns about the openness and accountability of the committee proposed in this legislation. Let me assure everyone that I, too, expect the government to be accountable, and that is why I see this legislation as a necessity. This legislation strikes the right balance. It would protect Canada's national security while allowing for accountable oversight for Canadians. This legislation has the proper checks and balances in place to address the concerns raised in the House during the debate this week.

The national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians would have representation from both the upper house and the lower house and would be charged with having non-partisan responsibility for reporting on security matters in the interest of all Canadians. Members of this committee would be granted unprecedented access to classified material to adequately carry out their mandate.

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●(1035)

With the current challenges Canada faces, this would be a crucial step in ensuring that Canada is prepared for what the future brings. By creating the national security committee of parliamentarians, the government would be ensuring that there was appropriate oversight and accountability moving forward. Specifically, this committee would have the ability to review the full range of national security activities, including all departments and agencies across the Government of Canada, and would be able to gain a full picture of what is being done by those government agencies in national security and intelligence matters.

Committees have been referred to as the backbone of Parliament. This committee would work to ensure that our national security was effective in keeping Canadians safe and that Canadians' rights were safeguarded. In fact, Canada is currently the only Five Eyes ally without parliamentary review. The U.S., U.K., Australia, and New Zealand all have committees similar to the one proposed in this bill. Many of our allies formed these committees in the late 1980s and 1990s. That means that Canada is already lagging behind our allies. We are long overdue for setting up this oversight, which is in the best interest of Canadians.

Actually, I am proud to see the broad scope of this committee and believe that it has the potential to be a stronger body than those seen in other countries. This is significant for Canada, as it has the potential to be the most effective committee within the Five Eyes group.

Something else caught my attention. On Tuesday, my colleague from Louis-Hébert pointed out that four former prime ministers, both Liberal and Conservative, have recommended that an oversight committee be formed. All four have called for an independent committee to review the actions of our intelligence agencies, but that is not all. Four Supreme Court justices and four former ministers also support the concept of this committee.

I am proud to join with those former prime ministers, Supreme Court justices, and justice ministers, as well as the current government and Canadians from across this country, in supporting this bill. This is not a place for blind partisanship but is an opportunity to fix our currently flawed system.

As one of my colleagues across the aisle said earlier in this debate, good oversight not only builds public trust but must make our security services much more effective. That is exactly what this legislation allows for. This committee would provide the oversight necessary to maintain accountability and to ensure that Canadians' safety and rights are maintained.

I urge all my colleagues to put their partisanship aside and see this important bill passed in this House. I see no reason why this legislation should not receive all-party approval.

●(1040)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to put aside partisanship, but it seems to me that with this committee that is recommended, the Prime Minister has already picked the chair. The Prime Minister will be selecting the senators, and the Prime Minister has the right to edit the committee reports that come out. I think that is fairly partisan on the other side.

I wonder how the member would respond.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question, because I have been hearing it all week, and I have looked forward to the opportunity to respond to it.

The truth of the matter is that the opposition is painting this as though it is a one-of-a-kind event that the Prime Minister would make this appointment. In fact, there has been much precedence set for the Prime Minister to make appointments like this.

Quite frankly, I think it shows great accountability when the Prime Minister makes this appointment. When this appointment is made by the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister becomes the accountable individual, because he or she, whoever the Prime Minister of the day is, made this appointment and is the one who will ultimately have to live with the realities of making that appointment.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, this bill highlights the difference between the Liberals and the New Democrats in the last Parliament.

The Liberals, of course, voted in this House in favour of Bill C-51. The only problem they had with the bill was the lack of oversight, which was of course a problem with the bill. What did not seem to trouble the Liberals was Bill C-51's massive violations of Canadians' civil liberties.

I will go over some of them. Bill C-51 criminalizes speech acts that have no connection with terrorism. It allows government departments to share the private information of Canadians without their consent. It permits police to arrest, detain, and impose conditions on Canadians who have not been charged with a single crime, based on mere suspicion.

This bill before the House, make no mistake, does not touch a single one of those violations of Canadians' civil liberties or freedoms in Bill C-51. All it does is deal with oversight.

My friend gave a great speech, talking about Canadians' civil liberties and freedoms. When will the Liberal government introduce legislation to change Bill C-51 to actually respect them?

Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, to suggest that the Liberal Party of the day had no problem with Bill C-51 I think is a great misrepresentation of the facts. In fact, the Liberal Party had a number of concerns and put forward a number of recommendations to change it.

The difference between the Liberal Party and the New Democrats is that we value both safeguards for Canadians and their right to freedom of expression and the other rights granted to them. Yes, there is a difference between the NDP and the Liberals, and it is the fact that we value both, not one having more priority than the other.

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we promised that we would do things differently, that we would work more closely with the opposition parties and all parties in this House, that we would give the legislative branch more say, and that we would allow more oversight.

Could the hon. member please let us know how this particular bill would allow us to do all three of those things?

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Mr. Mark Gerretsen: Madam Speaker, this bill would give us the ability to have more oversight, to see what the particular agencies are doing and how they are acting, to have this classified information, and to have parliamentarians at the helm of understanding and appreciating what is going on. This is in keeping with our five allies and what they have been doing, in some cases for many decades.

We are not setting a new course here. As a matter of fact, we are the last of our five allies to put these measures in place to ensure this accountability.

• (1045)

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians. With this bill, our government would fulfill a key commitment it made to Canadians to ensure that our national security framework is working effectively to keep Canadians safe, and to ensure that our rights and freedoms are safeguarded.

Far too often, I have heard in the House that the great imperatives of every government to keep its citizens safe and to safeguard their rights and freedoms is being spoken of as if we are required to make a choice, a compromise, or a calculation. The very nature of the public discourse suggests that it may be necessary to sacrifice one in order to achieve the other. I respectfully disagree. I believe it is the responsibility of every government, and by that I mean every member of the House, to ensure that we achieve both safety and freedom in equal measure.

I have had the opportunity over the course of my life to be involved in operational matters of national security. From these operational matters, I want to share some of my experience. There is always a tension between those who are responsible for gathering national security intelligence, those responsible for gathering evidence for prosecutions, and those who are responsible for ensuring that nothing bad happens in any of our communities. That tension is often resolved through certain guiding principles.

The principles that guide the work of those dedicated men and women who are responsible for keeping our communities safe while adhering to the rule of law are precisely these things, including the highest in this country, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It is their responsibility not only to obey those laws but to uphold them, to uphold them to be respected and honoured throughout the country.

We are also guided by the important principles of public interest. It is important that those who are responsible for keeping us safe do the right thing. That means, of course, not merely obeying the law, because this can lead to situations that in my old business we used to call “lawful but awful”, but respecting the public interest, ensuring that we are doing the right things and in a way that will engender the respect and trust of the public.

That brings me to the most important principle that always has to guide the work of those responsible for and tasked with keeping our communities safe, and that is maintaining the public trust. Maintaining the public trust is based upon a number of things. Certainly the rule of law and acting in the public interest are important, but it also requires transparency and accountability. This

is particularly difficult in circumstances where the work is done in secret, where we are engaged in activities that are clandestine, covert, or are classified and secret, when it is not in the public interest to disclose to the public what we know or the means by which we came to know it. It is not in the public interest for that information to become known to those who would do harm in our communities.

How can the public be assured that those tasked with safeguarding their security and their rights obeyed the rule of law and acted in the public interest? It comes down to who guards the guards. I believe that Bill C-22 would allow for a more fulsome answer to this critical question in Canadian governance.

I have been the beneficiary of both good governance and bad governance, and I can say from my experience that doing the job right requires good governance. Indeed, the effective operation of a national security framework requires that we have in place governance and oversight mechanisms that work for us.

We already have a fairly robust system of oversight for national security. We have ministerial oversight, and many of our laws require the explicit consent of the relevant minister for those enforcement and intelligence-gathering agencies to proceed and for those involved to do their job. Much of their work requires judicial oversight to ensure that certain legal thresholds are met. The organizations and the individuals who are responsible for this work are guided by internal policy. In addition to that, we have other important review bodies. CSIS, for example, is governed and overseen by the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which has access to certain classified information to review the work of CSIS. The work of our RCMP officers and other police services is subject to the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission and other oversight bodies to ensure that they are obeying the rule of law and acting in the public interest. CSE is overseen by the Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner.

• (1050)

In addition to that work, Parliament has a number of parliamentary committees. Here it is important to acknowledge that the committee being proposed in Bill C-22 would not be a committee of Parliament. It would not be a committee of either house of Parliament. Instead, it would be an additional review mechanism to assure Canadians that we are effective in our oversight and control of the extraordinary powers that are given.

I can tell the House from my experience that those who are tasked with this responsibility welcome oversight. They welcome that accountability. It is important to them that oversight and governance exist, because without public trust in the important work they will be doing, they cannot succeed in their dual mission of both maintaining safety and upholding the rights of our citizens. This measure is an important one to fulfill our commitment to provide effective governance and oversight of national security matters and to protect the rights and freedoms of our citizens.

Government Orders

The committee, from its proposed composition in the bill, would be an effective mechanism to ensure that matters are dealt with across various government agencies. In my experience, keeping our country safe and upholding our laws and freedoms is the responsibility not of a single agency of government, but of all agencies of government.

In far too many cases we have seen that oversight by one body is insufficient to review all of the activities of those other bodies engaged in this important activity, and that as a result there have been a number of gaps in information sharing, and our effectiveness has been compromised. Through the introduction of this new review committee, our government will be able to assure Canadians that those gaps are closed and that all committees are operating in a collaborative and more effective way.

* * *

MINISTER OF FISHERIES, OCEANS AND THE CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know there was a great amount of interest in the events that the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard is scheduled to attend next week. As the minister stated, the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has approved his presence at that event. To further that point, I will now table, in both official languages, the email response from the Office of the Ethics Commissioner related to this event.

* * *

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Madam Speaker, I hope Canada will be safer after Bill C-22 is passed. How can the bill guarantee accountability and public trust when the chair of the committee is being parachuted into the position by the Prime Minister?

Mr. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, it is important to understand the function of this committee and its chair. As I have already stated, it will not be a parliamentary committee. We have parliamentary committees and well accepted rules among ourselves on how their leadership and chairs will be appointed.

This committee will have a special responsibility. It will not be a committee of the House but a committee of parliamentarians whom the Prime Minister is tasking with an important role. All Canadians and the House will be tasking the committee with an important role to provide effective, nonpartisan oversight of all the activities of government in maintaining national security and upholding our rights and freedoms. It is an incredibly important task.

I am proud that my government has proposed a committee that is not, as we have seen in the past, dominated by the majority of members of the governing party, but rather a committee that is truly representative of the great diversity of opinion and perspectives that is the House of Commons and this country.

I am proud of the fact that this committee will comprise members of both sides of the House and of the other place to bring that diversity of perspective and to engender that public trust that must inevitably come from Canadians in knowing that their representatives, who are accountable to them, are there, know the secrets, and have access to sufficient information to hold accountable those who are entrusted with their safety.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I certainly do not have the kind of practical experience with this that my colleague opposite has. Logically, the committee's mandate should be to oversee the activities of our security and intelligence agencies. This talk about looking for a needle in a haystack makes it clear that the last thing we need is more hay, yet this committee would have more hay to search through to find mistakes, would it not?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, from my experience in dealing with matters of national security, I know that in order to be held accountable and to hold others accountable, it is important to have the right information at the right time. However, operational matters, because of their very nature, do require that certain information and certain types of intelligence gathering and certain ongoing operations remain secret. That is very much in the public interest. Nonetheless, I think we are making a huge step forward in creating greater transparency and far greater accountability.

