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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayer

• (1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

THE OLD PORT

Mr. Simon Marciel (Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Old Port workers have been on strike for nearly five months, and the federal organization governing them, the Canada Lands Company, is in no hurry to resolve the conflict. The company is in no hurry to come to an agreement with the workers, who are being paid less than Quebec's minimum wage. The company is in no hurry even though two-thirds of the workers have no sick leave. This is 2016, and Old Port workers will no longer stand for having to live below the poverty line.

On a related note, Quebec's largest science centre is closed. The Montreal Science Centre has a vital education mission that it was unable to fulfill at the start of the school year. That is what happens when a Toronto-based Canadian organization without a single Quebecker on the board refuses to compromise. This is reminiscent of colonial times, and it must change immediately.

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LAVAL SENIORS' WEEK

Mr. Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Laval is known for having an abundance of resources and services for seniors. In 1993, the City of Laval demonstrated its innovative vision by establishing the first Place des aînés in the province of Quebec, a centre that offers a variety of activities and services and that has over 3,600 members.

Since this is Laval Seniors' Week, which runs from October 12 to 23, I want to take a moment to thank seniors for their contribution to

our community and all the volunteer work they do. The importance of seniors to our economy is often underestimated.

Thank you for your wonderful solidarity. Your work toward the common goal of contributing to the good of the Laval community is appreciated.

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[*English*]

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 200 million women and girls are missing, gone forever. There is a dangerous gender imbalance in the world. This global crisis is called gendercide, and is caused by sex selection. The world has become a very dangerous place for girls because many prefer boys over girls. Gender-based violence begins for girls even before they are born.

Numerous studies and documentaries are revealing that sex selection is occurring in Canada. World leaders and Canadians are speaking out against sex selection, and 92% of Canadians believe that sex-selection should be illegal. Canadian gynecologists and radiologists strongly oppose sex selection.

It is time to join the voices that are speaking out against sex selection. I ask this Parliament to support Motion No. 77, and join Canadians, the United Nations, and world leaders in condemning all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

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EASTER SEALS

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am excited to inform this House about an extraordinary event that took place on October 5. Dancing with Easter Seals Stars—Newmarket—Aurora was an amazing local fundraiser.

Community stars were paired with professional dancers from the Artistica Ballroom Dance Studio and competed to raise funds for Easter Seals. This year there were eight contestants: Rob Clark; Chris Emanuel; Tony Di Pede; Brian North; Lindsay Strom; Nikki Pett; Jennifer Buchanan; and my wife, Andrea Peterson. All dancers trained for weeks. The competition was intense. Congratulations to Andrea for winning the judge's choice award.

More importantly, Easter Seals helps children and youth with physical disabilities by providing summer camp opportunities, giving the children a chance to enjoy their summer. Easter Seals helps kids be kids.

Statements by Members

I am so proud to be part of a community that has embraced this charity. I am also proud that this event raised over \$90,000, a North American record. Thanks to this, 50 kids will get to experience summer camp this year.

I would like to express my appreciation to AJ Kleiman, the 2016 Easter Seals ambassador, for his heartfelt and moving speech. I thank Charlene Myke and the Easter Seals team.

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• (1410)

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for thousands of years, salmon has been the foundation and main food source for the people of the Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation. However, they have been held hostage by government lawyers, and unable to exercise their right to catch and sell fish, despite the fact the Supreme Court upheld those rights over seven years ago. Enough already.

The Prime Minister made real promises to end legal battles that discriminated against first nations. Canadians and indigenous people were hopeful to build a new nation-to-nation relationship based on respect and trust.

It has now been a year since the Liberals took power. I am severely disappointed to see nothing but disrespect from the government toward the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The hereditary chiefs have taken the unprecedented action of dismissing government officials from their meeting and told the Prime Minister he is no longer welcome on their lands.

Today, the Nuu-chah-nulth are in Vancouver, joined by National Chief Perry Bellegarde, grand chiefs and regional chiefs, to send a clear message to the Prime Minister. I stand in this House today, united with them. Enough already.

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[*Translation*]

MICHELINE PELLETIER

Mr. Rémi Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was with great sadness and emotion that we learned on September 29 of the passing of Micheline Pelletier, mayor of Sainte-Anne-des-Monts. The region has lost a remarkable woman.

Fully devoted to improving life for her constituents, she was a strong advocate for the Haute-Gaspésie. This exceptional, caring woman of conviction worked tirelessly for her community her entire life. Ms. Pelletier was a cultured woman who believed in the power of education as a driver for community development.

Ms. Pelletier had a positive impact on thousands of people throughout her life and felt very strongly about the potential of her region. She will remain an example of perseverance, courage, and a fighting spirit devoted to the development of her region, our region.

My colleague, the Minister of National Revenue, and I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to her and thank her for her dedication. Canadians and the people of her community will always be grateful for her service.

Rest in peace, Micheline.

[*English*]

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Len Webber (Calgary Confederation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a sinister disease in Canada. It causes long-term suffering to both its victims and their families, and it's on the rise.

Lyme disease is passed with a simple tick bite, and there are many ways Canadians can take preventive action. Unfortunately, once bitten, many cases go undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, and simply ignored until the disease sets in.

We need better awareness amongst health care professionals and better public awareness. The good news is that it is treatable, but it can take time.

While infected, the patients and their families often face tremendous financial difficulties and emotional stress. We need to do more to help those fighting Lyme disease.

We thank the Lyme Disease Association of Alberta and caregivers like Nicholas, Ivan and Inez who make recoveries possible.

* * *

RICK JOHNSON

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a former colleague of mine, Councillor Rick Johnson, who passed away suddenly at the age of 62.

I served with Councillor Johnson on Pickering Council for a number of years, as did my hon. colleague from Ajax.

Rick had a larger than life personality and a variety of passions outside of politics. He was a proud farmer and musician. Anyone who has ever attended Pickering's Canada Day celebrations will never forget his annual rendition of the *Devil Went Down to Georgia*. I know I will not.

Rick and I also shared a passion for the Toronto Blue Jays. Tough as the Jays' current situation may be, I know Rick would not be ruling them out, and is somewhere cheering them on.

During this difficult time, my thoughts are with Rick's wonderful wife Susan and their son Chris, as well as his extended family and friends, and all those who worked with him in the city of Pickering.

Rick's memory will live on in the stories we share.

Statements by Members

●(1415)

TOBIQUE-MACTAQUAC

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of Small Business Week, I would like to extend an open invitation to my colleagues to “come for a rip” in Tobique—Mactaquac.

We are in the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining guests, not just with our inspiring landscapes, but with our hospitality, generosity, and activities.

Experience fiddler's on the Tobique and world pond hockey; drive through the longest covered bridge in the world; see what all the fuss is about at the giant axe or giant fiddlehead; spread your wings and zipline over the Grand Falls Gorge; shop at local summer markets; rock out at the Hullabaloo festival and the Dooryard arts festival; bend the rules and snack on some covered bridge chips before supper; have breakfast at a maple sugary; run through the corn maze at Hunter Brothers; take a Sunday drive on the scenic back roads through Tobique—Mactaquac or enjoy the Stanley fall fair; stop for a selfie at the Shogomoc Bridge; rent a houseboat, and enjoy the Tobique—Mactaquac head pond.

For the entire road trip, relish in our River Valley hospitality. This is an open invitation to everyone.

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SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is Small Business Week. As a former small business owner, and the critic for small business, it is my pleasure to mark this important week celebrating our innovators and job creators from across the country.

In the city of Richmond, small business and tourism is a critical part of our community. The 27-year-old entrepreneur, Amira Ladha, is an example of what it means to be an entrepreneur in Richmond.

Last year, Amira opened Sugar 'n Ice, a bakery store in our harbourfront area. She brought her passion for baking to our city, and has seen her business grow.

Whether it is hosting cake workshops, birthday parties, or other events, Amira proudly serves her community, and Canada should be proud.

I highly recommend to any of my colleagues to stop by Sugar 'n Ice in Richmond for one of Amira's delicious cakes, and commend her for representing the true spirit of Canadian small business.

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INNOVATION

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday, the district of Squamish and the Squamish Nation led the testing of a new community-wide emergency alert system powered by ePACT, a north Vancouver tech company that lets families create one emergency record to securely store all of their information so that in a crisis they can reach the organizations that matter most, like the school, day care, and seniors centre.

ePACT has customers in every province and territory in Canada, every state in the United States, and 102 countries around the world, and yet CEO Christine Sommers says, “we’ve never seen such an innovative approach to using our network...as what the Squamish District and Squamish Nation are doing.”

Municipalities everywhere are looking to learn from last weekend in Squamish so we can build better, smarter, and safer communities through Canadian innovation.

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[Translation]

PERSONS CASE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 87 years ago Canadian women could not sit in the Senate because the Supreme Court of Canada did not consider them “persons” under the Senate requirement.

Five Alberta women, “the famous five”, challenged the Supreme Court of Canada decision all the way to the Judicial Council of the Privy Council in Britain, which overturned the ruling.

[English]

The now historic persons case stated:

...the exclusion of women from all public offices is a relic of days more barbarous than ours. And to those who would ask why the word “person” should include females, the obvious answer is, why should it not?

Today, 32 women are senators. Canada has had a female Prime Minister, and 50% of women sit in cabinet.

It is 2016, but representation in Parliament of 51% women eludes us still.

* * *

JIM PRENTICE

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is nearly impossible for me to express my grief and sadness on the passing of my dear friend, Jim Prentice.

Many people knew the public Jim, but I feel truly blessed to have known Jim outside of politics. Jim invested a lot of time on my professional career, but above that, he invested in me as a person. He would always start a conversation asking about my daughters, and telling me that they need to know who I am before anyone else.

Being part of his caucus, he taught me to never live with regret and that public life is a privilege.

He was a man of great integrity who I will always remember as living with the motto of “service before self”. I regret that I will never get to ask his advice or hear his voice just one last time. It was an honour to stand with him and beside him.

Every one of my thoughts are with Karen and his extended family. He loved them dearly.

I will miss him.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on September 20, De Beers Canada and its joint venture partner, Mountain Province Diamonds, celebrated the official opening of the Gahcho Kué mine, located northeast of Yellowknife.

As the member for Northwest Territories, I am proud of the potential benefits this mine will bring to my communities. This \$1 billion mine is the largest new diamond mine recently constructed in the world, and highlights the importance of strategic and ambitious investment.

The benefits of this project are enormous: 54 million carats of rough diamonds will be mined over the life of the mine, which will reinforce Canada's position as the world's third largest diamond producer by value, and there will be spin-off benefits in the communities and small businesses, the backbone of our Canadian economy.

The potential contributions are further highlighted in the north with De Beers' partnering with our communities, using local procurement, local business, and hiring locally.

I congratulate De Beers on the opening of the mine and its commitment to work with first nations and Métis communities in the north.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, 64 women were elected to Canada's Parliament, and I was proud to be among them. At that time, women represented 21% of the members of the House. Now, 10 years later, women are still only 26% of the members, which is progress at a snail's pace.

Unless we make an effort, it will take another 60 years, to 2076, before women have equal representation in this place, a snail's pace indeed.

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Canada ranks 60th in the world when it comes to gender parity in Parliament. In all our history, women have never accounted for more than 29% of candidates in a federal election.

We can do better, and we have the opportunity to do that today. I urge every member of the House to support Bill C-237, the candidate gender equity act, put forward by the member for Burnaby South.

Let us do this for Canada, because, after all, it is 2016 and are we not all feminists?

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the limousine Liberals are at it again. Lavish lounges and lobbying loopholes are letting the Liberals line their linens while labourers are losing their life-savings.

Let us review what we have seen in the past year.