Previously, the national security framework was mostly under the control of a government and a minister who kept those secrets closely guarded, and there was very little trust of the other members of the House. This is an act of trust. The bill says that we trust parliamentarians from the other parties and from all parts of Canada to do the job of protecting our rights and freedoms and making sure that our national security framework is effective at both keeping our citizens safe and protecting their freedoms.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough Southwest for his eloquent words. As someone who has had a security role at the highest level in his career and now is in the role of representing the citizenry and its concerns about security as well as respect for civil rights and privacy, could he share his thoughts about how this oversight and review committee will improve the results of our agencies on both those fronts, both security and privacy and rights?

Mr. Bill Blair: Madam Speaker, in my experience, those who are tasked with the responsibility of keeping us safe often find themselves faced with difficult choices. The imperative of protecting our citizens and making cases against those who would harm us can sometimes lead to errors in judgment in the exercise of those authorities.

My colleagues who do this important work across the country believe very sincerely that we need to have the value-added of strict oversight and governance, with a clear, impartial, independent review of how those extraordinary authorities are given to us. This is kind of a deal with everyone who engages in law enforcement or national security and public safety. We accept the additional authorities that are given to us by the government and by the people, and in return we must be fully accountable for the use of those authorities. We must uphold and respect the rule of law.

To achieve that and to be able to reassure the country and its citizens that those extraordinary powers and authorities are being used in the public interest and according to the rule of law, independent oversight is critical. The bill finally provides that effective oversight and governance of those extraordinary authorities. I know with great confidence that the extraordinary men and women dedicated to keeping us safe and upholding our laws will welcome this level of oversight provided under the bill.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1100)

[English]

ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Hon. Hunter Tootoo (Nunavut, Ind.): Madam Speaker, today is the fourth annual Orange Shirt Day: Every Child Matters. This nationally-recognized movement commemorates the thousands of indigenous children across Canada who were taken from their homes and sent to a residential school.

The legacy of this day stems from the experience of a six-year-old girl, named Phyllis Webstad, who had her shiny, new orange shirt taken from her upon arriving at a residential school. The orange shirt represents the loss of culture, identity, and language for thousands of indigenous children, the effects of which are still felt to this day.

The Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs is mandated to work with indigenous communities to gain back the culture and identity that was lost.

Although efforts such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada have made strides in making amends with Canada's indigenous population, continued efforts are needed to heal the wounds inflicted by residential schools.

* * *

BROOKLIN HARVEST FESTIVAL

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Whitby, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on September 10, residents in my riding of Whitby participated in the annual Brooklin Harvest Festival. This family-friendly day marks the start of the harvest season, and an opportunity to celebrate our local farmers and thank them for all they do for our community.

[Translation]

This year's festival was a huge success. The new location was packed because so many people came. The marketplace was especially popular. Attendees had the opportunity to try local

Statements by Members

products, buy flowers and plants from local growers, and enjoy local entertainment.

[English]

On behalf of all residents of Whitby, I extend my deepest appreciation to everyone who contributed to making this year's festival the best yet.

* * *

WESTERN RESEARCH PARKS

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, scientific research is alive and well, not just across Canada but it is thriving in my riding as well.

Yesterday, it was announced that the Western Research Parks, which includes the Western Sarnia-Lambton Research Park, received the 2016 Outstanding Research Park Award from the Association of University Research Parks.

This international recognition makes Western the first research park in Ontario to receive this award and the third in Canada. The award recognizes the effective operation and the quantifiable contribution the research park makes to its community.

I want to thank the park team and their board of directors.

I congratulate Tom Strifler, Katherine Albion, Aung Oo, and Caroline Craig. I recognize their excellence, Sarnia—Lambton recognizes their excellence, and now the world recognizes their excellence.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, tomorrow, October 1, marks the international day for seniors. It reminds us to appreciate the sacrifices and contributions made by our seniors toward the progress of our country.

I have personal experience with my 96-year-old father, Sardar Parshottam Singh Sangha. I am certain the same applies to all of us.

Summer events were the great opportunities to meet and listen to seniors. During Canada 55+ Games held in my riding, I had the honour to present medals to senior champions, aged 50 to 90. What a great inspiration for me. I will cherish it forever.

Our seniors are reaching out to us. Let us all respond because we owe it to them.

“Action thy duty, reward not thy concern”, as in Bhagavad Gita.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Madam Speaker, on Monday, I introduced my bill to repeal Bill C-51. The New Democrats are still saying today what we said from the beginning: Bill C-51 infringes on our civil liberties without doing anything to make us safer.

Statements by Members

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness now calls Bill C-22 the centrepiece of Liberal national security policy. During the campaign, of course, the Liberals' centrepiece was fixing Bill C-51.

What we have in Bill C-22 is a necessary but flawed review committee, a case of bait and switch, plus more consultation. Yet, more consultation is cold comfort to Canadians whose rights are under threat, including those engaged in legitimate dissent, like first nations leaders and environmentalists, or even ordinary citizens who value their privacy.

We all know what works when it comes to combatting terrorism. We need to devote adequate resources to de-radicalization and to traditional intelligence and enforcement work. Neither restricting our rights nor collecting so much information on all of us that we lose focus on the real threats will help keep us safe. That is why it is time to repeal Bill C-51.

* * *

●(1105)

SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Ahmed Hussien (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about the Canada summer jobs program and the impact that it has had in my riding of York South—Weston. This program is meant to fund organizations to create jobs for young people.

Due to the rise in violence in certain parts of Toronto, York South—Weston received extra funding this year from the Canada summer jobs program. This funding was generously matched by Allan and Don Carswell and the Carswell Family Foundation.

Young people in my riding have told me of the positive impacts that this extra funding has had on their lives. They have told me how they have been able to assist organizations like the Boys & Girls Clubs of Weston-Mount Dennis and Frontlines Toronto to deliver even more vital services to my constituents.

I am very proud to be part of a government that invests in young people, and believes in investing in young people. I am happy to thank the organizations that participated, and the Carswell Foundation, for ensuring that young people will have a meaningful work experience as they start their careers.

* * *

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, on August 5, while millions of Canadians and others around the world watched the opening ceremonies of the Rio summer Olympic games, the town of Carlyle, Saskatchewan, and the people of Souris—Moose Mountain, were focused on 12-year old Carter Morrison.

Carter was born with achondroplasia, an inherited growth disorder. He was chosen to lead Team Canada into Maracana Stadium alongside flag-bearer Rosie MacLennan. Carter was also fortunate to lead Team Mongolia through the stadium. He carried with him a tree, which was later planted following the opening ceremonies.

This was the first time ever that children, the Olympics Kids, could walk in the opening ceremonies of the Olympics. Ronald McDonald House brought nearly 100 people from around the world to Brazil, and it has been bringing children to the Olympics since 1986. Carter has stayed at Ronald McDonald houses in Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Alberta since he was a baby.

I thank Ronald McDonald House. Carter has done a great job and has been a fantastic ambassador for Canada.

* * *

DIABETES

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the steadfast determination of one indigenous Labradorian. Guy Poole began walking to raise money and awareness for diabetes after his wife passed away due to complications related to the disease.

Now 72 years young, committed and energized, Guy has walked over 3,000 kilometres in Newfoundland and Labrador, and has raised over \$100,000. He most recently finished a walk from Gander to St. John's, Newfoundland.

Diabetes is a disease that disproportionately affects first nations, Inuit and Métis people, up to four times higher in indigenous communities versus non-indigenous communities. That rate is on the rise in both indigenous and non-indigenous populations within Canada.

I sincerely thank Guy Poole, I congratulate him, and I acknowledge him and the many others who have worked so hard to raise awareness and money for the prevention, treatment and a cure for diabetes.

* * *

CANADA GAZETTE

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to inform members that October 2 marks the 175th anniversary of the *Canada Gazette*, the Government of Canada's official newspaper.

Since 1841, the *Canada Gazette* has documented proclamations of war and peace, notices of royal assent, regulations and judicial appointments.

[*Translation*]

The *Canada Gazette* is much more than just a way for the government to keep Canadians informed. It is also a key communication channel through which Canadians can reach their government. The government's regulatory proposals are posted on the *Canada Gazette* website for all to see, and Canadians are invited to share their views.

[*English*]

I congratulate the Public Services and Procurement Canada in its role as the Queen's printer, and I thank the *Canada Gazette* employees whose efforts contribute to our country's democracy.

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, every year about a thousand Canadian babies fall asleep and never wake up. They die from sudden infant death syndrome. SIDS is the number one cause of death in babies under the age of one.

Quinn Isla Cormier of Airdrie was one of those babies. She was loved, and she is still missed. Her death, like all SIDS or undetermined deaths, could not have been predicted or prevented.

I rise to acknowledge Quinn's mother, Sarah Cormier, and her family for creating an organization dedicated to helping families that have lost an infant suddenly and unexpectedly.

Ms. Cormier and Quinn's Legacy Society Run are building awareness through fundraising initiatives and advocacy. In partnership with SIDS Calgary Society, the funds raised go to parents who have lost an infant to SIDS and face financial hardship due to the loss of government benefits.

Tomorrow marks the beginning of Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month, an important reminder of the babies lost and the families that survive them, to help raise awareness and to reflect on whether our current policies are adequately supporting SIDS' families.

* * *

• (1110)

RETIREMENT CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an institution inside the Liberal Party of Canada, the aptly named Paul Quirk. As a fresh Liberal volunteer in Ottawa, my first stop on the tour of the party office was the print shop, with Paul at the helm.

Never arriving later than sunrise, never shying away from a challenge, the 72-year-old keeps the machinery greased and the wheels turning, rain or shine. He has solved problems, he has given guidance, he has worked miracles. I have learned tricks from him to efficiently stuff envelopes that everyone here would appreciate, and some I might tell.

At the end of 19 years, 7 national elections, and more than 50 by-elections, with some 119 million pieces produced, Paul is ready to take his next step. We will hold the presses until we hear what his new career will be.

It has been an immense pleasure to work with Paul and to learn from him. I wish him all the very best in his retirement.

* * *

NATIONAL SENIORS DAY

Mr. Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to let people know that tomorrow, October 1, is National Seniors Day. We believe Canada is at its best when all citizens are treated fairly and have the opportunity to reach their full potential, including seniors.

Through budget 2016, we are making historic investments that will change the lives of seniors, both now and in the future, by

Statements by Members

addressing income security, social inclusion, poverty, affordable housing, as well as more generous and flexible leave for caregivers.

Let us take the opportunity on National Seniors Day to celebrate and pay tribute to all seniors for the valuable contributions they have made, and continue to make, to our families, workplaces, communities, and to Canada.

I would particularly like to take this opportunity to recognize a great organization in my riding of Winnipeg South, Pembina Active Living (55+), which provides valuable programs and community services to older adults.

* * *

ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize Orange Shirt Day. This was launched in the province of British Columbia and was created to educate students and communities of the history and legacy of Canada's residential schools.

Most of us in the chamber remember our first days of school very fondly, our new clothes and shiny shoes, and we would go off with pride. The experience for Phyllis Webstad, who was six years old when she began attending St. Joseph's mission school in Williams Lake, was nothing like many experienced. On her first day, her new orange shirt, a gift from her grandmother, was taken away from her. This profoundly affected her for many years.

Today, we need to continue the important work we started with the apology in the chamber and recognize the legacy of the residential schools. I hope all members in the chamber will stand and recognize Orange Shirt Day in Canada.

* * *

TOBACCO CONTROL

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): Madam Speaker, for a generation, Canada led the world in tobacco control. Successive Liberal and Conservative governments worked with not-for-profit organizations like the Heart & Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, and The Lung Association to drive down youth prevalence rates and see smoking reduced to some of the lowest levels in the world.

Then, for a decade, that leadership was lost and Canada watched as the rest of the world passed us by in tobacco control. We watched as stagnant rates in Canada on smoking continued. This means that about 37,000 die every year in the leading cause of preventable death. To give an idea of scope, that is the equivalent of an entire riding disappearing every three years.

Oral Questions

We have an opportunity to re-establish leadership in areas like plain packaging, where we have seen Australia, the United Kingdom, and others take action. We made a commitment to act and we know that will work. It is time for us to lead again.

* * *

• (1115)

ORANGE SHIRT DAY

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Orange Shirt Day, because every child matters.

I would like to read a letter from an Oji-Cree teenager who wrote to me. She wrote:

Dear House of Commons.

Residential schools have played a huge role in the history of Canada. ...this needs to be told to every Canadian...to bring awareness and honour the survivors of residential schools and their families.

September 30th is known as Orange Shirt Day because on this day, an indigenous woman, Phyllis Webstad, was stripped of her orange shirt on the first day of school. This action symbolizes the way many Indigenous children were stripped of their identity and culture in Residential schools.

When you destroy a culture, a language and tradition, you demolish the foundation of a human being. Many indigenous people are still suffering in silence... That is why the goal of Orange Shirt Day is to bring comfort and closure to the survivors of Residential schools to remind them that we support them on their journey to healing.

I hope you all take the time to stand with us and bring hope for a better future.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canada has been a trading nation since before Confederation. Cod fish and beaver pelts were traded as a form of currency and paved the way to the development of this country.

Today, we still trade in commodities, but also world-class ideas and services. Free, fair, and open trade corridors are the pathways to economic sustainability. In our cross-Canada hearings over the past months, it is clear that the vast majority of Canadians are open to and ready to take these bold next steps with CETA and TPP.

However, there will always be the naysayers who will see the sky as falling. We should never discount their concerns, but rather make sure they are apprised of the real facts, not the myths and misinformation that some are peddling. It is well documented that trade drives innovation and efficiency. The Canadian economic future is bright. With our resources and Canadian resourcefulness, we are a nation with huge potential. We must embrace these opportunities.

* * *

ROSH HASHANAH

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on Sunday evening, Jews in Canada will begin celebrating Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. As such, it is a good time for us to recognize the enormous contributions that Canadian Jews have made to our society.

Since 1760, the Jewish community has left its mark. In politics, Ezekiel Hart was the first Jew elected to the legislature of Lower

Canada in 1807. In 1872, Henry Nathan, of Victoria, was the first Jew elected to the House of Commons. Since then, they have been followed by such luminaries as Herb Gray, David Lewis, Dave Barrett, Joe Oliver, and Irwin Cotler.

From Supreme Court justices like Bora Laskin and Rosalie Abella, to athletes like Bobbie Rosenfeld and Mike Cammalleri, to writers like Mordecai Richler and Adele Wiseman, to actors like Seth Rogen and William Shatner, to musicians like Leonard Cohen, Geddy Lee, and Drake, Jewish Canadians continue to make Canada proud.

I wish all who celebrate Rosh Hashanah a healthy, peaceful, and sweet New Year. *L'Shanah Tovah.*

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FINANCE

Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, yesterday the parliamentary budget officer confirmed our worst fears. Compared with under the Conservative watch, the Liberals have increased spending by more than \$3 billion, and that was just in the first three months of this year. Yet, there is nothing to show for this reckless spending. Jobs are being lost across the country.

When will the Liberals stop their out-of-control spending and start respecting hard-working taxpayers?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the government that has decided to invest in Canadians and the Canadian economy. What we are doing has been applauded around the world.

Let me quote what the managing director of the IMF, Madame Christine Lagarde, said recently. She said, really, very much of the Canadian economic policies “can actually go viral”.

What we are doing is right for Canadians and is applauded around the world. We will continue to do that.

Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, the ordinary Canadian is struggling. The economy has lost over 60,000 jobs just over the summer. Investment is leaving Canada. Household debt is at record levels. Yet, the Liberal government continues to spend recklessly and increase taxes.

Expert after expert confirms that the Liberals' spending spree is not working and is not helping the economy.

Oral Questions

When will the Liberals do the right thing, cancel their tax hikes on Canadian families, and control their reckless spending?

• (1120)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, actually, growth was up in July. Let us be clear on the facts.

More importantly, this government has, as its first priority, reduced taxes for Canadians, because that is what Canadian families wanted. After that, we went on to introduce the Canada child benefit, which is helping nine families out of ten. Then we went on to enhance the CPP, the Canadian pension plan. Then we went on to make historical investments in infrastructure and innovation.

That is the way to grow an economy, and we will continue to do just that.

Hon. Candice Bergen (House Leader of the Official Opposition, CPC): Madam Speaker, Canadian businesses are losing confidence in the Liberal government. Less than 48 hours after the Pacific NorthWest project was approved, Petronas is rumoured to be selling its stake. Why? Because the cost and uncertainty of doing business in Canada is too high.

When will the Liberals stop raising taxes and stop choking businesses with needless red tape and delays?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me state for the record very clearly, the very first thing that this government did was to reduce taxes for nine million Canadians. That is the first thing we did, and we are very proud of it.

What we are doing is applauded around the world, by the IMF managing director, by the governor of the Bank of Canada, by the PBO.

What we are doing is the right thing for Canadians, and we will continue to do just that.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, interfering in provincial jurisdictions is thoroughly ingrained in the Liberal culture. This centralist government wants to impose conditions on health care and the money transferred to the provinces for Canadians' well-being.

Does the Minister of Health know what it means to respect provincial jurisdictions?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians are proud of their public health care system.

I understand the concerns, and I would like to point out that the Canada health transfer is going to increase by over \$1 billion next year, bringing it up to more than \$37 billion. I have already had discussions with my counterpart in Quebec, as well as the other provincial and territorial ministers. We will continue our discussions on how to create a health care system that meets Canadians' needs.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Madam Speaker, the provinces are in the best position to spend health care dollars. We on this side of the House understand that.

Today I am calling on the Minister of Health to remove all conditions on the transfer of funding intended for Canadians' health care. The minister needs to mind her own business and respect provincial jurisdictions for the well-being of Canadians.

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I find it fascinating that the members opposite who, while they were in power for almost a decade, did nothing to advance health care in this country are now dictating how it should be done.

Our government works with a spirit of collaboration with our partners. All levels of government have a role to play in health care. It requires us to work in collaboration with patients, with health care providers, all of us working together for the betterment of the health of Canadians.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, today marks Orange Shirt Day, a day to honour residential school survivors, so let us recognize survivors who were left out of the residential school agreement. For example, the day scholars have a certified class action, and time is of the essence because plaintiffs are passing away. However, the government has refused to settle with them in good faith.

In honour of Orange Shirt Day, will the Minister of Justice finally commit to true reconciliation and stop fighting survivors in court?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the government is committed to ensuring justice for all victims of this dark chapter in our history and that all those entitled to compensation will receive it. We will continue to pursue the vital work of advancing reconciliation with indigenous people and bringing closure to the tragic legacy of abuse of indigenous children.

We uphold the Indian residential school settlement process, and we will protect the integrity of that independent assessment process.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Madam Speaker, there will be no reconciliation without justice in this country. To achieve that, the government has to stop forcing residential school survivors to fight in court to get their compensation.

The Minister of Justice has to get rid of the endless procedural red tape that her department is imposing on residential school survivors.

On this day of recognition of residential school survivors, will the minister commit to doing that?

Oral Questions

●(1125)

[English]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I do not think there is any doubt of our government's commitment to all the victims who have suffered through this dark saga of residential schools in Canada. Just yesterday, we talked about the settlement, out of court, of the Andersen case in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are very proud that our government is moving forward with the truth and reconciliation process.

We will continue to work hard to reconcile with indigenous people and with survivors. Litigation is not our choice or the course of action we prefer.

* * *

*[Translation]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, speaking of human rights, yesterday, Saudi Arabia refused to acknowledge its past abuses. It also said that the sale of arms is an act of friendship.

We can agree that most Canadians are quite certain that we do not need to be friends with a country that violates human rights.

Will the government support the NDP's motion to enhance oversight of arms sales? If not, why not?

[English]

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are delivering on our campaign commitment by acceding to the Arms Trade Treaty in line with our G7 and G20 allies, thus promoting responsibility, transparency, and accountability in regulating the global trade of arms.

This is the right thing to do. It is what we are committed to doing, and we are delivering on our promise.

Right now, we are consulting with NGOs and industry before introducing legislation, at which time all members of the House and in committee will have the opportunity to scrutinize and review.

[Translation]

I look forward to working with my colleagues on this.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloeil—Chambly, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have yet to hear a convincing argument against supporting our proposal.

[English]

Let us go down memory lane a little bit. The Minister of Foreign Affairs quietly approved export permits for Saudi Arabia while claiming that his hands were tied.

Later we learned that the minister approved the export contract shortly after a private meeting with the Saudi ambassador. No wonder Saudi Arabia considers this arms deal to be an act of great friendship.

However, Canadians do not want to be friends with human rights abusers. Is this why the Liberal government is so afraid to support our motion for more transparency? Is this an act of great friendship with Saudi Arabia?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this government sticks to its word. We said we would accede to the Arms Trade Treaty and we are.

The NDP, on the other hand, does not stick to its word. Let me quote its leader during the last election: "You don't cancel a commercial accord retroactively, it's just not done."

Yet now we find that New Democrats are willing to abandon almost 3,000 well-paying jobs for hard-working Canadians.

We are honouring our promise of jobs for the middle class, and we are honouring our promise to make the arms export process more rigorous and transparent.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, the people of Alberta have worked hard for generations and the entire nation has benefited from Alberta's economic strength. However, now unemployed Albertans are struggling to provide for their families.

My province is the economic engine of the country, and we desperately need the Prime Minister to quite putting up hurdles and raising taxes on innovators and job creators in my province.

When will the government recognize the significance that a struggling Alberta has on the rest of the country?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we recognize the situation in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

I can say that the first thing the government did, which is helping people in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, was reduce taxes for Canadians. Then we went on to the Canadian child benefit. More importantly, we also reviewed the employment insurance regions to provide more benefits to people there when they lost their jobs.

This is a government that is listening to people and is acting for the people.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want the minister to know that this is not just an economic crisis but is a human tragedy as well. Since the beginning of 2015, the unemployment rate has risen from 4.8% to 8.4%, and more than 200,000 Albertans are out of work. Skilled workers across Alberta are struggling.

Can the Minister of Finance commit to reversing course on his ill-advised plan to raise taxes, spend recklessly, and string up red tape before it is too late for Albertans?

●(1130)

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let me be clear. We are listening to western Canadians. We are listening to people in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Oral Questions

We understand the situation. That is why we reduced taxes for Canadians. That was the first bill we passed in this House. It was to reduce taxes for Canadians and invest in infrastructure and invest in innovation. Those types of investments in the Canadian economy and in the Canadian middle class are going to make the people of western Canada and people across the country more prosperous.

That is what we promised to do, and that is what we are going to be doing.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I invite the government to live up to its responsibilities. It is holding consultations, forming committees, and working on a number of files, but nothing is getting done.

The softwood lumber file is a pressing matter. In a few days, the agreement will expire. We need to know what will happen to this industry. It is important for the regions.

When will the government move beyond its fine words and conclude an agreement in the interest of Canadian families?

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

We are working very hard on this file. Our negotiators are in more or less constant contact with provincial representatives, the workers, the industry, and obviously their U.S. counterparts. We are working very hard on this file to get an agreement that is good for the workers of Canada and Quebec, not just any old agreement.

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like the negotiators to be constantly working on this.

More than 400,000 jobs in Canada will be at risk if the agreement is not signed by October 12. More than 135 Quebec municipalities are relying on this agreement for some breathing room. We know that Quebec issues are of no interest to the Prime Minister. Fortunately, this agreement is something that concerns the entire country.

When will the government finally take responsibility and be respectful of Canadian workers, who definitely do not want to be unemployed in two weeks?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are working very hard on this file. The minister just went to Saguenay to speak with industry representatives and the workers.