The environment minister, who is apparently the only Liberal unable to take a selfie, spent \$6,600 so that a photographer could follow her around Paris. The natural resources minister, who could not walk a few blocks to attend a hockey game, decided to use a limousine at taxpayers' expense instead. Then we have the health minister, who not only rides in a luxurious Lexus limousine but also billed taxpayers so she could lavishly lounge and lunch with lobbyists on lobster linguine.

Unfortunately, the Liberals' lack of logic is leading Canadians down a long, lost loop where labourers languish and lose their loonies.

I call upon the limousine Liberals to let go of the luxury, lose the lobbyists, and leave taxpayers' money alone.

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago Canadians voted for real change and for a government that would provide them with more opportunities for success, and that is just what we have delivered.

[*Translation*]

Since coming to power one year ago, our government has increased taxes for the wealthiest in order to cut taxes for the middle class. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which is helping lift 300,000 children out of poverty.

[*English*]

We are strengthening the Canada pension plan to provide a more secure retirement for all Canadians.

Now more than ever, we are committed to making life better for each and every Canadian family, with a long-term vision to grow the middle class and create a strong economy for future generations.

I know I speak on behalf of the entire Liberal caucus when I thank the thousands of volunteers who gave whatever time they could, the communities for the trust they have put in us, and all Canadians. It is an honour and a privilege to serve them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

TAXATION

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the last year, the Prime Minister has been getting advice everywhere, from a secretive summit in Davos to a so-called summer camp for billionaires in Sun Valley. Even this week he was rubbing shoulders with Chinese billionaires. But along the way, he forgot to check in with ordinary working Canadians. He betrayed them by raising taxes on something as basic as piano lessons for their kids.

Oral Questions

Now I know billionaires do not need tax credits, but middle-class families use them. Will the Prime Minister bring back tax credits for music lessons and sports for kids?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a year ago, Canadians decided they had had enough of an approach that gave tax breaks and benefits to the wealthiest Canadians while ignoring the plight of middle-class Canadians. They voted for real change and when we put forward our very first proposal to lower taxes on the middle class and raise them on the wealthiest 1%, the Conservatives showed that they continue to be out of touch because they voted against raising taxes on the wealthiest and lowering them for the middle class.

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HOUSING

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, middle-class families dream of owning a home, and for many others it is their biggest investment. So it is concerning to learn that the Prime Minister is making changes to Canada's mortgage rules that will make it harder for first-time homebuyers. Experts warn that his changes could drop home prices by 5% to 10%. Now this is the same Prime Minister who blew through his promise on spending and is not creating any jobs. After he has failed Canadians on the economy, how can middle-class families trust him with their mortgage and their homes?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the contrary, we are focused on making investments in our communities, in infrastructure, in housing, and in bringing great new jobs to Canada like the ones we were able to announce when GE invested in Canada, when GM opened up a new research centre in Markham, when Thomson Reuters decided to move its entire head office here. Those are results that happened because we drew them in and made a case for investing in Canada and showed that we were willing to invest in the middle class, and create confidence among consumers and optimism for the future.

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[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Bank of Canada once again reduced its growth outlook for the economy.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister, who is completely out of touch, asked his Minister of Finance to organize a fundraiser at a lavish mansion in Halifax. The finance minister clearly violated the Prime Minister's ethics rules.

Will the Prime Minister discipline his minister and finally tell him to focus on creating jobs for the middle class?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years, Canadians have been living with a rate of economic growth comparable to that last seen in the era of R. B. Bennett and the Great Depression. That is why Canadians wanted investments in their communities and help for the middle class.

That is exactly what we have done. We implemented the Canada child benefit, which gives more tax-free money to nine out of ten families across the country every month. It will also help lift 300,000 children out of poverty. That is the real change that Canadians voted for.

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[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, families across the country are counting on our health care system, but they are betrayed by a Prime Minister who promised to increase health care funding and has now broken his word. Betrayed by a Prime Minister who promised to co-operate with the provinces on a new accord, but has instead hurled insults that have stalled a new deal. Meanwhile, everyday Canadians are being forgotten on wait lists. Why is the Prime Minister not keeping his word to patients and families across this country who rely on our health care system every single day?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the main difference between the approach the previous government had on health care and ours is that we expect that any federal dollars invested in health care actually be spent on health care for Canadians. That is what Canadians expect and if the members opposite disagree with that condition, I think they need to explain that to Canadians.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Albertans continue to struggle under the weight of a bad Liberal economy. In communities like Medicine Hat, thousands of people are looking for work and families are deeply worried about paying their bills and staying in their homes. The Prime Minister's response is to impose a carbon fuel tax, which will hit our province the hardest. Albertans justifiably feel abandoned by the Prime Minister. He is hitting Albertans with a fuel carbon tax at the worst possible time. When will the Prime Minister admit that it is not a lifeline he is throwing Albertans, but an anchor?

Oral Questions

●(1430)

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the members opposite pretended to be the defenders of Alberta, but they were not able to get our resources to market. They were not able to deliver the growth and the opportunities Albertans need. That is why Albertans voted for a change at the provincial level, and that is why they are looking to a federal government that is going to actually be able to demonstrate that leadership on the environment actually leads to opening up new markets for our resources, that putting more money in the pockets of middle-class families right across the country, including in Alberta, is exactly what communities need, and that bringing in investments and jobs for ordinary Canadians matters.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the finance minister took a break from drafting the next budget to host a private fundraiser in Halifax with wealthy developers, bankers, and mining executives. Each paid \$1,500, the maximum allowed, for the privilege of access to the minister. When it comes to getting the ear of the person overseeing billions of dollars in public spending, that is quite a bargain.

The Prime Minister knows that this sort of cash-for-access fundraising is wrong, so the question is: Why does the Prime Minister continue to allow it, and when will they repay the money?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal level has the most stringent election financing rules among provinces and jurisdictions in Canada. Canadians expect us to follow all those rules, and that is exactly what we have done.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, #realchange.

[Translation]

The provinces believed they had a new partner who was ready to listen to them on issues such as health and the environment. Instead, they are on the receiving end of threats and ultimatums. After health ministers met yesterday, it was clear that the parties have reached an impasse on health care funding.

Will the Prime Minister meet with the premiers for good-faith discussions about health care, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very much looking forward to meeting with the premiers to discuss a number of issues in the weeks and months to come. We will talk about the things that matter to Canadians.

In terms of health care, Canadians are concerned about the fact that federal health care dollars do not always flow to our health care system.

We expect money invested in health care to be spent in our health care systems. That is a perfectly reasonable condition, and if the deputy does not agree with me, he should say so.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did he just say “deputy” instead of “member”? We are starting to see the root of the problem.

A year ago, the Prime Minister made a formal commitment to put an end to the current voting system, which creates false majorities.

My question is simple. Will the Prime Minister keep his promise to make the 2015 election the last election under our old, unfair voting system, yes or no?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the spring the member was very worried that we were not respecting the opinions and perspectives of all members of the House and all Canadians when it comes to changing our voting system.

What we did was form a committee that is going to make thoughtful, responsible recommendations, and we are going to pay very close attention to what comes out of the work done by that committee, which is what he wanted.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Here is the problem, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that while he liked the idea of getting rid of our unfair first past the post system, now that he has been able to get elected using that very system, it might not be so bad after all.

Canadians have been clear that in 2019, every vote should count. A year ago, the Prime Minister said he agreed with them. Instead of inventing excuses and backing away from his solemn promise to Canadians, will he work with us in good faith to deliver the fair proportional electoral system voters deserve?

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the spring, the member opposite was tremendously worried that we would use our majority to ram through changes to Canada's electoral system, and we worked with them to demonstrate the hard work a committee could do, hearing all perspectives and giving a report on our electoral system.

Now he has changed his mind, and he wants us to use our majority to ram through electoral change. Saying one thing and then its opposite was exactly what landed that member in that seat in this House.

* * *

●(1435)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the relationship between this government and the provincial health ministers continues to deteriorate. After the Prime Minister said that the provinces were misusing their money, the minister added insult to injury by commenting on how the provinces manage the transfers. Now she is saying that she was misquoted.

Oral Questions

Why did the minister have to apologize? What did she have to apologize for?

I would like to hear what she has to say about that.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are proud of their public health care system, but we know there is room for improvement.

Yesterday, I had a meeting with my counterparts and I said that we would invest in health. However, health investments need to go toward health care. That is what Canadians expect.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): That may very well be, Mr. Speaker, but I would still like to talk about they are doing today.

If the minister wanted to keep practising medicine, then that is what she should have done. Today, she is trying to tell the provinces how to manage health care, but that is their responsibility. The provinces were told that they were mismanaging the money that is transferred to them.

Which provinces are mismanaging the money, Madam Minister? Please name the provinces that are mismanaging the money.

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to address the chair.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is true that I am a doctor. I worked as a doctor in Canada for more than 30 years. Even though Canadians are proud of their health care system, I know that it is in need of improvement and could serve Canadians better.

That is why I am working with my counterparts. We are going to make investments in health and we want that money to truly be invested in health.

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FINANCE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last thing we need is for the federal government to interfere in provincial jurisdictions given how it manages its own finances.

When I read in this morning's paper that the Prime Minister was not ruling out higher deficits, even though he promised a small deficit during the election, I had some serious concerns. The deficit is now out of control.

Deficits are amounts of money borrowed at the expense of our children and grandchildren, especially when there is no repayment plan.

How can the Prime Minister—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic growth in the past decade has been too low. That is why we decided to invest in infrastructure and to make investments that will increase our growth rate in the future for our

children and grandchildren. That is how we can grow our economy at this juncture and in the future.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in an attempt to justify this huge deficit, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance keep telling us that they are spending money to drive the economy.

In addition to the thousands of jobs that have been lost over the past year, just this morning, the Bank of Canada released another report downgrading the country's growth outlook. Where is the Liberal's economic plan? They do not have one. It is with the dozens of consultations that this government has undertaken since the beginning of the year.

Can the Minister of Finance tell us what new tax he is going to create to eliminate this future deficit?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, growth is very important to our economy.

After a year, we can say that we have done many things to help Canada's middle class. The tax relief we provided to middle-class families has really changed the course of their lives.

Nine million Canadians and nine out of ten families with children are now better off. What is more, Canadians will benefit from improvements to the Canada pension plan and a higher growth rate.

● (1440)

[*English*]

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of their children, the Liberals have done nothing but hurt hard-working Canadians since taking office. Their spending is out of control, they have raised taxes on everything, and they have made it harder for Canadians to save. Now they are changing the mortgage rules, which will make it harder for first-time home buyers to get their first home.

How can average Canadians believe that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, who have inherited millions, understand the challenges young Canadians face when buying their first home?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take our responsibilities to Canadians and Canadian families very seriously. We know that the housing market is something Canadians have a rightful interest in. We know that the investment in housing is, in most cases, the most significant investment for a Canadian family. That is why we want to ensure that the market is stable over the long term.

The measures we have taken will ensure that Canadians, now and in the future, can be assured that their investment is safe and secure, because we have taken the responsible action to help the market be secure for the long term.

Ms. Rachael Harder (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friends Tony and Noel, from my riding, have saved for six years for their dream of owning their very first home. The finance minister just recently released changes with regard to mortgage rules, and now these same friends no longer qualify for the same amount they once did.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister claimed that he would help the middle class out, but instead, over the last year, 1.4 million Canadians are without jobs, small businesses are struggling and failing, and now young Canadians have to wait even longer to be able to buy their first home.

How can young Canadians trust the Prime Minister, when his policies make it even more difficult for them to succeed?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take us back to a year ago, when the party opposite was saying that it would balance the budget—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

We do not want to make question period longer, I am sure. We are going to have to add a few seconds for the minister's answer. I would ask members to listen and not interrupt and to save their applause until the conclusion of the answer.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, Canadians, a year ago, made a decision about their future, and they made the right decision. They made a decision to have a government that would make investments to ensure that their economy could grow in the future. They made a decision to get a government in place that would take the responsible decisions around their most important investment: their house.

Now where we are, a year later, is that middle-class Canadians have more money in their pockets. Middle-class Canadians can know that their housing is more secure for the long term.

We are investing in the future, doing the right things for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said that no relationship was more important than the relationship with first nations, but I am here today to say how deeply disappointed they are.

For one thing, instead of eliminating racial discrimination against first nations children, he is still fighting them in court. Even with a \$30-billion deficit, he could not come up with the \$130 million needed right now to help the most vulnerable children in Canada. It is unbelievable.

Is that really what the Prime Minister's most important relationship looks like?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is committed to reviewing child and family services on reserves and partnering with first nations to reform those services.

We know the system is broken, as illustrated by the British Columbia Representative for Children and Youth's damning report. Feedback from young people must guide our work to transform the system, and we must ensure that any new approach is informed by their experiences.

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the first promises the Prime Minister made were to indigenous Canadians, and those were the first promises he broke, with the justice minister supporting the Site C dam and then using lawyers to fight residential school survivors in court; the health minister denying medical treatments to first nation children and using lawyers to fight their families; and the Prime Minister defying two human rights tribunal orders, trying to pretend that Stephen Harper's child welfare plan was his own, and then shortchanging students by \$800 million.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that breaking promises to first nation children is the oldest con in Confederation?

Happy anniversary.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is deeply committed to renewing the relationship with indigenous people, and we are delivering on our promises to implement the TRC's calls to action. We have launched a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous people. We have launched a total overhaul of the child welfare system, made a historic \$8.4 billion investment in first nations education and infrastructure, and announced our unqualified support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This is just a beginning. We are committed to making meaningful progress on reconciliation—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

* * *

ETHICS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who you know in the PMO is alive and well in the Liberal government.

We learned today that Liberal insiders sold tickets at \$1,500 per person for access to the Minister of Finance when he was in Halifax. Can the Minister of Finance tell this House exactly what topics were discussed at this \$1,500 per person Liberal fundraiser?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like all members in this House, I am engaged in fundraising activities in support of my party. The October 13 event in question was organized by the Liberal Party of Canada and we followed all of the applicable rules. I will remind the House that those rules were put in place by the party that preceded us.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not an answer on what was discussed. We are still going to look for that answer.

Oral Questions

What we do notice is that these Liberals look a lot like the old Liberals, and Canadians are tired of that. Whether it is the justice minister selling special access to Bay Street lawyers or the millionaire finance minister selling access in Halifax, it is just plain wrong.

When will the Liberals stop abusing the public trust and provide the ethical standard that they promised?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that events like these are part of every party's fundraising and engagement work. Federal politics is subject to some of the strictest political financing legislation and regulations in the country, and our party always complies with the Elections Act in all cases.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again.

First it was the justice minister, and now it is the finance minister caught in a pay to play fundraiser last week. The finance minister was charging \$1,500 a person for millionaires and Liberal insiders to lobby him prior to his next big-spending budget.

The Prime Minister has demanded that his ministers not give preferential access to those who made financial contributions to the Liberal Party. However, the finance minister has clearly violated the Prime Minister's own ethics rules. When will the millionaire finance minister stand up and do the right thing and repay the money?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we have taken on a consultation process for our budget that allows us to listen to all Canadians. Last year, we heard—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We do not want to shorten question period either, do we? Most members in all parties are able to sit and listen to things whether they like them or not without responding or reacting. It is very mature. Let us see everyone else do that too.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, we have been embarking on the most extensive consultation processes around the budget that have ever been done. Last year, we spoke to 250,000 Canadians and received 5,200 submissions. This year, we have already touched 140,000 Canadians. We have the most open process ever put in place, and we will continue to listen to Canadians as we craft the next budget on their behalf.

* * *

• (1450)

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Well, it gets worse, Mr. Speaker. The event was hosted at the waterfront mansion of Mr. Fred George, a land developer who just received a federal appointment to the Halifax Port Authority from his friend, the President of the Treasury Board. There could not be a bigger quagmire of conflicts of interest.

The Liberals appoint a land developer who is conveniently a bagman for their party who oversees the port's development. This bagman then hosts a fundraiser for the finance minister, who controls the purse strings and possible investments of this same port. In what universe would the finance minister ever claim that this was either ethical or acceptable?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I do not know if someone wants to lose a question today.

The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am the person responsible for appointing Mr. Jim Spatz to the Halifax Port Authority, and let me tell the House what David Henderson, chair of the Halifax Port Authority board of directors said about him. He said:

Jim Spatz is a tremendous addition to the HPA board of directors. He is a community leader with experience in business, arts, culture, education, and charitable causes. The maritime community and the larger business community are fortunate to have such an individual taking on this role.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LABOUR

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party presented themselves as strong supporters of our workers, but in the first year of their term of office, they voted against increasing the minimum wage to \$15 and rejected the NDP's anti-scab bill.

By voting against my bill, the Prime Minister refused to guarantee and respect workers' right to collective bargaining. This simple amendment to the Canada Labour Code would have made a big difference for workers.

What happened to the fair and balanced approach promised to Canadian workers?

[*English*]

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to point out that we expect that Bill C-4, which reinstates fairness and balance for labour across the country, will be passed in this House today on the one-year anniversary of a progressive new government for Canada.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Liberals promised to be on the side of Canadian workers, yet in their first year, not only have the Liberals voted against the anti-scab legislation denying workers' rights to collective bargaining, they have also shelved pay equity until 2018.

To quote PSAC, "You said you'd be different". However, PSAC is not the only one unimpressed with the government's record. It has been a year, as we know, since the election. The time for action is now. When will the government deliver on the change it promised Canadian workers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an excellent question. Equal pay for work of equal value is a human right, and we are so proud to bring forward pay equity after a decade of inaction. Pay equity between men and women and fair treatment of all workers in the workplace regardless of gender are critical for creating growth and a thriving middle class.

We are going to make substantive reform and implement proactive pay equity in the federal jurisdiction, which includes 874,000 employees and 10,800 employers.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's agricultural policy framework affects our farmers, ranchers, and growers across my province of Ontario and indeed right across the country. This framework provides the programs that help our farmers manage risks and provides the tools they need to become more innovative, competitive, and sustainable.

Could the Minister of Agriculture give the House an update on where our government is in terms of developing Canada's next agricultural policy framework and how this framework will help some of our original small business owners, Canada's farmers?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with the provinces and territories on developing the next agricultural policy framework. In July, my counterparts and I agreed on a joint statement for the future of agriculture in Canada. I will continue to consult the sector in every part of the country, and together we will develop a framework that will create a more prosperous Canadian agriculture, and certainly help the middle class.

* * *

• (1455)

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing that the Liberals would consider changing a fundamental piece of our democracy without a referendum. It is crystal clear that Canadians want a say before Liberals impose any changes to the voting process. I have heard from literally thousands of constituents in my riding, and more than 94% of them want a referendum.

The clearest, most inclusive form of consultation is a national referendum. Will the Liberals listen to hard-working Canadians in my riding and Canadians across the country and give them the referendum that they want, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in this House representing the people of Peterborough—Kawartha as the Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Happy one year anniversary to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all of my colleagues in this place.

To address the member's question, we have a committee that has been working hard travelling the country to hear a diverse range of perspectives. Many thanks to all of the MPs who have gone out of their way to host town halls so that their constituents' perspectives

could be included in the conversation. My parliamentary secretary and I have been hearing from Canadians as well.

I look forward to the committee's report on December 1, and making a thoughtful decision then.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, consultations were held in my riding and over 700 people responded to our survey. Some 85% of respondents want a referendum. One of the respondents to our survey wrote that "it is ridiculous to believe that changing how MPs are elected without a referendum is democratic". This is worth listening to.

What is the minister's response to this individual who wants to be consulted by referendum on how he chooses his representative here in Parliament?

[*English*]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for allowing his constituents to be part of a survey. More important, I thank the majority of members in this House who brought their constituents together to hear from one another the diverse range of perspectives that are required to make a thoughtful decision about electoral reform.

We have empowered a special all-party committee to study the subject, to hear from Canadians, and to come back to us on recommendations for alternates for first past the post, as well as a decision on how we determine whether or not reforms have the broad support of Canadians. I look forward to reviewing that report.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the battle for Mosul is under way, but we have no idea what our Canadian troops are doing. Military commanders have confirmed that the mission has become much more dangerous, but they were muzzled from saying anything because of the Liberals' cone of silence.

The Minister of Transport once stated, "It is important for us to get as much information...on what possibly can happen and how this mission can evolve" in Iraq.

Does the defence minister find it hypocritical that the Liberals used to demand transparency on the fight against ISIS, but now are hiding behind a curtain of secrecy?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree there is a very important operation under way for the final defeat of ISIL in Mosul. We have been part of the planning. We have been part of the work for this. Now, when an operation is going on, I can say with absolute certainty that operational security for the force, and the protection of not only our troops but our coalition partners and the people who we are trying to assist, is foremost.

When it is the appropriate time, we will be able to share that information. I have provided updates to the member opposite in my office as well.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the offensive to retake Mosul from ISIS began this week. We would have liked to see our CF-18s support the assault by the peshmerga, who are leading this offensive.

Almost 200 Canadian soldiers are on the front lines. We will have to find out from the United States, which has a more transparent government, what their role was.

When will the government stop hiding the truth from Canadians and inform them about the work our soldiers are doing?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I can say is something that is also known in Mosul. There is a civilian population there. The plan that we took, in consultation with our coalition partners, was to look into training the right number of Iraqi security forces. That is exactly what we have done, and that is exactly what is needed right now. The support that our troops are providing, the plan that we have in place, the intelligence that we have provided is having a substantial impact for the coalition for the final defeat of ISIL. I am very proud of the work that our men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces are doing in Iraq.

* * *

• (1500)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a full year since Canadians voted out the Conservative government, which was a laggard on action on climate change. Canadians had high hopes for a new government, yet the Liberals are embracing what they once called Stephen Harper's woefully inadequate reduction targets. Canadians are just as troubled that the Liberal government has broken its promise for a new, fair environmental assessment process.

How many more projects are going to be approved before Canadians are finally given a voice on the projects that impact them?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to be standing here today representing the residents of Ottawa Centre a year after I was elected.

We understand that the environment and the economy go together. We have worked extraordinarily hard this year to deliver on that promise. We have helped to negotiate an ambitious Paris agreement.

We brought in the biggest budget in Canada's history. We are reforming our environmental assessment process. We entered into the historic clean tech climate change agreement with Mexico and the United States. We have ratified the Paris agreement. We put a price on pollution. We will keep on doing this because #realchange.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if only a hashtag did the trick.

Last Thursday, a tanker barge spilled more than 200,000 litres of toxic diesel into the critical fishing areas off B.C.'s central coast. First nations leaders told me that the government's response has taken far too long, and done far too little to stop the devastation. In just one year, we have seen Haida Gwaii, English Bay, and now Bella Bella.

Crossing our fingers and praying does not protect our environment. The Prime Minister promised to protect our beautiful B.C. coast with a permanent oil tanker ban.

When is he actually going to finally bring that promise to reality?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving marine protection, and taking measures with respect to marine safety. We have been very clear on the fact that we are coming forward, shortly, with a coastal strategy that will improve marine safety off our coasts.