Listen to what others have to say about our work. The Conseil du patronat du Québec noted “the efforts of the Minister of International Trade...on behalf of Quebec’s forestry industry.” The Quebec Forest Industry Council says it is pleased with our position on Quebec’s forestry regime. The positions of Quebec’s industry and workers are reflected—“

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Pacific NorthWest LNG project is a \$36-billion investment that would create thousands of well-paying jobs and allow Canada to export clean energy to the world.

Today Canadians see the news that the project’s proponent is considering selling. In the spring, we warned the Liberals that delaying the rigorous assessment process longer would put the project at risk. While the Liberals held up the approval process, did they know the project’s investors were considering getting out?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, unlike the party opposite, we understand that the only way resources will get to market in the 21st century is if we can get a balance between the environment and the economy.

We did a review. We spent the time necessary. We have conditions that are reasonable. I can quote from many different people who acknowledge that these are conditions that are normal with any project. They are conditions that are responsible. Really, it is up to the proponent to decide, and right now the issue is low commodity prices.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Madam Speaker, time is of the essence for LNG, but the Liberals added barriers to the process at the worst possible time. The Pacific NorthWest LNG project is supported by the vast majority of local first nations, the City of Fort St. John, the BC Chamber of Commerce, and the Government of B.C. It is important to all of Canada. Approval is one thing; getting it built is another.

Are the Liberals working with the proponents to ensure that none of the conditions are permanent roadblocks so the project can get started and Canadians can get back to work?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we believe in rigorous environmental assessments, and we believe that what we have done has paved the way for the project to go ahead in a sustainable way. Once again, it is up to the proponents to determine if the economic conditions are there to go ahead.

I can read from a number of different people, including the CEO of the Business Council of British Columbia:

This decision paves the way for Canada to compete in the international LNG market while continuing our climate leadership on a global scale.

Oral Questions

• (1135)

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, when the Liberals took office, they said that the one-way conversations with the provinces were over. However, from what we have been hearing about the health transfer negotiations, it seems nothing has really changed.

The Quebec health minister thinks that the federal government's approach is a trap. Isn't that the truth. The Liberals are trying to sugar-coat it, but they are offering the provinces the same \$36-billion cut to federal health transfers that the Conservatives before them were offering.

Can the minister explain the difference between the Conservatives' health care cuts and the Liberals'?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the difference is that our government is working hard with the provinces and territories. We are having excellent discussions with my counterparts across the country. Yesterday, I spoke to the Quebec and Ontario health ministers. We will continue to work together.

I would like to remind members that the Canada health transfer is going to increase by over \$1 billion next year, bringing it up to more than \$37 billion.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health called her cut to the health care escalator reasonable.

The Liberals used different adjectives when this cut was first announced by Stephen Harper. The member for Vancouver Centre, who was the Liberal health critic, said it was walking away from medicare. The member for Toronto—St. Paul's, now a Liberal cabinet minister, said it would leave Canadians "out in the cold". The member for Ottawa South called the Conservatives' approach "unconscionable and indefensible".

How does the minister explain to Canadians this blatant, undeniable reversal?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is a government that is interested in collaborating with all of our partners across the country. I will remind the member opposite to clarify something that he said yesterday. He talked about health care spending increasing. In fact, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, across this country annual health care spending has declined by an average of 0.6% since 2011. That is in the context of the Canadian health transfer increasing by 6%.

We are going to increase it next year. There will be more than \$1 billion extra added to the Canada health transfer. In addition to that, there will be new investments in the areas important to Canadians.

* * *

ETHICS

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, last fall, the minister disclosed that he had a personal relationship with the Irvings. The Ethics Commissioner has

banned him from any dealings with the Irvings. Apparently he does not think it applies to cocktails with Irving lawyers and lobbyists. Given that the minister is in charge of all litigation involving the government, could the minister tell us how many ongoing cases the federal government has with Irving or with Cox & Palmer?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians expect our ministers and MPs to adhere to very high ethical standards.

I therefore invite all opposition members to familiarize themselves with the document tabled in the House today. It clearly indicates that the minister's participation in the event is not a problem. The minister took it upon himself to seek the Ethics Commissioner's advice about the invitation. As everyone can see, her answer was very clear: the minister's attendance at the event is not a problem.

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard recently stated, "law firms are not able to confirm whether any person or company is a client, as such matters are confidential".

An easy Google search revealed that Cox & Palmer represents the Irvings. When did the minister request a ruling from the Ethics Commissioner, and at that time, did he disclose that Cox & Palmer represents the Irvings?

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, I would invite the opposition members to consult the document that was tabled in the House, which states very clearly that the minister can attend the event.

This is an annual event organized by a law firm during which guests can meet with members of Toronto's business community. The minister has absolutely no access to the client lists of Canadian law firms, which they cannot legally disclose.

Once again, the minister got the Ethics Commissioner's permission to attend the event.

[English]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, moments ago the Liberal House leader tabled only one email of a string of several between the Minister of Fisheries and the Ethics Commissioner concerning his attendance at a law firm representing the Irvings. When will the Liberals table all emails and all documents between the minister and the commissioner? When will they tell the House the truth, and what is the minister hiding?

Oral Questions

●(1140)

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, once again, I would invite the opposition members to consult the document that was tabled in the House, in which the Ethics Commissioner states very clearly that the minister's participation in the event is perfectly acceptable.

I wonder if the members opposite are calling into question the work and ethics of the Ethics Commissioner, who gave the minister permission to participate in the event.

The minister will continue to participate in events where he can promote the interests of Atlantic Canada and the rest of the country.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries confirmed that he will be the guest of honour at a cocktail party organized by the law firm that represents the Irving family.

Yes, the minister checked with the Ethics Commissioner, and the media is reporting that the minister provided some information. However, did he provide all the information? For instance, did he indicate that the law firm hosting the event represents the Irving family? We do not in any way question the work of the Ethics Commissioner, but we do wonder about what the minister told the Ethics Commissioner.

Did the minister indicate that the event is being hosted by the law firm that represents the Irvings?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will repeat myself, because this is important. The minister got the green light from the Ethics Commissioner to attend this event.

[English]

They want to talk about it, let us talk about it. The interim Conservative leader charged taxpayers nearly \$10,000 to stay in Ottawa while she was living in an official residence, also paid for by the public, according to records from the House of Commons. If they have a letter or document stating this, I would love to see it.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the Minister of Environment told CBC that she approved the Pacific NorthWest LNG project because measures will be taken to protect salmon spawning areas. The trouble is, these salmon do not spawn at the mouth of the river. What is actually threatened are juvenile salmon in what DFO has called one of the largest and most diverse wild salmon watersheds in the world.

How can Canadians have confidence that the minister's measures will actually protect the environment and our salmon when she does not even know where salmon spawn?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, our government makes decisions based on science and evidence, and we rely on our experts

across government, who have been working on this file for the past three years. I apologize if I misspoke, but the reality is we rely on our expert public servants who are scientists to make decisions, and the 190 responsible conditions were based on that science.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Madam Speaker, if the environment minister were standing up for the environment instead of paving the way for development, we would all feel better.

On Wednesday, the Union of BC Municipalities passed two resolutions calling on the government to deal with an improved oil spill response in the marine environment, but the Liberals seem to be in favour of tanker increases that will further threaten those coasts. We have a continued legacy of serious gaps in our oil spill response capacity. Local governments are alarmed. Our local coastal environment and economy are at risk.

I want to know what the government will do.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canada is very much focused on improving marine safety in our country. In fact, it was part of my mandate letter. I have been working with my colleagues from fisheries, from the environment, and from other portfolios to make sure that we in Canada will not only have proper marine safety measures put in place but that we will improve our capability to respond to spills on all of our three coasts.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the UN Civil Aviation Organization, the UN agency responsible for aviation, has its head office in Montreal, a source of pride to all Montrealers.

[Translation]

Montreal is also hosting that organization's 39th triennial assembly, which began on September 27.

Can the Minister of Transport tell us about some of the discussions taking place at the assembly regarding greenhouse gas emissions and the role our government is playing on this critical issue?

●(1145)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Mount Royal for his question.

The Government of Canada is proposing concrete measures to reduce or limit greenhouse gas emissions in the international aviation sector. We are proud of our role. I was actually there for the opening of the ICAO assembly, where I gave a speech and met with my international counterparts. We believe it is extremely important for all 191 countries to reach an agreement to limit greenhouse gases, and Canada has an important role to play.

Oral Questions

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, almost one year ago Ottawa's regional minister slammed on the brakes on plans for a new Civic Hospital in her own riding, because, we were told, hospital construction would interfere with valuable climate change research. Yet a report posted on the environment commissioner's website confirms that all the research happening on the land will be done at least five years before shovels even go in the ground for the new hospital.

Did the member of Parliament for the area and the environment minister read this information before she decided to block the construction of a hospital in her own riding for at least a year?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are committed to a state-of-the-art hospital centrally located in Ottawa.

We understand the need of the committee to make a decision quickly. Unlike the past government, this important decision cannot be taken behind closed doors. We really believe in a transparent and rigorous process, and that is why I asked the NCC to lead a site review process. I understand that the people in Ottawa are getting involved in this important public consultation process.

I am confident in the NCC's ability to lead a thorough study to provide the government with—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Carleton.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Madam Speaker, my question was for Ottawa's regional minister, not Montreal's.

The member for Ottawa Centre is the one who triumphantly announced a year ago that she was reversing John Baird's decision to grant farmland to the hospital. When she later learned there was nowhere else to put it, she went into hiding and punted the matter to the minister for Montreal. Now our city is voiceless on a hospital in our city.

When will the minister take responsibility for her community and our city and let us build a new hospital?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very happy to be in charge of the National Capital Commission, the NCC, in order to make sure that Ottawa has a centrally located state-of-the-art hospital.

Unlike the past government, we really believe that this decision-making should not be done behind closed doors. That is why I will not take any recommendations or lessons from my counterpart.

We will make sure that we invest in an important and thorough NCC study. I look forward to getting all of the recommendations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind members that when someone has the floor, they are to listen, and then they will have an opportunity to ask questions at a later time.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government claims it is consulting on fundamental changes to our democracy, but then it is not actually listening to what Canadians have to say, so let us listen.

Constituents Jeff and Annie wrote, "This is not a decision for only political parties to make". Charles and Wynanda wrote, "It is unconscionable that a government in power would try to rig an election system to stay in power. This is what dictators do". Denis says, "A referendum is essential".

Will the Liberals finally agree to let each and every Canadian have a say in a referendum?

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know that the member's constituents, Jeff and Annie and Denis, would appreciate that feedback, but they would also like to have opportunities to be able to speak to their MPs. On this side of the House, more than 150 members of Parliament have either had or will have consultations in their riding on this issue. The Conservatives have had five. That is a lot better than the zero they had on the unfair elections act, I will grant them that.

When are they going to let their constituents have their say on this issue? When are they going to consult their constituents and participate in the process of improving our democracy?

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Madam Speaker, last Saturday, I hosted an open house on electoral reform to hear what Canadians have to say. Let me tell members the results.

After tabulating the responses from my town hall, there was a clear majority who want a referendum, and over 800 people in my riding have now petitioned to have a vote before any change in electing MPs is implemented.

Will the Prime Minister listen to their demands and stop denying them their right to have a vote in a referendum?

● (1150)

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am glad the member opposite took the opportunity to have that session. I encourage all members of the House to do that. In fact, all the other parties, except the official opposition, have taken that opportunity.

I would say that there is an excellent starting point for conversation, and that is the critic for the Conservative Party on democratic reform, who said that first past the post is not the best system. So has the critic for every other party, and so have we.

Why do we not focus on proposing the best possible alternative, on working together, and having those consultations so we can move forward in the best way possible to improve our democracy?