We are very concerned, obviously, about the incident. We are responding as quickly as possible. That is a good indication of why we need to improve marine safety. That is what we are going to do. Stay tuned.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Human Rights Council has been an embarrassment to democratic members of the world body for years.

Again this year, a number of notorious human rights abusers, seeking membership, are asking for Canada's secret vote. It is clear the Liberals are working to curry favour for eventual Security Council votes

Is it not time for the foreign affairs minister to stand and to declare publicly how Canada will vote on Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Cuba?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will repeat again that the premise of the question is wrong.

We are not asking for favours for any vote. Never. That is not the way we work. The seat at the Security Council will be a tool for the goals we have for the world, for a world that will be more secure, more just, a world where we will have pacifism, and a world where we will have more equality between men and women.

This is the world which we are working on, and the Security Council seat is a tool for that.

Oral Questions

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Davud Hanci has been imprisoned in Turkey for three months now, without any access to legal counsel, and denied virtually any opportunity to communicate with his wife and children. As a Canadian citizen, he deserves the support and assistance of the Canadian government, especially with numerous reports of human rights abuses occurring in Turkish prisons.

Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs explain why he is focused on cozying up to dictators in China, Russia, and Iran, instead of helping Canadians like Davud Hanci?

Mr. Omar Alhabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has been in contact with the Turkish government at the highest levels, advocating for two citizens who are detained in Turkey.

I met this past summer with the parliamentary Turkish delegation. I met with Mr. Hanci's wife just last week to assure her that our government is highly committed to the well-being of her husband and all citizens abroad.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable behaviour by a fellow NATO ally.

At the same time, Canadians of Turkish origin are reporting unacceptable diplomatic behaviour by officials and agents of the Turkish government in Canada.

In Canadian mosques and commercial establishments, we are told adherents of the Gülen philosophical movement are being characterized as enemies of Turkey, and members of the broader community in Canada intimidated into avoiding, isolating, and informing on Gülenists.

Is the minister aware of such unacceptable diplomatic behaviour, and what is he doing about it?

• (1505)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government strongly protects the rights of all Canadians in Canada. Any government that tries to infringe on these rights would be wrong to do it, and we would tell that to any government.

On this specific case, we have told the government of Turkey that it has no evidence, and it should not create any problems for these people.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 37th anniversary of Small Business Week to recognize the hard work, talent, ambition, and determination of Canada's small business owners and entrepreneurs.

Small Business Week is also an opportunity for small business owners and entrepreneurs to participate in events across the country to learn, network, and share ideas about making their businesses as innovative, export-ready, and successful as possible.

Could the Minister of Small Business and Tourism tell us how our government is helping small and medium-sized businesses in Canada?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, small businesses should be celebrated every day. They create jobs. They support local communities. They are the supply chain of larger companies in Canada and around the globe.

Our government recognizes the importance of small businesses. That is why we are making investments in programs like CanExport, and the industrial research assistance program to support innovation and skills development of all businesses, including young entrepreneurs, indigenous entrepreneurs, and women entrepreneurs.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Grande Prairie—Mackenzie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just minutes ago the transport minister admitted that he did appoint Jim Spatz to the Halifax Port Authority. It was Mr. Spatz from whom the Minister of Finance took \$1,500 to meet at Mr. Spatz's business partner's home. We want to know what exactly the Minister of Finance said to Mr. Spatz.

Was anything discussed in relationship to developments in Halifax or at the port?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say a few other things about Mr. Jim Spatz. Jim Spatz is the 2015 recipient of Atlantic Canada's top CEO of the year, and he recently concluded a five-year term as chair of the board of governors at Dalhousie University.

As one of the region's leading real estate developers, Mr. Spatz brings a depth of experience and judgment to a board that manages 260 acres of land in the Halifax region. Achieving the highest and best use of port assets is crucial to maximizing the value of—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been one year, and Liberal MPs have kept very quiet when it comes to defending Quebec's interests.

They have not said one word about jobs in the forestry industry, which is headed for a trade war, and nothing on behalf of dairy producers. They did not lift a finger for Bombardier jobs, and they betrayed Aveos employees. What is more, they are saying absolutely nothing about the health cuts. Quebec deserves MPs who make themselves heard, not a bunch of members who are asleep at the switch.

There should be an inquiry. Quebec's Liberal MPs have gone missing—

The Speaker: Order.

It seems that there is a problem with the interpretation, and some members did not hear what was said.

Oral Questions

The member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, after a year under a Liberal government, promises are once again being broken. The Liberals have the same agenda as the Conservative Party, the same agenda as the previous government.

Where are the Liberal members from Quebec? Why are they not standing up for our citizens, our jobs, our regions, and the economy? Where are the Liberal members from Quebec hiding?

• (1510)

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is certainly very passionate, but so am I.

We are proud of the fact that 40 members of the House, including the Prime Minister, six government ministers, and 33 MPs who proudly represent their ridings, are here to defend Quebec's interests. We are very proud of that.

* * *

[English]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the marketplace to Canadian homes, drones are becoming more important and prevalent.

[Translation]

This can cause security risks that must be considered. My riding of Madawaska—Restigouche is home to a number of airports.

Over the past few months, the Minister of Transport has been warning people about the potential risks of drones colliding with aircraft, particularly near airports.

[English]

Could the Minister of Transport please inform the House the steps he is taking on this matter?

[Translation]

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche for that excellent question.

[English]

This government is committed to the safe and secure operation of this new technology as more and more drones are taking to the skies.

[Translation]

We are staying on top of this issue and providing the necessary leadership with regard to the regulation, classification, marking, and registration of drones. We will have more to say about this in the coming months.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the fentanyl conference in Alberta, authorities confirmed that they are not even close when it comes to confronting deadly fentanyl abuse. While opioid addiction is not new, street drugs laced

with fentanyl have led to a public health crisis. Even though the government took some measures this summer, it is not enough, not even close.

Will the Liberals take further measures to make it more difficult for illicit drug dealers to get their hands on fentanyl, and increase the punishment for trafficking offences involving street drugs laced with deadly drugs like fentanyl?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for bringing up this very important topic. This was actually something I discussed yesterday with my colleagues, the other ministers of health. The opioid crisis is very serious. It requires a comprehensive response, and in fact, we have already begun with a federal action plan. A number of provinces have taken great leadership roles in addressing this.

I will be working along with my colleague, the Minister of Public Safety, to address the very matter of illicit fentanyl. We have already taken steps to list some of the precursors to fentanyl to not allow them to continue to be imported into the country. We will take all necessary steps to address the crisis.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am aware what I am alleging is indeed shocking, but it appears that three federal government departments colluded with Petronas, the proponent, in order to suppress science and mislead ministers. The threat to the Skeena salmon is real, but the ministers were given a report that cooked the books.

Will the Prime Minister investigate the integrity of the advice given about the threat to Flora Bank and Lelu Island? Were these permits obtained by fraud?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has emphasized, the only way to get resources to market is to do it in a sustainable and responsible way. The project that the member opposite is discussing was subject to rigorous environmental assessment over a number of years.

We delayed decision on the project to obtain more information from the proponent. The project is subject to 190 conditions. We have the first ever environmental monitoring committee that includes indigenous people as well as the provincial and federal governments.

I am very proud that we made this decision. This is a very significant decision, and it shows that we understand that the environment and economy go together.

* * *

• (1515)

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House the member for the electoral district of Victoria, has been appointed a member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of the member for the electoral district of New Westminster—Burnaby, for the purposes of and under the provisions of Section 50 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[Translation]

PENSION BENEFITS STANDARDS ACT, 1985

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-27, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985.

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

* * *

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation respecting its participation at the 15th winter meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, held in Vienna, Austria, on February 25 and 26.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Saint-Jean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Joint Seminar of the Mediterranean and Middle East Special Group and Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Economic Relations held in Florence, Italy, from November 26 to 28, 2015.

* * *

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, the 17th report, entitled “Via Rail Canada Inc., Special Examination Report of the Spring 2016 Reports of the Auditor General of Canada”.

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

I would like to thank our clerks, our analysts, our researchers, our translators, and all those who helped with this report. As with every report, the professionalism is very much appreciated.

• (1520)

[Translation]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

The Committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence as a result of the replenishment of Friday, September 30, 2016, and recommended

that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

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

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and if you seek it I believe you would find consent for the following motion:

That the order made Thursday, October 6, 2016, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1 respecting the deferral of the recorded division on the motion to concur in the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security scheduled to take place on Wednesday, October 19, 2016, be discharged and the motion deemed adopted.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising yet again on behalf of the hard-working residents of Shawnigan Lake in my riding of Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, who are fighting a contaminated soil dump in their area that affects a critical watershed. They ask that the federal government take some action on this issue and enforce the Fisheries Act to protect this critical drinking water source and fish habitat.

CITIZENSHIP

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of nearly 9,000 Canadians regarding birthright citizenship. This petition asks the government to introduce legislation that requires at least one parent to have Canadian citizenship or resident status before granting a child citizenship.

[Translation]

TAX EVASION

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present dozens of petitions from the people of Drummond. They are concerned about the consequences of tax havens. They say that the use of tax havens results in massive losses for the public treasury, which causes problems in delivering public services such as health care, for example, when we know that there will be \$36 billion in cuts.

Accordingly, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to take the necessary legislative measures to combat tax havens with the aim of reducing social inequality in Canada.

POVERTY REDUCTION

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting another series of petitions in support of Bill C-245 concerning the establishment of a national strategy on poverty reduction.

The petitioners are calling on the members of the House to support this bill, which is set to go through second reading stage on October 31.

[*English*]

BOTTLED WATER

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions.

The first is one that comes in an old-fashioned way, handwritten, from residents throughout Saanich—Gulf Islands calling on the federal government to take action to prohibit the use and sale of bottled water within federal institutions, except in cases when potable water is not otherwise available.

• (1525)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is one of grave injustice. It is a global scandal and a deep tragedy. On March 3, 2016, Honduran indigenous activist and leader Berta Cáceres was murdered. The work she was doing was to protect indigenous communities and the environment. The petitioners want an investigation. They want the Canadian government to make up for the weak powers of investigation where this crime occurred.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions.

The first is on palliative care. It highlights the fact that the House of Commons, in the last Parliament, unanimously supported a motion calling on the government to create a national strategy on palliative care, so they are calling on this Parliament to carry on that work and create a national strategy on palliative care to make sure that every Canadian has an opportunity to have high-quality palliative care at the end of life.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with sex selection. It highlights that ultrasounds are used to identify the sex of a child, and if it is a girl, the pregnancy is ended. There are over 200 million missing girls in the world right now, and it makes it very dangerous for girls around the world. The petitioners are calling on Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through sex selection.

HEALTH

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by Canadians from my city of Saskatoon. 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

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well-being of women and girls. As such, the petitioners call on the House of Commons to adopt Motion No. 47.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. John Barlow (Foothills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs said that she was committed to transparency and was willing to provide audited financial statements at any time. With that in mind, I would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to call a Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-11.

That an Order of the House do issue for a copy of the audit commissioned by Indigenous and Northern Affairs and completed by KPMG for the Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe).

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this notice of motion for production of papers be transferred for debate.

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am privileged to reinforce the efforts of this government to ensure that Canada's labour laws best serve both employers and employees and fulfill their roles in growing Canada's economy. A fine balance is required in labour relations in the tripartite relationship between unions, employers, and government in establishing fair labour laws.

I will first address the important function played by unions in protecting the rights of Canadian workers and in helping the middle class grow and prosper.

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Historically in Canada, unions have played a vital role, both in determining the way people are paid and in preserving people's rights in the workplace. A few of the many benefits that have been secured include the right to fair, safe working conditions; compensation for injury; and equitable labour relations. These three notable fruits of the work of Canadian unions benefit all Canadian employees.