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this week is Right to Know Week, but every day that goes by without a duty to document the discussions and decisions in ministers' offices is an affront to Canadians' right to know.

The Liberal government has so far not dealt with the issue of ministerial emails being deleted. The Information Commissioner has recently called for the Auditor General to look into the practice.

When is the Liberal government going to make it clear to Canadians what it is deciding to keep and what it is deciding to delete, and when is it going to bring in rules to require proper documentation?

After all, Canadians have a right to know.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the opportunity to rise in the House to remind all members and Canadians that we campaigned on a commitment to have a more open, more transparent, more relevant government for Canadians. We will continue to do the good work that we are doing.

I look forward to working with the member opposite with any feedback that he has.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Madam Speaker, *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* has been published since 1853, which makes it the oldest French newspaper in North America. It is a member of the Coalition pour la pérennité de la presse d'information au Québec. Most major newspapers in Quebec and Canada have agreed to ask for concrete financial assistance programs to transition to the digital platform.

What is the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development's timeline for putting in place concrete measures to support news media?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I recognize that our news media outlets are facing significant challenges because of the digital shift. I also recognize the importance of the media and journalism for our democracy.

That is exactly why my team and I have taken the lead on the media issue and are holding public consultations to study it. I hope that all Canadian media outlets, and those in Quebec in particular, will participate in our public consultations. We will be in Montreal on October 28, and I invite media stakeholders to join us.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Madam Speaker, Liberal MPs from Hamilton, Kitchener, and Vancouver have all come out in support of Jetlines' proposal because it will benefit the traveller.

Oral Questions

The Minister of Transport likes to tell us that he is doing his homework on this file. At the rate he is going, he will hand in his homework long after the school year is over. He will not even get a grade for his work.

Will the minister make a decision and get Jetlines in the air?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, of course, I always do my homework, and I do it thoroughly. It has been a principle all my life.

We are looking very seriously at the recommendations of the Canada Transportation Act review, which brings in the question of foreign ownership. That is certainly very germane to the requests that have come from both Jetlines and Enerjet.

We are looking at this very diligently, as part of my homework, and our decisions will be based on what is in the best interests of Canadians.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Waterloo International Airport wants the Liberals to raise the foreign ownership limit of airlines to 49%. This will allow low-cost airlines to start up in Canada and will create thousands of jobs.

The minister said a decision was not forthcoming, but in the House last week, his parliamentary secretary said that there would be a decision in the coming months.

This uncertainty is unacceptable. We need action now. Why is the minister not listening to Canadians who want low-cost air carriers and more jobs?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did not say it was not forthcoming. Sometimes the media decides to frame it that way.

I have been working very diligently, as I said, for a long time to make sure that we make an informed decision. In fact, I have held round tables for the past four and a half months. I have consulted with Canadians. I have even had a Facebook chat, live, to talk to Canadians about their views with respect to improving the traveller experience.

Believe me, I am working on this. I am doing my homework. I am consulting Canadians. We will make a decision in the best interests of Canadians.

* * *

• (1155)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberals are spending billions on pet projects, yet there are no jobs for Saskatchewan. They claim there is an increase in so-called infrastructure, yet there are no jobs for Saskatchewan.

Now the Liberals want to force a carbon tax on the provinces that will kill more jobs in Saskatchewan. Forcing the provinces and the territories to adopt carbon taxes will cost families thousands of dollars.

Oral Questions

When will the minister stop taxing hard-working Canadians and end the job-killing carbon tax?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we are very pleased that we are going to be moving forward with a pan-Canadian climate plan that was agreed to by the provinces and the territories in the Vancouver declaration, which also included recognition of the importance of putting a price on carbon.

I am very excited about the debate that is going to take place next week on the Paris agreement. I am also looking forward to meeting with my counterparts, the provincial environment ministers, this coming Monday to talk about our pan-Canadian plan, including how we are going to price pollution.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians only need to turn on the news to see the devastating effect that the misuse of fentanyl is having in our communities.

My home province of British Columbia has already declared a public health emergency after a dramatic increase in the number of overdose deaths from illicit drugs such as fentanyl, and 800 people are projected to die due to overdoses in B.C. by the end of the year.

This is an issue affecting all provinces and territories, and we need to act. Will the Minister of Health inform the House what our government is doing to combat the opioid crisis?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells has raised a very serious matter.

We are deeply concerned about the growing number of overdoses and deaths caused by fentanyl and other opioids. That is why we have delivered a five-point action plan to address the opioid crisis in this country. It includes work done in collaboration with our partners, including Senator Vern White.

We were able to take a step in August to restrict the chemicals used in the illicit production of fentanyl. We have much more work to do in collaboration with health professionals, addiction experts, provinces and territories, and all members of all parties to implement—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. member for Calgary Nose Hill.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Calgary Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, this summer the government abruptly and without consultation added significant new study permit requirements for those wishing to complete language courses in Canada before entering a degree program. This added red tape is dulling Canada's competitive edge in attracting international students, and decreased enrolment this fall in language institutes is already reflecting this.

Can the minister tell the numerous educational groups and institutes that have urgently contacted many of us across party lines,

as I am sure my colleagues in the government have heard too, when he is going to talk to them about their concerns, and address their concerns, more importantly—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can say that we are addressing this issue of these Conservative-imposed rules that are causing some trouble. I am hoping to have a response in September.

I could also say, on the international students, that we want to court international students. We have reversed the Conservatives' provision taking away the 50% credit for citizenship, and we are adding points for international students on express entry.

We Liberals are working for international students and reversing what the Conservatives did.

* * *

[Translation]

SPORT AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this summer, Canadians across the country were glued to their televisions as they watched our athletes excel at the Rio Olympic Games.

My question is for the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities.

[English]

Now that the Rio games are sadly over, can the parliamentary secretary advise the House just how well Canada's Olympic and Paralympic teams performed?

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Châteauguay—Lacolle for her excellent question.

I watched both the Paralympic Games and the Olympic Games. Saying that our athletes made us proud is an understatement. The Canadian paralympic team finished 14th, and our Olympic team finished 10th. Both teams exceeded expectations.

• (1200)

[English]

On behalf of all Canadians, I thank our athletes for their hard work, perseverance, and courage. This past summer, they gave us memories of a lifetime.

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Cold Lake, CPC): Madam Speaker, on June 21 there was a screening of the documentary *Angry Inuk* held here on Parliament Hill. Produced by a prominent Inuit filmmaker, this documentary covers the struggles of Inuit seal hunters, who have seen the cost of their seal products crash due to the EU product ban. Pelts now go for half of what they once did.

When will the government take action to combat the EU seal ban, which is devastating Inuit hunters?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak to this particular issue. Being an Inuk myself and living in the north, I know how critical the sealing industry is to our communities and our people.

We continue to work hard as a government and we continue to work hard with Inuit people to open new markets around the world. It is a very humane industry. It is one that we take a lot of pride in. It is a long-standing part of our culture. As we speak today, there is a delegation from Nunavut that is in the U.K. marketing and promoting seal products from Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Mario Beaulieu (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Madam Speaker, last week, the Minister of Immigration did not answer my question on Haitian and Zimbabwean refugees who are still waiting for a response to their application for permanent residency.

More than 1,000 refugees have been living with uncertainty for years, without status, often in great difficulty, and without access to work permits, health insurance, or even telephone services.

Will the minister commit to adopting a special measure to give these refugees a response and their permanent resident status—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order, please. The hon. Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Madam Speaker, we have been working very hard on these files. We held a press conference with my counterpart in Quebec and the hon. member for Bourassa. We offered a simplified process and a loan with an interest rate of less than 1%. The hon. member for Bourassa spoke in Creole at a church and on the radio. We have made extensive efforts to help the Haitian community.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, first, the Liberals adopted the Conservative government's greenhouse gas reduction targets, and now they are approving the Conservatives' project.

The same minister who, in Paris, stressed how urgent it was to fight climate change has approved the Pacific NorthWest pipeline.

Oral Questions

By so doing, she is condoning the production of an additional six to nine million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

I would like her to explain how we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing them.

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Our government knows that the environment and the economy go together. We are working very hard on all the files. I am very pleased to say that, next week, we will have the opportunity to discuss the Paris agreement. I hope that my colleague opposite will participate in that dialogue.

Monday, I will be meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts to propose our pan-Canadian plan.

* * *

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the ADISQ sounded the alarm. The Quebec music industry is in crisis.

For example, Jean Leloup's song *Paradis City* was streamed 540,000 times on Spotify but he was paid just under \$30 for it. What did the Minister of Canadian Heritage say? She said she felt bad for him. The house is on fire and the chief firefighter is saying, "oh, that is too bad".

Quebec artists need swift and concrete action, not consultations that will take months.

What is the Minister of Canadian Heritage waiting for? When will she finally protect Quebec culture?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her important question.

I am working on that file. We have taken the lead in studying how digital content is affecting the entertainment and information industries. We are listening to all stakeholders and have invited them to a consultation process where they can express their opinions. I truly hope that they will attend those consultations in Montreal on October 28.

I am also in talks with my counterparts in other countries on this issue because it does not just affect Canadians. It also affects many—

● (1205)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Order. That concludes question period for today.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Glen Abernethy, Minister of Health and Social Services, Minister Responsible for Seniors, for Persons with Disabilities, for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, and for the Public Utilities Board for Northwest Territories.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32 (2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled "Final Acts of the World Radiocommunication Conference of the International Telecommunication Union", done at Geneva on November 27, 2015.

* * *

[English]

HOLIDAYS ACT

Mr. Colin Fraser (West Nova, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-311, an act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day).

He said: Madam Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Holidays Act, regarding Remembrance Day.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Gatineau for being the seconder on the bill.

Similar versions of the bill have been introduced by former members of Parliament from the NDP, the Conservative Party, and the Liberals, including in the 41st Parliament where it received nearly unanimous support on a vote at second reading.

Every year, on November 11, ceremonies are held across Canada to remember those men and women who have made the supreme sacrifice for our country. We have the privilege of living in a free and democratic country, thanks to the valour of those brave Canadians who fought to protect our rights and freedoms. It is with a deep respect for members of the Canadian Forces and our veterans that I put forward the bill that would officially recognize November 11 as a solemn day of remembrance by including it as a federal legal holiday.

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

PETITIONS

JUSTICE

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am presenting 10 petitions today in support of a law protecting pregnant women and their preborn children.

This week, I received an email that put into words the very essence of why Bill C-225 is resonating and reflecting in the hearts and minds of Canadians. The email contains three letters, addressed to their MP, the Minister of Justice, and the Prime Minister. I am posting them on my MP Facebook page for all to read.

I do not expect all my fellow parliamentarians to like my page, but I would encourage them to go there and read the views of three of my amazing grandchildren. I have nine of them altogether. They write about what they would have felt if their mom and baby brother, whose birth was a highly-anticipated event, had been attacked the way Cassie was when she was carrying Molly.

When they learned they were not old enough to sign this petition, they decided to petition their friends anyway. There is a petition mailed to me with the heading "Kids' Petition", and all 15 signatures in their choice of coloured pencil crayon. Sometimes it is out of the mouths of children that true wisdom comes.

● (1210)

FALUN GONG

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I present a petition from hundreds of Calgarians who are publicly calling for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from Coaldale, Alberta.

The petitioners are concerned about the accessibility and impact of violent and degrading sexually explicit material online and the impact on public health, especially on the well-being of women and girls. These petitioners are calling on the House of Commons to adopt my Motion No. 47.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today in the House to discuss Bill C-22, the national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians act.

I stand here after reading hours of previous debate from this parliament as well as previous parliaments, media reviews of this bill as well as the bill itself. The bill is extremely misleading and should have a disclaimer that states "read the small print". The bill truly deceives Canadians. The government has deceived Canadians by introducing a bill that would not provide true parliamentary oversight, but is a facade that it is doing something.