The right to be treated fairly and without discrimination, according to the Canadian Labour Congress, is the most valued right that unions have pursued for workers. Minimum wages, employment insurance, and maternity leave are also workplace benefits that were pioneered by unions and that many of us share. Unions are and have been instrumental in developing the evolution of positive employment practices in Canada.

This government is working to ensure that labour law is balanced, equitable, and fair. Accordingly, Bill C-4 has been set forth by the government to restore fairness and balance to Canada's labour system. It is essential to this restoration of the balance of rights that Bills C-377 and C-525, both of which were supported by our predecessors, be repealed now. Bill C-4 would fulfill that function. It would rescind the provisions of two bills: one bill that causes undue interference and upsets balance and stability in labour relations, Bill C-525; and one that attempts to amend the Income Tax Act for no foreseeable benefit, and that turns out to be counterproductive to a positive working relationship between employers and employees.

Bill C-4 would restore a long-time system that worked well for decades. According to Bob Blakely of Canada's Building Trades Unions, it would restore fairness and respect for the confidentiality of union financial information by allowing unions to be treated like every other tax entity in Canada. The Government of Canada prizes the role that unions play in protecting the rights of Canadian workers and, in so doing, helping the middle class grow and prosper. Unions are a positive force in our economy. This government has also not forgotten that labour rights are human rights. Bill C-4 would restore and maintain those rights.

The repeal of these two bills is essential. The adoption of Bill C-4 would result in positive and productive outcomes, but in order to show these benefits clearly, it is necessary to outline the conditions of the bills and their counterproductive unfair defaults.

In Bill C-377, the intent was to require unions to show financial statements for expenses over \$5,000 and salaries of more than \$100,000. Unions were also supposed to provide statements related to expenditures on political and lobbying activities. All of the information was to be posted on a Canada Revenue Agency website. Keep in mind that legislation exists already to ensure that unions make financial information available to their members. Such legislation is evident in section 110 of the Canada Labour Code, with similar provisions in many provincial labour laws. In fact, some provinces feel encroached upon by this overriding of their responsibility. Redundancy is counterproductive. Labour unions are already transparent.

An amendment to the Income Tax Act forms the basis of Bill C-377. This amendment requires a plethora of yearly financial statements in prescribed formats and with prescribed information. So detailed are the requirements that at least 24 different highly specific

statements must be included. This is an onerous annual task that, as set out in this bill, is a significant cost in dollars and time for unions, as well as for the Canada Revenue Agency. It has been suggested that tens of millions of dollars will be expended by the government to set up this system and by unions to be in compliance with this redundant process. The compliance and preparation costs remove funding from unions that is supposed to be used by them in their work with members, and the set-up and administration of the system removes funds from government for spending elsewhere.

● (1530)

These are all needless uses of union member dues and taxpayer dollars. Onerous, unnecessary tasks like this in Bill C-377 simply set up excessive and expensive red tape.

Intrusion and lack of privacy are results of both bills, Bill C-525 and C-377. Bill C-4 would omit such problems by reverting to former processes.

Bill C-377 requires labour organizations and associated organizations to report the details of every cumulative transaction over \$5,000 and, as a result, invade the privacy of millions of union members, in addition to the privacy of any businesses that provide service to labour organization.

Not only are millions of workers subject to these statements, but also section 4 of Bill C-377 states that the information "shall be made available to the public by the Minister, including publication on the departmental Internet site in a searchable format." Thus, all Canadians can have access to this highly specific and often quite personal material. Consider how this material could even interfere with effective collective bargaining when management is availed of the information in these statements. In fact, the Canadian Bar Association has suggested that privacy concerns may make Bill C-377 subject to legal challenges.

Bill C-525 attempts to supersede the simple, efficient, and time-honoured card check certification model for union certification by adding a separate mandatory vote system. Intrusion into union formation stands as the basis of Bill C-525.

The adoption of Bill C-4 would return a workable labour-management relationship, with the union conducting its own affairs in its own way. It would remove precedent-setting interference in labour organizations by management. Indeed, the provisions in Bill C-525 make it harder for unions to be certified, yet easier to be decertified. This disturbs the balance and stability in labour relations.

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It is important for workers to make free and informed decisions without intrusion, as was provided through the previous federal labour relations system, a system that was respected by both labour and employees. Such intrusion in Bill C-377 and Bill C-525 should be obviated by our adoption of Bill C-4.

Discrimination against our unions is widely evident, including in Bill C-377. Other organizations, such as professional associations, receive favourable treatment under tax laws and are not subject to the intrusive, invasive, and expensive reporting mandated by Bill C-377. These other associations, sometimes federations, are freely formed in their own way, with no interference from management. Unlike the interference suggested in Bill C-525, the focus on unions in both bills is suspiciously inequitable.

Bill C-4 would restore impartiality and fair and equal treatment after the union movement in Canada was dealt a harsh, unreasonable set of blows by Bill C-377 and Bill C-525. In fact, they could just be the initial victims in these two possibly precedent-setting bills.

The Government of Canada values the role of unions in strengthening our economy and protecting the rights of Canadian workers. In this capacity, they help and encourage the middle class to flourish.

The government respects the right of unions to be treated fairly and without discrimination. To restore a balanced, equitable approach to labour relations, it is essential to support Bill C-4. Canada's labour laws must be fair. At least 18,000 labour organizations, along with millions of union members and, indeed, all employees in Canada will be thankful for the restoration of workers' rights if assent is given to Bill C-4.

• (1535)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the member. Members were elected one year ago today by secret ballot. This bill is about, among other things, the issue of secret ballots. It is surprising to me that the members across the way are opposed to guaranteeing a secret ballot. Of course, a secret ballot is still a possibility, but it is not protected.

How would the member feel if all of a sudden he found out that his position would not be decided anymore by secret ballot at the next election? Would he think that was a reasonable change to our national electoral system, and if he does not think that is a reasonable way of electing members of Parliament, why does he think there should not be a guaranteed secret ballot in the case of unions?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, when we look at how changes should be made, it is usually when something is not working. However, what we have found is that we had labour peace, and labour peace is what we are all looking for. We would be restoring balance to labour and employer relations and allowing for those relationships to thrive.

When I look at the history of Canada, what has worked well is having that balance in place. The system that was in place prior to the previous regime's changes to it, for reasons I do not know, was working. We should stand with a system that was working and restore that balance to our labour relations.

• (1540)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, having fought hard against the Conservatives' anti-union bills, we welcome the changes tabled by the government. I thank the member for speaking on the importance of the rights of working people. We know that the rights of working people have been under attack for far too long, and the repeal of the Conservatives' bills is a good first step.

However, there is so much more to do for workers' rights and conditions. I have a question for the member. The Liberals committed to restoring good-faith bargaining with our public sector service workers. When will the Liberals enhance the health and safety provisions of our public sector workers, and will the member help champion this?

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, the cornerstone of what organized labour does is the health and safety of our workers. We want to ensure that when our moms, our dads, our friends, or family members go to work, they come home at the end of the day and are safe. This is something our government has championed. It is something that organized labour and employees have championed, and we will continue to do so.

We have one of the best health and safety records in the world, but we can always do better. It is something we have to continue to be vigilant about and always look for ways to improve the working conditions and health and safety of all employees.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to elaborate, based on his experience as the Ontario minister of labour, about the importance of having balanced relationships when it comes to unions and employers. If he could elaborate on that a bit, it would be much appreciated.

Mr. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague focuses on a point that is so crucial to our economy, making sure that good working relations are in place between employers and employees, so we are able to be as productive as we possibly can. We have had labour peace in the provinces, the territories, and our federal government for many years. The system is working. When I was labour minister, we received many delegations from different parts of the world that came to study how we were doing it, because we were doing it right.

I am baffled by how the previous government looked to take something that was working well and tried to break it. We want to restore that balance and fairness and ensure that our labour relations continue to be productive so that our economy can grow, and ensure that our workers' rights are taken care of.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it saddens me that this is likely the last time I am going to get to rise in the House and debate this piece of legislation, unless we have some type of miracle in the Senate that protects the rights of workers.

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I want to thank my colleague for his speech, but I find the comments that he made to be paramount in their hypocrisy when it comes to what he is actually saying. It does not make any sense to me. He said as the former labour minister for Ontario that Ontario had it right. Guess what workers in Ontario get to do when they are asked if they want to be part of a union or not? They get the right to a secret ballot.

The member talked about the rights of workers. These are workers' rights and human rights, so what about the right to vote? What about the right to know where a person's legislatively mandated union dues go? Those union dues are tax deductible at the expense of about half a billion dollars for the taxpayers of Canada. What about the rights of all those people to know how that money is actually spent?

We know. We do not have to rely on the misinformation campaign by the member opposite. We can simply look at the polling information that has been done time and time again, which has resulted in the very same regressive laws that the Liberal Party, with the support of the NDP, is going back to. These laws have been changed in virtually every other democracy in the world that we would consider to be our peers, and in the provinces of our very own country. The United States, for example, has mandatory secret ballot voting for workers to decide whether or not they want to be in a union. Various countries in Europe have the same thing. Various provinces in Canada have the exact same thing.

I do not know any members of Parliament who have stood in the House and said that a constituent asked them when once elected by a secret ballot to trundle off to Ottawa, rise in their places and make some speech about things that are flowery but do not make any sense whatsoever. I do not know of any members whose constituents have asked for their ability to see where their tax dollars or union dues are spent to be taken away. I do not know of any members who have said that their constituents have asked them to take away their ability to have a secret ballot vote because they do not want to make that decision on their own behalf. It is tomfoolery. That is absolutely ludicrous.

The Liberals talk a great game about union bosses and they talk a great game about employers, but they never talk about what an actual worker wants. Unionized workers are the people who actually pay the dues. They are not the people who live off the dues. They are not the people necessarily who subsidize the union dues. Unionized workers are the people who go to work and show up with their lunch pails in their hands every day. They are the people who pay these union dues.

Leger as recently as 2013 asked for people's opinion on the secret ballot when a union is formed or removed from a workplace. Across the country, 69% of Canadians completely agreed and 17% somewhat agreed. We are talking numbers north of 75% to 80% in the various regions of this country of unionized workers who absolutely want the right to have a mandatory secret ballot vote to verify whether or not they want to be members of a union. What is so wrong with supporting that notion? It is absolutely mind-boggling to me. This would be tantamount to members of Parliament knocking on doors in their constituencies during a byelection or a general election campaign with ballots in hand. They bring along two of the biggest people they know who stand right behind them

and they tell the person who answers the door that it might be in his or her best interests to vote for them right there, right now. That is called card checking and that is sometimes how it is played out. I have heard that from my constituents.

The Liberals and the NDP like to claim that it was the previous Conservative government's notion to put this bill forward. I did it. I put Bill C-525 forward and I did it because I heard from workers in my riding that they were not getting the accountability that they wanted.

I do not think as a member of Parliament that I should be reaching into the internal operations of a union, but I do believe as a member of Parliament that I have a responsibility to give every accountability measure I can to workers so they can understand where their money is being spent, so they have the ability to see where it is being spent, and so they have the ability to hold that union to account if it is not doing a good job spending their union dues.

● (1545)

Absolutely, this is the right way to solve this problem. Give people the tools to look after themselves, and they will do it. I could go on about this poll.

Opinions on the disclosure of financial information is the other aspect of the bill. It is clear that the Liberals are simply promising things to their friends. Nobody in their right mind would actually take away financial transparency provisions in any piece of legislation. We move forward on transparency when it comes to letting taxpayers know where their dollars are being spent and letting people know what investments are being made on their behalf, but no, that is not what is happening here through Bill C-4, by the Liberal government, with the support of the New Democrats, the Green Party, and the Bloc Québécois. Only Conservatives actually want to let people know where their money is being spent.

It does not just stop at unions. They are doing the same thing by not enforcing the first nations financial transparency accountability legislation. The Liberals have aligned themselves with the elite at the top, the union bosses, the reserve chiefs, the band chiefs and council members. They are not actually looking after the so-called middle-class, everyday, ordinary person either living on reserve or carrying their lunch pail every day to their job.

This is a matter of saying one thing, and doing absolutely the opposite. Members do not have to trust me, but if they do not take my word for it, let us take a look at the opinion on disclosure of financial information. Respondents were asked for their opinion on the disclosure of financial information without giving them a preamble, and the majority of employed Canadians completely or somewhat agreed that it should be mandatory for unions to publicly disclose detailed financial information on a regular basis.

How many completely agreed? Not one region of this country actually had anything less than 60% who completely agreed, and nothing less than 16% for somewhat agreed for totals of north of 80%, again, on almost all of these indicators, 80%, when asked in a poll.

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These are numbers that most people could only dream of getting in an election. I know, because I got it once. Having this kind of a mandate to be able to go forward and do something is wonderful. This is what Canadians want. This is what they expect. This is what they deserve. This is, however, what is being taken away from them.

If we take a look at the opinion on union due uses, most union workers might not actually know where their union dues are being spent. More than eight out of 10 employed Canadians completely or somewhat disagreed with using union dues to fund attack ads against a political party or making contributions to political parties, or making contributions to advocacy groups unrelated to their workplace needs.

The fact that that question needs to be asked at all in a poll is indicative of the problem, a problem that can be resolved by, one, shedding light on where the money is being spent, and two, giving people the right to vote on what their best interest is based on the performance of the union that is representing them or wanting to represent them.

I simply cannot fathom why anybody would want to take away somebody's right to a secret ballot vote, and take away somebody's right to see where their money is being spent on their behalf.

I have to appeal to the better angels in this place, the ones who know and understand what fairness is all about, the ones who stand up and speak for transparency, who speak in favour of accountability. These people need to stick to their convictions and vote against this regressive piece of legislation, taking us back to a time where nobody knows where the money is being spent, and taxpayers cannot be assured where their taxpayer-funded union due deductions are being spent, and where workers actually have the ability, each and every time, to decide if they want to be in the union, to recertify to be in the union, or to decertify.

The process under Bill C-525 made decertification and certification exactly the same, and yet the Liberals and the NDP and the other parties in this House say that it is now unbalanced, when it is exactly the same. It is in balance. We do not drive around with 15 pounds of pressure in the front left tire and 60 pounds of pressure in the front right tire. That is not how it works.

• (1550)

In conclusion, I can only say how proud I was as a member of Parliament to have a mandate from a secret ballot vote to come to this place to present a private member's bill that changed the legislation for the betterment of workers in this country, and I will stand by them all the way, regardless of what the government tries to do.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his statements, but he keeps referring to people who want the right to know how their money, their dues, are being spent, and I am kind of taken aback by that.

I have been involved in unions for 34 and a half years, with three different locals over my career. In fact, in two of them, I was the president of the union, so I know how the system works. When that money is deposited from the company that the members are giving dues to, to its own local, there are positions, such as the financial officer and what they call trustees. On a monthly basis, there is a

report that is given to its members, on a line-by-line basis, of where every penny went during that month.

I am having a hard time understanding what the member was saying when he said that people wanted to know. They have a right to know, and we give them that information. If a person does not want to attend a union meeting to find out where that money is going and then wants it mailed to them, that is a different subject.

I would ask the member, as it is transparent what the unions are doing, what he was referring to when he stated that the people did not know where the money is going.

• (1555)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I brought forward my bill, Bill C-525, in response to questions about financial transparency. I looked after the accountability part of it, which dealt with the mandatory secret ballot vote. The member should understand that the people that had come to talk to me in my own constituency had differences of opinions with their union leadership.

I have been a member of a union as well, several different times. I am not arguing against whether or not unions should or should not exist. The reality is, though, that certain members get offside with their union leadership. That union then has the entire wherewithal of all of the money from union dues to use in court litigation and action against members who disagree with the leadership of the union. When they ask for that information and try to get specific information about their case, about how much money is being spent on litigation against one poor union member, a union member, by the way, who is supposed to be looked after by the union leadership and not sued and litigated by the union membership, they cannot get that information.

Is the hon. member standing in his place here and accusing my constituents of lying?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at one time I was the labour critic in the Province of Manitoba. I can tell members that whenever we dealt with labour legislation, it was almost like a general given if we were going to change a labour law, and one of the things that is fundamental to do, we always wanted to get a consensus between labour and management. When government wants to change legislation, typically it will enter into a consultation process and try to build that consensus. Canada works better when we have harmony within the labour force, and that means unions working along with business.

The member might be surprised, but I can assure him that unions have played a valuable role in society, and we have what we have today because, in good part, of our union movement.

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As the sponsor of one of the bills that actually offended a great number of union organizers and, I would suggest, the management side, because of the manner in which the Harper government ultimately saw that bill pass, would the member not acknowledge, at the very least, that if we want to promote harmony within the labour and management communities, we need to build consensus before we introduce legislation?

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, we already had the polling information that I put out there that tells us there is already a broad consensus among the Canadian public about how they would like to see this particular piece of legislation.

Bill C-525 is no different from the laws that already exist in other jurisdictions outside of Canada and in our provinces within Canada. This is not some airy-fairy massive change. This is simply giving the Canada Labour Code, or whatever looks after the private sector, that ability. The legislation before Bill C-525 had “may” actually go to the union members and have a secret ballot vote. Changing the word “may” to “shall” is really all that Bill C-525 did. It took something that was optional and made it mandatory, at no extra cost, by the way. The bill did not need a royal recommendation or anything like that, because the labour council could simply absorb that. It is part of its mandate already. It is part of what it does.

No, I am not buying the member's argument. Is he saying that private members should not have the right to bring forward legislation to change labour laws or things like the wording of the national anthem?

[*Translation*]

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): Call in the members.

● (1600)

[*English*]

Hon. Andrew Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be deferred until the expiry of the time provided for government orders this day.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The vote is deferred.

* * *

[*Translation*]

SALARIES ACT

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue my speech of last Friday on Bill C-24. It will give me the opportunity to highlight the key elements I talked about last Friday for the benefit of those people who are very interested in these legislative changes, which directly affect us in every region of the country.

First of all, we were presented with Bill C-24, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act. We must admit that the title of the bill does not tell us much, and that is exactly what I am going to talk about. What I want to try to point out today is that the Liberal government does more harm with what it does not say than with what it does say, and that is very obvious in Bill C-24.

For the benefit of anyone watching us, this bill could have been called “an act to abolish the ministers for the regional economic development agencies and to centralize all regional economic development decisions in one location in Canada”. That would have been a more accurate title for this bill. It would have indicated to Canadians, as well as my colleagues across the aisle, I think, that this move is completely unacceptable for the various regions of Quebec.

Getting back to Bill C-24, all bills have a summary that clearly states the purpose of the bill. The summary of Bill C-24 states:

This enactment amends the Salaries Act to authorize payment...of the salaries for eight new ministerial positions. It authorizes the Governor in Council to designate departments to support the ministers who occupy those positions and authorizes those ministers to delegate their powers, duties or functions to officers or employees of the designated departments.

That summarizes the bill.

The summary does not say much about subclause 2(1), which states that “Paragraphs 4.1(3)(s) to (t.4) of the Act are repealed”. Those sections have to do with the ministers responsible for the regional economic development agencies. We have this one very short subclause and suddenly, poof, the ministers are gone, ministers that this government could not even be bothered to name, I might add.

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In this government's view, what is the point of having a presence in all of the regions of Quebec, Canada and the west? There is no point at all, when one person in Mississauga is authorized to make all the decisions on all economic development projects from coast to coast to coast. That is the real problem, although it is not expressly said.

Once again, we need to be wary of what this government is not saying, because the real problems lie in what it is not saying, and that is where Canadians will pay the highest price. It is no wonder this government has produced such poor results over the past year in terms of economic development and job creation.

We are wondering what is going on because there is no longer a minister for economic development for each region of Quebec. How are members from either side of the House supposed to talk to someone about the economic difficulties facing their ridings, regions, or municipalities? Who are we supposed to talk to?

The 338 members of the House will have to schedule a meeting with the one and only minister responsible for economic development to talk about their files, or if not, they must talk to someone in his cabinet. In any case, we are going to have a lot of difficulty finding someone to speak to about the problems our regions are experiencing, because they are of no interest to the Liberals.

The diafiltered milk issue is a prime example. We used to be able to go and see the minister responsible for economic development in our region and tell him about all the problems that this is causing for the region and its SMEs, which are dairy farms. It is important to understand that, in regions like mine, a farm is not just a farm. A dairy producer is a small business that supports the family, employees, the local convenience store, tractor and truck dealers, and others.

• (1605)

This will have a huge impact on local economies. We are not talking about just one farm. Any given riding can have 10, 12, 100, 200, or even 300 farms. The government is letting the problem drag on. Every now and then, the government says it will deal with the issue and that someone will take care of it at some point.

Today, the Minister of Agriculture announced plans for a new agricultural policy. The policy does not yet exist, but it will someday. Today, though, he did not say a word about diafiltered milk even though he was the one who told us back in May or June not to worry because there would be a meeting before the summer and a solution would be found.

Now here it is nearly November. The last day before November, October 31, is Halloween, a day for frightening people. In this case, the government could not wait for Halloween to frighten people about diafiltered milk. We have been raising the subject for a year and telling them that there is a problem and it is hurting dairy farms in our regions, our small and medium-sized businesses.

What is going to happen on Halloween night when kids go trick-or-treating? The dairy producers of my riding will not even be able to hand out Halloween candy to the kids. They cannot afford it; it is that simple. How sad.

Meanwhile, the softwood lumber issue is affecting thousands of jobs, including hundreds in my riding and hundreds in my colleagues' ridings. In the ridings of many of the members across the aisle, the current situation is having a direct impact on sawmills, since negotiations with the United States are not going well at all, because the government really does not care about resolving this matter. Why are the negotiations not working? Who in cabinet is going to stand up and speak on behalf of the various economic regions? We no longer have ministers responsible for regional economic development.

Not only does Bill C-24 abolish them, it abolishes them forever. It is really troubling.

Since this is a new government, those folks over there do not really realize what those regional ministers did. What does a minister responsible for an economic development agency do? I will refer directly to the Canada Economic Development website to explain what an economic development agency does. There are six regional development agencies across Canada that each represent one of the country's various regions.

Regional Development Agencies across Canada help to address key economic challenges by providing regionally-tailored programs, services, knowledge and expertise that: build on regional and local economic assets and strengths; support business growth, productivity and innovation; help small- and medium-sized businesses effectively compete in the global marketplace; provide adjustment assistance in response to economic downturns and crises; and support communities.

Further, it explains that:

Each Regional Development Agency brings a regional policy perspective in support of the national agenda through: regional economic intelligence to support national decision-making.

I will repeat that because it is important, and I will add the words "minister responsible" to put this in the context of a cabinet minister. This gives us:

Each [minister responsible for a] Regional Development Agency brings a regional policy perspective in support of the national agenda through regional economic intelligence to support national decision-making.

That is the problem. There is no longer anyone in cabinet capable of bringing a regional perspective when it comes to making a national decision. What happens as a result? There will be consultations on just about everything because there is no minister who has taken the time to consult the people of their region. There is no minister who is aware of the economic development of their own region. There is no minister who is capable of talking to cabinet about the repercussions of bad national decisions, because this type of minister no longer exists.