Just a year ago many members of the House sat through electoral debates. It was during this time that the current Prime Minister campaigned on real change and less power of the PMO. Yet, in this bill, the Prime Minister would have even greater power than we can even imagine when it comes to the actual inner workings of the proposed committee.

Let us start by pointing out that the Prime Minister would personally choose the chair of the committee, and he chose that member and provided a handsome bonus for this position. Let us point out that the make-up of the committee would not be like one of the standing committees in the House of Commons. These committee members would be approved by the Prime Minister. This committee would only be able to receive information approved by the Prime Minister and his cabinet. This committee would report directly to the Prime Minister, and the report that would be tabled in Parliament would be vetted by the Prime Minister. Let us not forget the Prime Minister would have the right to edit this report. I truly think I see a theme in these things that I am stating.

On another note, this committee would be made up of parliamentarians who would not require any experience in security, policing, or defence. Am I wrong for thinking that a hand chosen committee with political imbalance is right for Canada?

I would like to point out that the information that would be reviewed by the parliamentarian committee would already have been cleansed by the cabinet and the Prime Minister. Information that would be reviewed by the committee would have been approved yet restricted. I will share a section of a speech given by the hon. member for Durham, citing former speaker, Peter Milliken:

The insinuation that members of Parliament cannot be trusted with the very information that they may well require to act on behalf of Canadians runs contrary to the inherent trust that Canadians have placed in their elected officials and which members require to act in their various parliamentary capacities.

This legislation would do exactly opposite of the statement by the former and reputable Speaker.

Government Orders

We all understand that there would be sensitive information presented to this committee. However, the fact that the committee would not be seen to have this privilege is very disturbing. My thoughts on this committee can be compared to a family dinner. The committee is not old enough and not wise enough to sit at the grown-ups' table. As well, how could there be true oversight if the information received were already edited? It is sort of like reading a letter that has black marker all over it, except in this case it would be done all by the Prime Minister's Office.

I am unsure if the members of the committee would even know there was edited information that they would be receiving, so that when it came to them it would already have been edited so therefore they would not have all points of view and they would not have the opportunity to look at all of the information necessary to make the appropriate decisions. I say that because there has been little information provided on this actual committee, just the limitations it would be given.

The government is introducing a committee to be more transparent to Canadians, the Liberals say. However, we know that transparency is truly not the case here. I speak as an average Canadian with the honour of representing the great constituents of Elgin—Middlesex—London, an average Canadian who hopes the government will recognize this flawed bill and make important amendments, such as the amendment requests that were presented to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and completely ignored, amendments that were not only reviewed by the official opposition but were shared with the critic for the NDP for its input as well.

These suggestions include: a set number of members and senators; the ability for the committee to summon any witness required; the election of the chair; the request that all parties should have the right to select members who have the necessary experience and who are familiar with security, intelligence, and defence issues; and as well become a member of Her Majesty's Privy Council and swear an oath of secrecy for the work conducted.

• (1215)

These are just some of the suggestions presented to the minister, and as I just stated, with no response.

Changing gears, I have reviewed numerous suggestions indicating some sort of support for the bill. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association supports the introduction of the bill; however, it notes that there are many considerations that need to be addressed. These include the government's power to halt a committee investigation, the Prime Minister's power to redact the committee's report, as well as the decision that the Prime Minister personally appoint the chair.

A law professor at the University of Ottawa, Craig Forcese, has stated that he has concerns about the government's ability to veto the committee's plans, limit its ability to see secret materials, and redact its reports. A University of Ottawa historian stated that this is a "good bill", but he too adds that the real test will be finding the right members.

Government Orders

Even when people look at the bill who actually support it, they too have questions. We have seen academics, lawyers, and many people react to the bill by saying that it is just not right. It needs to have amendments made to it, and it needs to have suggestions from the opposition parties as well.

The bill is not perfect. Therefore, I urge the Minister of Public Safety to start looking at these suggestions and start listening to the opposition members. My colleagues and I are not saying that third-party oversight is not important, but we see a government setting up a new branch of the PMO, not a committee that is allowed to do its job.

Currently, there are watchdogs in place, including the Security Intelligence Review Committee that reviews CSIS, the CSE commissioner who reviews the Communications Security Establishment, and the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission that reviews the RCMP.

This is a committee that is not and will not have the tools and resources available to be effective. This committee already has limitations set out by the Liberal government. The committee is already hampered by the government's decision on the development of the parliamentary committee.

I ask my colleagues to review this piece of legislation and proposal for the committee, and ask themselves whether this is what Canadians are really looking for. Did they ask for a committee that is another branch of the Prime Minister's Office, or did they ask for third-party oversight? Did they ask for hand-picked members, including a hand-picked chair that reports to the Prime Minister directly, or did they want to see a committee that truly has the rights of a committee and can do its work with all resources available to them?

The legislation is very worrisome to me. If the Prime Minister is hand-picking, then can we be sure that he is not also setting the agenda? How can we be sure that the agenda is allowed to be scrutinized by members, ministers, and the Prime Minister himself, or is this committee just fluff?

I am not against watchdogs and whistleblowers. However, the legislation is not that at all. The legislation would not provide the true parliamentary oversight that is necessary. This committee is window dressing, and it does not have the teeth to be able to do anything. This committee reports to one person and one person alone, and that person is the Prime Minister of Canada. It is he who will decide what is actually tabled in the House. National Security is extremely important and the Prime Minister would not allow the committee to do its work.

I urge the Minister of Public Safety to scrutinize the bill and provide something to Parliament that is meaningful. I urge the minister to work with all members, government and opposition, to do what is best for all Canadians. Please work with the recommendations made by former security lawyers, our Armed Forces members, and former RCMP and police officials, who now sit in the House, to make this a better piece of legislation that we can all support.

• (1220)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question for my colleague on her speech.

We hear constantly about the concern of the Conservatives on the ability to vet reports for classified information. Does the member believe that classified information should be releasable, or should there be some kind of mechanism to make sure that never happens?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate that question, because truly the security of all Canadians and protecting Canadians is paramount here.

I respect what the member is saying, but we also see that it is in the hands of one individual. I am recommending that this committee, when sworn to the Privy Council, would have the right so that the information remains with them. The committee needs to be able to make a proper decision, and the only way to do so is by having accurate information and the necessary resources. If it is supposed to be properly able to do its job, whether it is going to be something from the public or something from ministers, it needs all the resources. It does not need things that are picked and chosen by the minister and his cabinet.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if my colleague might comment on the fact that the chair of the committee was appointed before legislation was even tabled in the House. He was appointed back in January, and here we are in September only now debating the creation of this committee, yet the Prime Minister saw fit to give him a \$42,000 pay raise before the committee was even established.

I wonder if the member might have some comments on that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank the member for Perth—Wellington for asking that question, because that is something Canadians need to know. This is not the way parliamentary committees work. Parliamentary committees are able to vote for their chair and that is important. We need proper leadership.

What we saw here was the Prime Minister hand-pick that person and give him a \$42,000 or \$43,000 bonus just to sit as the chair. That is of great concern to me. Maybe the Prime Minister vetted him, but I do not see that. It is outside the normal protocol for selecting committee chairs. Does the member have the experience in security, policing, and intelligence? Does the member who is going to chair the committee have all the proper resources? As my colleague said, the number one thing is that the member who will chair the committee was personally selected by the Prime Minister. That is unparliamentary.

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, since the three Liberal MPs who are actually in the House right now do not seem to be asking questions, I will ask another question.

I regret having called the attention of the House to the absence—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I just want to remind hon. members in the House that we are not to refer to anyone's presence in the House.

Mr. John Nater: That was my mistake, Mr. Speaker. I should have known better.

Government Orders

The Liberal government seems to be implying that we are somehow taking this from international examples, yet when we compare it to the British example, we are falling short. This committee will not report directly to the House as it ought to.

I wonder if my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London might have some comments on the way the committee has been structured.

• (1225)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, when doing research on this committee, all of us probably looked to see what they do in other Houses, such as in New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain. As the member stated, it is not the same sort of parliamentary committee as in those other Houses. We have a hand-picked committee, whereas for the others, it is a committee similar to a standing committee of the House. Its members have the rights of committee members and the resources. The problem is that we cannot compare apples to oranges.

The government has indicated that it is the same idea and that it is using those references. Unfortunately, it is going down a totally different route than what it has seen.

We have heard many times that the Conservatives are against the selection of the chair. It is not just the Conservatives who are against it. We actually see groups in the community that usually do not support the Conservative movement now saying that this is not a good piece of legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in light of some of the reports we have heard on CBC over the past week, clearly, it seems appropriate to ask some questions. There were reports of incredible abuses committed against Canadian citizens who were literally sent to be tortured at the request of various Canadian agencies. That is precisely why I am pleased to rise here today to speak to Bill C-22 at second reading.

My good friend, the member for Victoria, has been handling this issue skilfully and intelligently. I will therefore be voting in favour of the bill at this stage so that it can be studied further in committee. As always, that is where the real work is done for the benefit of Quebeckers and Canadians.

We certainly commend the government's initiative in bringing this bill forward. Not only does it respond to a very clear call from various commissions of inquiry over the past several decades, but it also fulfills a promise made during the election campaign last fall regarding some recent issues.

This bill to create a national security and intelligence committee of parliamentarians is crucial. The committee has to be formed not only with the greatest of care, but also with the necessary tools to be credible in the eyes of everyone, citizens and politicians alike, as well on the international stage. Half measures are not an option.

When it comes to credibility and legitimacy regarding national security, the truth is that the previous Conservative government missed the mark with Bill C-51 in the last Parliament. They went in exactly the wrong direction. A critical mass of national security experts were against that bill that was rammed through.

The NDP was the only party that firmly opposed this bill, and Canadians overwhelmingly rejected this intrusive approach that did nothing to balance national security with the protection of the individual freedoms of Quebeckers and Canadians.

Let us be clear: the Liberals have to keep their promise to get rid of the problematic provisions in Bill C-51. We will hold them to it. If we as parliamentarians, and the government MPs in particular, want to win back the trust of Quebeckers and Canadians, then this is definitely the right first step.

Honestly, the public's trust in our institutions should be among the primary objectives of Canada's security policy. Let me explain.

We live in a world that is constantly evolving and, unfortunately, as shown by the tragic events in Istanbul, London, New York, Paris, and Brussels, it is unpredictable and quite dangerous. The length of this list should be enough to attest to that.

We must ensure that our national security organizations, the RCMP, CSE, and CSIS, have the necessary tools and resources to do their job, but that they also do not operate without administrative transparency, so that Canadians can know that they are effective and that they protect Canadians' rights in the best possible way.

Make no mistake, the world in which we live is not a John le Carré or Ian Fleming novel set in the cold war. The duty to protect is particularly important, but entails a responsibility.

I agree, our national security organizations already have oversight bodies, but the truth is that these bodies operate somewhat haphazardly and do not have full and systematic access to sensitive information.

The mandate of oversight and review bodies is limited to examining the work of their target organization. They are unable to follow the thread that connects them to various government organizations.

I want to remind everyone that the annual budget for CSIS, the RCMP, and CSE is close to \$4 billion. That responsibility, not to mention the significant amount of taxpayer money involved, justifies the creation of this committee of parliamentarians. I know that every MP represents his or her constituents admirably. That is the spirit in which the members of this parliamentary committee will be tasked with overseeing these operations.

To get back to my first point, the committee must be put together very carefully. All of our allies have parliamentary committees for international security, but they differ in their makeup and especially in their mandate. We can learn from both their experience and their flaws to ensure that our review committee is robust.

Quebeckers and Canadians want a watchdog with sharp teeth. The new committee must have full access to classified information, sufficient resources, and independence. Within reasonable limits, it must be able to share its findings with Canadians in an informative and transparent way.