I have a lot of respect for the current Minister of Economic Development. Imagine that. One man alone has to make decisions for the economic development of all the regions in Canada.

I was the mayor of Thetford Mines for seven years. Thetford Mines is small town with a population of 26,000.

Government Orders

•(1610)

There are eight wards in that town, and there were ten when I was mayor. Every municipal councillor had different priorities. As surprising as it may seem, we needed a representative in each ward so that when we were at the council table, he would give us his opinion on the development of our town. We had a population of 26,000. Canada's population is much greater than that. There are different regions, the economy is different, and yet we are left with only one person to stand up for all of Canada's regions around the cabinet table.

In closing, this kind of decision by the government is going to lead to these kinds of results. The economy is stagnating. Despite all the spending by this government, the Bank of Canada, the IMF, and the OECD have revised their forecasts for Canada downward for this year and the next. Good jobs are rare. The vast majority of new jobs created under the Liberals are part-time jobs. Meanwhile, the cost of living is increasing. It is difficult for Canadians to buy a house, and the new federal regulations will ensure that even fewer people will buy homes.

The economy relies on the regions, which in turn rely on their small and medium-sized businesses. Will the current government understand this? Will it change its position on Bill C-24 and once again give our regions a regional minister to stimulate employment and create real, sustainable jobs in the SMEs of our regions and Canada?

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member might actually be a little off base on this particular bill. Bill C-24 really equalizes. It makes all ministers equal. For example, with the Harper government, we had status of women being one level of cabinet minister, and the minister of finance being another level of cabinet minister.

It takes a two-tier system, and establishes one-tier for cabinet ministers. When they sit around the table, they speak from the same power base, and that is important.

The member made reference to regional ministers. Finance does an incredible job, and that minister represents the entire country. We have confidence the minister responsible for development will represent the entire country. That is an obligation of all federal ministers. It is not just one pocket but the entire country.

When we talk about the economic development of regions, we have FedDev, ACOA, CED, and the Western Diversification Fund. If we look at the Western Diversification Fund in particular, even with a majority Conservative government, the regional minister did squat in terms of developing that fund during the Harper years.

My question to the member is, would he not recognize that the real true value are those regional development funds?

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe I am hearing comments like that.

The work done by the public servants at the economic development agencies is non-partisan. The government employees

of these agencies work to advance the economy and create jobs in Canada. That is what those agencies do.

As I was saying earlier, it is the things that are not being said that are worrisome. The government is talking about economic development agencies, but if there are no more ministers, what guarantee do we have that those agencies will remain open?

The current government is a centralizing government that wants to do away with the economic development agencies across Canada and make all the decisions. That is what this government wants to do and that is the intent behind Bill C-24.

•(1615)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a basic math question for my esteemed colleague.

Is it not true that, regardless of how many responsibilities ministers have, they only have a certain number of hours in a day? If they are given more responsibilities, they have to divide their time by the number of responsibilities, not multiply it by that same number.

If I am right, how can just one minister do the work of six for Canada's economic regions?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, my colleague must have studied math, because it is obvious that one minister alone cannot do the work that took six ministers to do in the past. That is what is troubling.

Since this government was elected, it has been promising to do things differently, to be accessible, and to meet with everyone. I challenge the minister to do twice as much work and answer all of his constituents' questions regarding the economic situation, diafiltered milk, softwood lumber, and small and medium-sized businesses that are not getting their much-touted tax break. I invite all the members opposite to do that.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what my colleague had to say, as well as the Liberals' response, or question rather, in which they accuse us of partisanship. I would like to point out that the ministers responsible for the regional economic development agencies from across Canada did a great job, without any partisanship.

Does my colleague think that this bill is transparent?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. This bill is no more transparent than the paper it is printed on. That much is clear.

The summary of this bill, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act, states that the government will appoint more ministers and give them authority to act. However, nowhere in the summary or the text is there anything about abolishing the positions of ministers responsible for Canada's regional economic development agencies. That is not transparency. Transparency means clearly stating the purpose of the bill.

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My first concern is about the minister. What is going to happen? Hundreds of dedicated public servants in economic development agencies across Canada care deeply about their mission. When the new cabinet was announced, nobody was as disappointed as they were because they had set up a great office for their new minister. They were keen to work with a minister and show him or her all of the good things they were doing in the various regions of Canada. A few days later, they had to get used to the idea that the position would remain vacant.

A year has gone by, and now we know that the Liberal government's plan was to abolish regional ministerial positions. What will become of our economic development agencies?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is fairly straightforward. Three economic development agencies are budgeted a certain amount of money on an annual basis. If we look at the Western Diversification Fund, we find that the budget, which the minister is responsible for allocating the money, has not done well in western Canada. The minister representing western Canada did not get the job done in terms of delivering for western Canada. The argument is that a minister is responsible for the entire country, whether it is the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, or the Minister of Health. This legislation makes all ministers equal.

From the Conservative Party's perspective, is there anything wrong with having an equal cabinet?

• (1620)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague is not saying is that the ministers that he wants to be equal will not be because they will be allocated resources according to their roles. Thus, someone with a role that is less important than that of the finance minister will not have the same staff.

The government is reserving the right to say that they will be paid the same, but that they may perhaps have to work with the staff of the full minister's office. That is different from what my colleague is saying.

I do not believe that one man can do all that work because it is impossible. However, that is what the Liberals believe. One year later, we can see the results: growth has stalled and things are not improving. The government should learn its lesson, backtrack, and give each region a minister.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in the debate at second reading stage of Bill C-24, which would amend the Salaries Act so that it better reflects today's realities.

Priorities in government change and the portfolios assigned to cabinet ministers change with them. Take for example, the ministry of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Hon. members will find that there are many portfolios whose names and responsibilities have evolved over time. The Laurier government had a minister of railways and canals. We have a minister of transport who oversees many more modes of transportation. The Laurier government had a postmaster general, while today those responsibilities fall under the jurisdiction of the

Minister of Public Services and Procurement. The Laurier government had a minister of the interior and superintendent-general of Indian affairs and one of the responsibilities of that minister was to promote immigration to the Prairies. That minister's many responsibilities have since been assigned to different portfolios, including that of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.

To respond to the changing needs of the times, the Laurier government appointed the very first labour minister to cabinet, a young William Lyon Mackenzie King. What is more, three titles in the ministry were not considered part of cabinet: the solicitor general, the controller of customs and the controller of inland revenue. This serves to remind us of just how much priorities change. A prime minister must have the flexibility to keep abreast of those changes and adjust his or her ministry. When the cabinet was sworn in on November 4, 2015, five ministers were appointed under the terms of the Ministries and Ministers of State Act. Nevertheless, they took their oath of office as full ministers and they have had full standing and authority, including salary, since day one of this government.

The addition of these new positions to the Salaries Act speak to the priorities of our times, just as Laurier's ministers spoke to his time. Laurier was the first French-Canadian prime minister. He argued that Canada's linguistic duality could make our country a key player on the international stage. Today, we are proud to be part of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie. In addition to her responsibilities as Minister of International Development, the Minister for La Francophonie pursues Canada's strong and engaged commitment to the 80 governments and member states of la Francophonie. Together we represent more than one-third of the United Nations' member states and account for a population of over 890 million people, including 220 million French speakers.

The Minister of Small Business and Tourism also represents a priority that did not exist in Laurier's time, when Canada was predominantly an agricultural nation. Today, our small businesses are the backbone of Canada's economy. They create jobs, they support communities, and they provide a launching pad for our best and brightest to create world-class companies. The Minister of Small Business and Tourism helps these people thrive and contribute to a strong Canadian economy. Her efforts to help small businesses grow and prosper contribute to building a strong middle class in Canada.

Like the Minister of Small Business and Tourism, the Minister of Science has a mandate that contributes to the competitiveness of Canada in a global, knowledge-based economy. Science plays a key role in providing the evidence for sound policy decisions. Support for world-class research is critical to making innovation a national priority, and the minister is helping promote the science that will drive an economy that is both prosperous and environmentally sustainable.

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The Government of Canada is the largest single investor in our country's sports system. Its investments in Canada's able-bodied and paraport athletes was recently on display in the excellent results Canada achieved at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio. These results encourage all Canadians, especially our young people, to get involved in sport and recreation. The Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities promotes healthier Canadians through sport and recreation and helps to ensure greater accessibility and opportunities for Canadians with disabilities. She plays an important part in pursuing the government's goal of fostering and celebrating Canada's diversity and making sure that all Canadians have equality of opportunity.

●(1625)

This goal of promoting diversity applies, as well, to the work of the Minister of Status of Women. One hundred years ago, women first earned the right to vote in Canada, starting in Manitoba. Last year, Canadians saw the first ever gender-balanced federal cabinet and, for the first time, a minister is dedicated fully to gender issues.

This government has made gender equality a priority. The minister champions gender equality, addresses the issue of violence against women, advances women's economic security and prosperity, and increases the representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles.

What does diversity look like in 2016, Mr. Speaker? Let us look to the role and influence of women in Canada. In Laurier's time, women did not even have the vote. The priorities of today's cabinet have changed since his day. In the Speech from the Throne last December, this government outlined its priorities for our times. They include growth for the middle class; a clean environment and a strong economy; diversity as Canada's strength; security; and open and transparent government.

Five new titles have been added to the Salaries Act so that the Prime Minister can name ministers to pursue those objectives. As society changes, Canada's needs will continue to evolve. It is important that we provide prime ministers with the flexibility to respond to these changes. This Bill represents an important step in that process and I urge honourable members to support it.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech. He did a fine job learning the talking points for this bill, especially the ones on equity.

The hon. member talked about what is included in the bill, but he did not talk about what is not included in the bill, in other words, the elimination of the regional minister positions. He also failed to talk about the ministerial lottery, these three new, mysterious minister positions that are included in the bill and we have no idea why.

Why is the government reserving the right to include three new minister positions in a bill without providing any further details? Would it be because the government wants to cut the number of regional economic development agencies to three? We do not know, because it is not in the bill. We have no idea.

What are these three mysterious minister positions? What is this Liberal ministerial lottery all about?

●(1630)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on toeing his party line so well with that question.

These ministerial positions, which have yet to be named, are meant to support the expansion of any government, whether ours or any future government formed by another party. Thus, there will be no need to change the legislation every time there is a change in cabinet. Needs change over time, and so cabinet must change, too. Why should we have to come back to Parliament every time to make small administrative changes in the executive branch?

As for the regional development agencies, why do we need six ministers all doing the same thing? Is that the kind of job creation the member advocates?

[*English*]

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague to emphasize the importance of a gender-neutral cabinet and the importance of ministers of state all being equal. This is 2016. I would like to hear from the member his thoughts on that.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I will paraphrase an older quote: a minister is a minister is a minister. I think it is very important that the ministers we have are treated equally and that they represent our country equally, to the extent possible. I think the importance of a balanced cabinet is completely self-evident.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question that actually has to do with the legislation. Could the member elucidate for the House, in practical terms, what exactly is the difference between a minister of state to assist and a minister for whom a department is designated?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, as of this fall, there will be no more difference. The minister of state will act in support of another minister. There will be two ministers in one department. It does not mean that they will have less work or less responsibility. They are two aspects of the same file.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to ask another question, because I heard my colleague say something that made what little hair I have left stand on end. If I continue listening, I may well lose the rest.

Does my colleague realize what he just said, with the comment about six ministers doing the same thing? Do the six ministers for the regional development agencies, which means one for the Atlantic provinces, one for Ontario, one for Quebec, one for the west, and one for the north, all have the same mandate to develop the same thing? Are the regional development issues in the west the same as they are in the Atlantic provinces?