Government Orders

Twelve years ago, an interim committee of parliamentarians on national security recommended that, should such a committee be created, it should have complete access to all of the information it needs.

• (1230)

Of course, the NDP will be working hard to ensure that this new committee has access to that information.

In that regard, Kent Roach and Craig Forcese, legal experts and authors of a book that was recently published on Bill C-51 and Canada's anti-terrorism laws, have said that without full access to classified information, the committee would not be able to accomplish its task. Mr. Forcese added that this is a good bill, albeit one with inevitable flaws, which likely reflect compromises designed to reconcile elements within the government. Bill C-22 is a good start, but even the best review mechanism in the world cannot make up for flawed legislation, such as Bill C-51. It is therefore important not to lose sight of the bigger picture. These are very clear statements from very competent individuals.

It seems obvious to me that the new parliamentary oversight committee must act as a sufficient counterbalance to restore Canadians' confidence and, more importantly, prevent the kind of abuse that we have seen or bring it to light.

On that note, in order to demonstrate why we need an oversight committee with adequate powers, I would like to draw the House's attention to fact that the excellent journalists at CBC/Radio-Canada managed to report that, from 2001 to 2004, Canadians were imprisoned and tortured in Syria with the complicity of Canadian authorities.

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York, CSIS and the RCMP wanted to find al-Qaeda cells located within the country. In the end, that contributed to massive human rights violations and complicity in the torture of three individuals in Syria. CBC/Radio-Canada had to comb through some 18,000 documents to bring this story to light.

Let us be clear: complicity in torture is unacceptable. It is unacceptable for our authorities to use such an approach. While waiting for a proper parliamentary committee with the right tools to be set up, it is up to talented reporters, like the ones at CBC/Radio-Canada, to ensure that our national security institutions do not engage in this sort of abuse.

I think it is high time that we had this tool so that Quebeckers and Canadians can have confidence in the institutions responsible for protecting us.

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I note that in correspondence sent from the Conservative Party opposition critic for public safety and emergency preparedness several attempts to foster a collaborative and informed dialogue on our national security and its oversight were made by both our caucus and the NDP caucus, without any response and no consultations with members on the opposition side of the House. Could the member comment on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. She is quite right. She has put her finger on something that is a hallmark of this government.

If there is one thing this government has mastered, it is communications. It knows what it is doing. We must give credit where credit is due. The Liberal Party sure knows how to spin its sunny ways, its assurances that everything will be great, and so on.

The message is really consistent. It is a very solid, well-backed campaign. The media are thrilled, and everyone is feeding us the same news. It is all around us. Everything is great and the dark times are over.

The reality, however, is that all this comes with a severe case of “consultitis”, and it takes forever to see any action on any number of issues. Then again, during the summer, there were some announcements about fundamental decisions that parliamentarians should have been allowed to contribute to.

With that in mind, it should come as no surprise that the Prime Minister is being given the right to choose everything here and that the committee is full of empty promises. Honestly, in just one year, the Liberals have already severely disappointed Canadians in terms of the transparency and brilliance that were promised during the 2015 election campaign.

• (1235)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a first step, the bill will move us a lot farther down the road than we have been. With the dynamics of our friends on the opposite side, better is always possible, which is the terms we have used, so we will work on that.

I wanted to specifically focus in on one thing and ask the hon. member about the value of having the work of this committee apply to the work in progress by the agencies, not after the fact, not just when something has come up, but the ability to see the moving parts and to perhaps intervene and comment at that time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his very appropriate question.

I am not an expert in national security and police inspections, but I think that people back home are well aware of the value of wanting to oversee operations in real time and not after the fact, as my colleague says.

That being said, I would say to my colleague that his government repeatedly announced that it would make changes to Bill C-51. Now that is being pushed back. The government has decided to form a committee to oversee operations, but under Bill C-51, this adds to everyone's work because almost everyone is potentially under surveillance.

To use a very fine analogy: this work is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Bill C-51 essentially dumps a pile of hay on the bale. That is just great.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it sounded like there are a good number of people in this place who would like some changes in this process. Why are we just starting? Why do we not actually implement the oversight committee?

I think a number of amendments will be brought forward by our members. Certainly there is concern that the government can still pre-emptively halt the confidential investigation by the committee on national security. Is that not the very point of the committee?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, we see that an attempt is being made to solve problems that really resonate with people. Many people considered these security issues to be important.

I have to say that that people talk about them constantly and for good reason. We all share this planet and we are grappling with complicated issues. Everyone is concerned about potential abuses. I am thinking first and foremost of indigenous people who, under Bill C-51, will come under suspicion if they oppose a pipeline route. We must resolve these issues.

What remains worrisome is that the Liberal election campaign identified a popular issue and promised the moon. We must watch the Liberals because they have a habit of signalling left and then turning right after an election.

[English]

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 yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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): Pursuant to Standing Order 45, the recorded division stands deferred until Monday, October 3, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

• (1240)

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practice of the House, the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-22, an act to establish the

Private Members' Business

National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts be further deferred until the expiry of the time provided for oral questions on Tuesday, October 4, 2016.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I think you would find unanimous consent to see the clock at 1:30.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It being 1:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

The House resumed from May 11 consideration of the motion that Bill C-227, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (community benefit), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Terry Sheehan (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I speak in favour of Bill C-227, the community benefits agreement.

As the member for Sault Ste. Marie, I campaigned on historic infrastructure investments of \$125 billion over 10 years. I strongly believe that if the government wants to, investments will have important impacts on regions and communities, and the bill will have that effect.

Bill C-227 will amend section 20 of the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act to include provisions that will give the minister the flexibility to require bidders on federal projects to include information on community benefits of said projects for the local community.

For the purposes of the bill, the community benefit agreements are defined as social or economic benefits the community obtains from a public works project. These benefits can include local job creation and training opportunities, improvement of public spaces within the community, and any other specific benefits identified by the community.

Private Members' Business

It is a bill modelled on existing legislation in the province of Ontario, which was implemented earlier this month and is a great fit with this government's priorities.

In my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, the steel industry, including companies like Essar Steel Algoma and Tenaris Algoma Tubes are plagued with challenges. Global overcapacity and weak demand have put these domestic steel producers in jeopardy and are threatening the livelihoods of many people and their families. Many have already been laid off. Good-paying jobs in northern Ontario are hard to come by.

As a former city councillor and someone who has worked in economic development in Sault Ste. Marie and northern Ontario for many years, I know that economic development, diversification, and investments in key infrastructure projects are more important today than ever.

In fact, Sault Ste. Marie's unemployment rate over the last few years has been in the double digits. Investment in infrastructure in Bill C-227, in combination, will work to ensure that the historic investments our government is delivering have direct impacts that will leverage the existing skills and expertise of local businesses and individuals in my riding and in ridings across this country.

As someone who has worked in training and with the trades, it is my hope that, once passed, this legislation will also lead to more opportunities to train and develop a skilled workforce.

CBAs are a new approach to empowering local communities to partner with developers to respond to local challenges, and through encouraging activities like training, can lead to economic development and growth, poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability in neighbourhoods across Canada.

Canadians, in particular, are struggling economically and need a boost. Our government is working to deliver on a procurement and modernization agenda, and the constituents of my riding, like many others, want the Government of Canada to step up to the plate, after years of neglect, to ensure that Canadians are not left behind.

I think of an example in my riding of community benefits that our first nations partners put in place many years ago. We should look to our first nations as leaders in developing community benefits. When we added lanes to Highway 17 that ran through my riding a few years ago, the first nation of Garden River said they would like to see some community benefits, and they listed a number of things, including employment of Garden River people, training, use of local aggregates, and subcontracting with local businesses.

I think we could learn a lesson from our first nation friends that this is a good thing. It really helped Garden River. I know that Chief Paul Syrette is a leader in this area and will continue to be.

I have been able to speak with the mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, Christian Provenzano, and with many city councillors, and they believe that this is a good thing that will really help our economy, which has been struggling over the last few years.

The Government of Canada has an opportunity to work directly with many communities across this area to dictate these community benefits.

●(1245)

I will use the example of some tradespeople who came to my area to get certification so they could work. They were not from the community. They were not even from northern Ontario, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, or Alberta. They were from the United States. Sault Ste. Marie is on the border of America, and they had come to work. I have nothing against my American cousins, but when the government spends infrastructure monies, they should direct them to community benefits.

I said that the economy in my riding had been suffering over the last few years and it was an opportunity for other tradespeople from Sault Ste. Marie, northern Ontario, or across the country to work, but they did not. Those are just two anecdotal examples where community benefits in play have helped a community like Garden River and when community benefits were not in play, there was a bit of seepage, so to speak.

Our government has also invested greatly in infrastructure spending in my area, and there are many federal projects that could be invested in and expanded upon. This gives the minister the ability to work with local communities.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the member for York South—Weston for introducing this great bill and for his hard work. I know he has gone from coast to coast across the country, talking with many businesses, labour organizations, communities, community leaders, and organizations. I will not steal his thunder as I know he will speak later, but there were very positive results from those consultations and hard work. My hat goes off to the member for York South—Weston, who has been working very hard.

This is really important. It is a critical time for us to invest in infrastructure and get the economy going. It is of utmost importance, not just for my generation but our children's generation. My daughter Kate Sheehan is visiting Ottawa today on a professional development day. We have to think about what her future will look like in Sault Ste. Marie and Canada.

I am very pleased that we can dictate the community benefits that will help the riding of Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding area. The people from Batchewana First Nation are going to have opportunities, as well as Prince Township, Heyden, and Searchmont. There are untold opportunities, and this is just the beginning.

We could look at this to see how we could expand it to have more impact. Our historic spending of \$125 billion over 10 years is absolutely remarkable. Of course, the spending is important to the steel industry because infrastructure projects use steel. Being the co-chair of the steel caucus, I recognize there are plenty of opportunities for us to have steel in our infrastructure program. I know it will be extremely beneficial for places like Sault Ste. Marie, northern Ontario, Ontario, and the rest of Canada.

I cannot stress enough that, after talking with local community leaders, they are totally looking forward to announcements. I am looking forward to making announcements in the future in my riding and working with community leaders to prioritize which infrastructure projects they believe are important. Not only that, but we should engage them again and ask how we can benefit their communities more, get people working, get people into the trades, and get local contractors working on these infrastructure programs.

I again thank the member for York South—Weston. It is an honour to co-second the bill.

● (1250)

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech on Bill C-227, the community benefits bill. Like my colleague, I too was a city councillor, having spent nine years with the City of Barrie before being elected to this wonderful institution.

It is my honour to rise on behalf of the residents of Barrie—Innisfil today and speak to Bill C-227, a bill brought forward with all the best intentions. In my opinion, and I say this with all due respect to the member for York South—Weston, it fails in the reality of what he may be trying to propose here.

The bill deals with federal infrastructure projects but does not stray far from the process for municipal projects that many here in the House are familiar with. There are 77 members of the House who have municipal political experience; 36 of those members are of the government.

The planning process goes through many different phases, from determining a need to the drawing up of an idea, the drafting of the building rationale, and the production of the plans. Each of my 76 colleagues who have served locally know that red tape cannot be added to ensure a community benefit.

In the process of a project, there's always the discussion of the benefit that a new project is going to bring to the community, and that really starts at the beginning. If it is a new LRT plan, it is to increase transit ridership, new roads mean goods move faster, wastewater systems mean safer water, and housing funding means affordable housing.

What does Bill C-227 mean for federal employees who fall under this? Has their work managing federal infrastructure projects been subpar? Have the women and men of PWGSC been operating under the guise that there's no such thing as a community benefit? There's always a community benefit, and our federal departments are always working with the needs and the benefits of Canadians.

When the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities announced funding for municipal projects, he stated on May 5, 2016:

...we also respect the ability of the local governments to make their own decisions.

Does the member for York South—Weston naturally assume that he does not feel the same for federal employees and our provincial partners? Let us be clear, the bill aims to add red tape and bureaucracy to a process that already has safeguards built into it.

The bill intends to add three new reporting mechanisms to every federal infrastructure project. The first stage of the new reporting will come in pre-attribution. This is a repetition of the work being

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done from the start of an idea: the determining of a need, the benefits of the project, and the benefits of the community the project will serve. Will these proposed projects not come under the watchful eye of the public during consultations? Is this step of a pre-attribution report nothing more than a repeat of the project application process?

I have been a part of many public consultations in the city of Barrie. The public in these consultations have a keen eye for the community benefit of each and every project. Our residents can see waste a mile away. There is no need for a new step in the beginning to determine if a funding project is a worthwhile endeavour by the government.

The second new mandated report will take place during a project, with ongoing reporting during the works of the project. The most common reasons for increased costs of construction are delays. Delays are deadly to the life cycle of a project. It costs the project manager, construction company, inspectors, and the federal government.

The life cycle of a project has milestones, and these milestones and the timeline in these milestones are watched and mitigated by the project handlers themselves. These milestone reports form much of the reporting after completion. It will be difficult to determine just how community benefits are being met during construction. Time is money. Bill C-227 will add time and money to the cost of every federal project at a time when many feel we take too long to complete a project today.

● (1255)

Let me now address the third proposed mandatory reporting requirement after the project is complete. This is perhaps the only real beneficial step in what is being proposed in this bill. We do need to find accountability in the work that is being done and funded by Canadians. Gaps found in a post-evaluation can be addressed for future projects. However, this does not need to be mandated. In the world of project management, a post-completion review is part of a current rigorous process. Why entrench it further when there is no need to?

This bill requires that we add some very important questions addressing red flag concerns. Where will the costs of the extra work be covered? Will it come from within the department's budget? Will the red tape be paid for by project funding received by the very same minister who is asking for the review? Will there be a need to hire to meet the new expanded reporting demands that this bill creates? The current government is starting to sound like the Government of Ontario and becoming a leading new hire employer. The private sector, not the government, should be leading with job creation. Will the government be forced to hire to cover the extra workload? These are all fair questions.

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When the Prime Minister was gearing up for the election, he spoke at the FCM conference in Edmonton in June of 2015. He stated:

We will make it easier for municipalities to get shovels in the ground by removing the requirement that virtually every project must go through...that too often results in unilateral federal decisions.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

And we will make sure that that investment gets to you when you need it, not when it's politically convenient for the federal government to send it your way.

He concluded his speech by proclaiming to municipal leaders:

I want you to know that with the right partner in Ottawa, you will have real partnership with Ottawa. A partner that respects your experience—

—that is, who respects municipalities' experiences.

Does this statement exclude federal departments? Does the trust the Prime Minister has in municipalities not extend to the hard-working men and women of our public service? Additional bureaucracy does not send a message of trust. Rather, it says that we need to watch you a little more closely.

As the member for Spadina—Fort York once wrote in a blog post in May 2015, when he was a member of Parliament for the old Toronto riding of Trinity—Spadina:

Unlike complex funding programmes, direct revenue does not require a new ministry or massive bureaucracy for oversight.

We believe in the transparency of government, but we do not believe that we need to add more regulations and rules to it.

In closing, I, along with 76 other colleagues in House, including 36 from the government side, know all too well the red tape and bureaucracy that exists in getting projects completed from idea to the completion of construction. The last thing needed is another level of red tape and the threat of a federal ministerial review for community benefits that have already been proven at their local level. We would not accept this at the municipal level.

As a resident of Ontario, I have witnessed first hand the wasted tax dollars and the effect of over 300,000-plus regulations by the McGuinty and Wynne Liberals. My fear is that the federal Liberals are taking us down the same path at the national level. Why should we accept that at the federal level?

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, agreements on community benefits are definitely vectors of social and economic development at the local level. Today, it seems that creating such agreements is a progressive idea and an opportunity that we should seize.

I would like to say that I will be supporting this bill at second reading stage.

The NDP believes that we must promote local growth, training and employment by increasing investments in public infrastructure and promoting agreements on community benefits.

This government promised Canadians that there would be change. I am pleased to see today that they are finally getting down to work.

The Liberals promised to make massive investments in infrastructure, among other things. We are still waiting.

Agreements on community benefits would stimulate growth, employment, and economic and social development not just in my riding, but in all ridings. In Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, there are a number of major infrastructure projects waiting for federal funding.

I want to talk about a large-scale infrastructure project, the Casavant Boulevard extension in Saint-Hyacinthe, that I would like to see covered by this kind of agreement. Having served six years as a city councillor, I am sure everyone in Saint-Hyacinthe knows what I am talking about. The project involves building a rail overpass. It is vital to the city's economic development because it will open up the industrial park. Believe it or not, we have been waiting for federal funding for this project for 10 years.

The Casavant Boulevard extension is critical to Saint-Hyacinthe's growth and development. The federal government must act quickly and decisively on this file so that we can build this road infrastructure. The Casavant Boulevard extension is well suited to a community benefit agreement. It would be an opportunity to create good jobs, make training available, and revitalize the local economy. It would certainly stimulate growth, help create wealth, and contribute to more responsible development.

While I have no doubt this would benefit my riding, I am skeptical about the implementation and the scope of such agreements.

I think that this bill could be improved in several ways. In my riding, it is important to support local businesses. Saint-Hyacinthe is known around the world for being an agrifood technocity. The development of its local businesses would definitely stimulate the economy, create jobs, and promote growth and innovation in my region. That would create a ripple effect. We all know that when our businesses are successful, our economy does well too.

What the NDP wants is to include local organizations, regional businesses, and members of the community in the planning process for infrastructure spending. We want to ensure that they enjoy the benefits and spinoffs that this spending creates. That seems like common sense to us.

However, this bill does not require bidders to provide all the information about the project to the various stakeholders. In my opinion, that is vital information. This bill also does not specify how the intended benefits will be calculated. It also does not mention the objectives of these agreements.

We believe that a targeted recruitment policy must be included in the bill so that members of the community and local organizations and businesses are not forgotten. What is more, as my hon. colleague, the sponsor of this bill mentioned, the purpose of these community benefit agreements is to “create community wealth, quality jobs, training, responsible growth, and a healthier environment”.

Private Members' Business

● (1305)

These are honourable goals. However, how can we be sure that they will be implemented if they are not even mentioned in the legislation? I suggest that the legislation include guiding principles that emphasize equity, community involvement, eco-friendly practices, and support for disadvantaged groups.

I would also like to come back to a small, but significant word. I am talking about the word “may” in clause 2 of the bill. This small word makes a big difference. Clause 2 of the bill reads:

The Minister may, before awarding a contract for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal real property or federal immovables, require bidders on the proposal to provide information on the community benefits that the project will provide.

Why the word “may” and not the word “shall”? In other words, the requirement on community benefits that the project will provide is left to the discretion of the minister.

There is no guarantee that these agreements to include community benefits will in fact be implemented. I think if we really want to make a difference and generate wealth locally, we should not leave that to the discretion of the minister. If we truly wanted communities to benefit, we would establish clear structures and avoid the kind of ambiguity that we see here.

We want the goals of community benefit agreements to be an explicit part of the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities's mandate. Otherwise, there would be no requirement for the government to report on the success or failure of the policy.

I am trying to believe in the legislation, and I want it to become a reality for our regions. However, when I consider the conditions of the trans-Pacific partnership, I cannot help but be pessimistic about it. When my honourable colleague introduced the bill in the House, he said, “a similar piece of legislation in Ontario, Bill 6, has survived trade agreements.”

Bill C-227 must do more than survive trade agreements. Chapter 15 of the trans-Pacific partnership does not state whether bid criteria such as those in community benefit agreements would be considered a trade barrier. If that were the case, the bill could expose Canada to trade challenges

The government has bulldozed straight ahead to ratify this trade agreement. It is clear that the government will definitely limit preferences regarding government procurement at an international level. Let us also not forget that a similar piece of legislation in Ontario, Bill 6, has never been in force at the same time as the trans-Pacific partnership. If it survives, I have to wonder what will become of it once that agreement comes into effect.

It seems to me that the bill requires a number of changes before this initiative can become a reality, despite its goal to support vulnerable populations while working on development.

As I said, we do not want this bill to be a missed opportunity. These kinds of community benefit agreements need to become a reality. It is our duty to provide our regions and our constituents with meaningful social and economic development opportunities.

Let us work on creating jobs at a local level. Through these agreements, let us create a generation of qualified workers to build a talent pool for our industries, as recommended by Canada's Building Trades Unions and the National Construction Labour Relations Alliance. Let us stimulate economic growth in our regions. Let us encourage social and economic development in our ridings and our regions.

Let us work together to make our regional economies models of development.

● (1310)

[English]

Mr. Ahmed Hussen (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-227, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act, regarding community benefits.

Community benefits are defined as the benefits obtained by a community, above and beyond the infrastructure project itself. These include but are not limited to local job creation, paid training, affordable housing, green space, or any other benefit identified by the community itself.

My colleagues have brought forward some concerns regarding the bill in today's debate, and previously. I would like to address some of them.

It is, in fact, a myth that the bill would increase red tape and increase costs for small- and medium-sized businesses. It is not true. In fact, Bill C-227 would speed up the approval process, thereby, saving money for small and medium-sized businesses. When communities have been consulted on the kinds of benefits that they would like from an infrastructure project and can see those benefits being obtained from an infrastructure project, they are more likely to support the development process and speed up the approval process for new development.

It is also a myth that business groups and other organizations oppose Bill C-227. In fact, the Toronto board of trade, the Vancouver board of trade, the Montreal board of trade, and many other organizations have come out strongly for community benefit agreements as a good way, as a good economic policy, to tackle youth unemployment and to deal with the issue of including marginalized groups that are not included in the construction industry.

It is also a complete myth that Bill C-227 did not receive adequate consultation. The fact is that I have consulted extensively on the bill all across the country. The groups that I have spoken with include, but are not limited to, the United Way, the Toronto Community Benefits Network, the Atkinson Foundation, the Mowat Centre, Canada's Building Trades Union, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Carpenters' Union, the Province of Ontario, the City of Vancouver, and many others.

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The Mowat Centre and the Atkinson Foundation have jointly published numerous studies that have stressed the importance of community benefit agreements for local economic growth. I have consulted all levels of government in the provinces across Canada. Having said that, my consultation process is ongoing. I have already planned many meetings across the country to ensure that I continue to consult widely on Bill C-227.

The bill is modelled on Ontario legislation, Bill C-6. The beauty of that is that we are able to now understand what has worked and what is not working with the Ontario legislation. As such, for example, Bill C-227 would address the concern about implementation and measurement of outcomes. It would do so in two ways.

First, the bill would empower the Minister of Public Services and Procurement to demand from contractors to demonstrate what they think the community benefits would be from an infrastructure project, and to demand an assessment after the completion of the project, to see whether those benefits were indeed delivered. Second, it would also require the minister to report back to Parliament once a year to show how the community benefited from various select building and repair projects.

Community benefit agreements are also in line with our government's priorities, including procurement modernization and social infrastructure promotion.

I am asking my colleagues from all sides of the House to support the bill, Bill C-227. Help me to enable communities all across Canada to benefit from building and repair projects.

I was elected to Parliament to represent York South—Weston, to push and propose legislation that would benefit my constituents. Bill C-227 would do exactly that, by dramatically improving the economic local impact that infrastructure has in local communities across Canada.

This would help York South—Weston and many other communities across this great country.

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 yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 5, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

It being 1:15, the House stands adjourned until next Monday, at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 1:15 p.m.)

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