I would like the member to clarify his thoughts on the role of regional development ministers and what he thinks of economic development and the economic development agencies, which do not do the same thing from coast to coast to coast. Can the member clarify his thoughts?

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Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, obviously, there is a world of difference between our opinions.

The major difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals is that we trust public services to do their job. We have a minister responsible for the major issue of economic development and public servants do their job under government leadership.

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think there might have been a slip of the tongue in the answer to my previous question, so I want to give the member the opportunity to correct himself.

I think he meant to be talking about ministers for whom a department is designated. He said that they will be working together, and that is what the new arrangement is going to be, but he said “minister of state”. I think the slip of the tongue might actually be telling, because it is actually hard to tell the difference between what these positions are, other than the fact that they will have a slightly different title. In practical terms, it seems to me that these are still two different positions. One kind of minister, ministers of departments, will be heads of departments, and the other ones will effectively be assisting those ministers with resources from their departments.

I want to give the member an opportunity, if there is something I am missing, to maybe clear it up, but I think the slip of the tongue might have been telling.

• (1635)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I do not think my tongue particularly slipped. If multiple ministers work together to accomplish a greater task, I do not see a problem with that.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a quick question. I recognize that there is a parliamentary secretary in the House today, who does a fantastic job. However, if we are talking about assisting other ministers, what is the role of a parliamentary secretary compared to a minister of state?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before the hon. member answers, I want to remind hon. members that we cannot refer to the presence or absence of members in the House.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I think parliamentary secretaries serve a different role than adjunct ministers. It is a very important role in managing the business of the department here in the chamber. That is why we see parliamentary secretaries at the late show and why we see them in a lot of different tasks. It is not a decision-making role.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not quite understand the confusion on the other side. My colleague has actually been fairly forthright in his explanation. There is a difference between them. The primary reason for the legislation today is that there was a strong statement by the Prime Minister, after swearing in the cabinet, that all ministers would be equal around the table. It does not necessarily mean that each minister gets the same size budget. It is a breakdown.

The bottom line is that there is equality within the cabinet. Is that not a good thing?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I believe equality among the cabinet members is very important. These are all people with the responsibility to run our country effectively. Having them be equal at the table is important to that function.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Child Care.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-24, an act to amend the Salaries Act and to make a consequential amendment to the Financial Administration Act.

The bill can be broken down into three major components: the legal creation of eight new Liberal ministerial positions, including three ministers; the elimination of six regional development agency ministers; and the amendment to the Salaries Act so that all ministers are paid equally.

Before I start speaking directly to these points, I want to share with everyone the importance of economic development agencies. I have seen first hand in my own riding the positive impact of federal economic agencies, and more specifically, of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

In 2009, the federal government created FedDev Ontario. Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced this agency, recognizing the global recession and the specific challenges in every region of the country. The agency was created to deal with the specific and distinct needs of southern Ontario, tailored to the priorities of the region. The agency was developed as a tool to help businesses and communities succeed with necessary resources.

At the time, the prime minister appointed the hon. Gary Goodyear to tour and engage workers, businesses, and community leaders. Gary was a member of Parliament from Cambridge who not only represented the area but was able to see the issues first hand and work with leaders to create solutions for the economic downturn.

Through the creation of this agency, many incredible opportunities came to fruition, and over \$1 billion was provided over five years. Mr. Goodyear's job was to work with the departments and account for putting programs into action, working to expedite funding for economic development, diversification, and community development.

Programs included under FedDev Ontario were the community adjustment fund, the National Research Council industrial research assistance program, the community futures program, and the Business Development Bank of Canada.

Overall, the agency's mandate was aimed at addressing the short-term economic needs of the communities hit hard by the economic recession. FedDev was able to announce a number of important initiatives, including an \$8-million investment to build an air cargo terminal at the London International Airport and improvements to Highway 8 in co-operation with the Province of Ontario.

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All that being said, I believe that we have a very competent minister currently at the helm, but I believe that expecting one minister to personally oversee all the important projects that fall under his portfolio is asking for failure. I believe that we need to have someone accountable for all the money that floats through these agencies who has knowledge of an area and the specific needs of that area.

Although I have travelled this beautiful country a bit, I recognize the vast differences from region to region. The needs of Atlantic Canada are vastly different from those of Alberta, yet currently they both need assistance. They need someone on the ground advocating on their behalf and recognizing what works best in their own communities. I feel that it is not the time to have one minister accountable for all the money and all the projects. I think this is reckless and poorly thought out, regardless of the efforts of the current minister.

That leads me to point number one: the creation of eight new Liberal ministerial positions. We see the government chopping the important positions at the economic development agencies yet creating new positions when we do not even know what they are for. Maybe if the government could share its plans for what the ministers are, it might get greater support from the opposition. Instead, it is proposing these new positions with no information.

The government is asking for a blank cheque payable to someone for something. Does that sound transparent? I would urge the government to just tell us. Let Canadians know what it is doing and why. These are simple requests, but instead, we are being asked to support Bill C-24 with no further information. The ministers have not yet been named. We have no idea what they will be doing, and we have no idea why they will be doing it.

The government was elected one year ago today on slogans like “transparency”, and today I am speaking and questioning the government on its plans. I thought I would be silly and maybe help the government with the meaning of transparency, using the ever so competent source, *Wikipedia*, which says, “Transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.”

● (1640)

If Wikipedia gets it, why does the Liberal government not? Why are we voting on something in the House of Commons that is so unclear? Why are we voting blindly on an issue? The Liberals are asking us to support something about which we have no idea. Truly, it is sounds like something I would say to my husband in the car. If I am not positive about the outcome, I usually say to him, “Trust me”. I know then that it is between him and me, not 30 million taxpayers, and that I can therefore be accountable to him.

However, we are being asked to give carte blanche authorization for something we do not know about, so the words, “trust me”, just cannot matter. When we are asking the government to give us some sort of ideas, we should be privy to what those requests are, especially when there are three new ministers that will be set up.

Finally, I would like to touch on the ministerial equality proposal. The Prime Minister proudly announced his gender-equal cabinet. Shortly afterwards, it was pointed out that he had appointed only

women to junior ministerial positions. I am 100% supportive of the idea of gender equality, but as many of our colleagues have pointed out, the solution to this “oops” is taking all of the junior ministers and giving them more money. Any woman fighting for gender equality sees the holes in this solution.

Let us just break this down to the simple facts. These are the following portfolios that are currently junior ministers: the Minister of all Francophonie, the Minister of Science, Minister of Small Business and Tourism, the Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities, and the Minister of the Status of Women. All of these positions are very important and necessary, but the Prime Minister is trying to end the gender gap in his own cabinet by saying these positions are equal to those of senior ministers.

This is not about gender parity; it is about saving face and protecting his reputation as a feminist. I find his solution quite an overreach and very degrading. Each of these women in their portfolios works hard, but if we asked them, not one would say they have a job that is equivalent to the Minister of Finance or the Minister of National Defence. There is a very big difference.

In our caucus, members who were previously in these positions speak frankly and honestly. Their roles are very different and their portfolios are much smaller and focused. The role of senior minister comes with a deputy minister and a larger departmental budget, as this is needed.

This one-tier approach is not modernizing and I question whether this is about gender parity or ministerial parity. Truly, this is neither. This is not about pay equity or equal pay for equal work, as my NDP colleague had clearly pointed out in her opening speech last week.

Let us look at this in simple terms. We talk of this as being about all ministers at the cabinet table having equal jobs. Let us be honest. I will take this back to something I have a lot of experience with, which is the restaurant business. If I am looking at a restaurant, I would look at the different roles that were set up. We would have the executive chef, the sous chef, the order cook, the manager of the front of the house, the servers and bartenders. We would have everyone. At the end of the day, everyone needs to work to make this restaurant work and every single person has a very important job to do, but the onus will be on the executive chef and the manager. Although the executive chef is out there doing the meals and doing the meal planning, the sous chef will be cutting celery and carrots.

We are trying to say that some of these small roles are not as small as they seem. The thing I have problems with is that when we look at this, we all need everyone to work together at the cabinet table and be equal, but that does not mean their jobs are equal. We cannot compare what a person does as an executive chef or a minister to what a sous chef does or to what a junior minister may do. I am not trying to say that these roles are not very important, because they are, but at the end of the day, let us look at the work.

We talked about ministerial parity; let us now talk about work parity. Do we see these ministers doing the same amount of work that the ministers of state are doing? I think the answer is very clear and it is no.

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Would I truly want to be the Minister of Finance setting up a budget for 2017 and also having to do a full forecast? That is a lot of work. Would I want to be the Minister of Justice who has to deal with almost every single bill that comes through the House of Commons? Absolutely not. Those are overwhelming things.

On the other side, I do recognize the importance of these junior roles, but saying they are not junior roles does not make them more senior. I really appreciate all of the work that we have done. We have just come out of an excellent 2016 Olympics, but does that make the Minister of Sports' role as important as the role of the Minister of Finance?

•(1645)

I want to show that huge difference because there is a huge difference. I think for us to say there is not would be rude, and the only reason that some people are not willing to say so is that she is a woman. Therefore, we have to say that it is an equal role. It truly is not an equal role.

We also look at the Minister of Status of Women, for whom I have great respect. She does an excellent job going around and checking important things about women throughout the country, including violence against women. Once again, is that role as great as that of the Minister of Justice? I am using these two women for comparison's sake, because they have different roles but are both female. Let us look at the two of them as equals.

We have the Minister of Justice, who was recently involved with a huge bill like Bill C-14. She is dealing with different aboriginal issues, with the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and with health issues. She is dealing with so many different things. We have to recognize that the job of the Minister of State for the Status of Women is a very focused one and does not include all of what the Minister of Justice may do.

I also look at the Minister of Health. I have great respect for her and the work she has to do. We have to understand how comprehensive her job is, not only working on her own role but working with all of the provinces.

We are sitting here talking about job parity, but this is not about job parity because if it were about job parity, we would be looking at equal work, and this is not equal work.

If I were in small business and paying everyone the same, I would go bankrupt. Our government has to look at this as not being about equal work. This is about a time when the Prime Minister last year appointed his cabinet, which was scrutinized through the lens of his statement that his cabinet was gender-equal. The media pointed out that he truly did not have a gender-equal cabinet so because some of those ministers were ministers of state. Therefore, we are now giving large increases to those ministers of state, chopping off the words "of state", and saying that they are equal. Let us be honest. Changing the name of minister of state and making it "minister" and not increasing the workload and saying that they are the same as everyone else who is sitting along that front bench is not true. I think we all have to sit back and see that.

I asked a question earlier of my colleague the parliamentary secretary, because I know that in my own region I have an excellent parliamentary secretary who works very hard. I sit there, and before I

question the minister of state, I am thinking "How is this going to roll out?" Although I know she works very hard, should I expect that in time the parliamentary secretaries are going to be saying, "I do a lot of work as well because when the minister is not here I sit here on Fridays, and when the minister is not available I take a lot of the calls and requests".

What is going to happen? Is this going to be a snowball effect so that the next thing we know, even a critic like me will get a raise? To me, that does not sound right. Our work is as members of Parliament and we are elected to come here, making the amount of money that we do. Yes, they got a cabinet position; congratulations, they get more money. But at the same time, they are working hard and all members of Parliament should be working hard for all Canadians.

I want to go back to the three main topics here. We are talking about removing the regional ministers, which I feel is very unnecessary. As I indicated, even in my own hometown we have seen great things done because of the impact and the knowledge of those ministers. I am not going to sit here and say that the minister is not doing a great job, but he has a huge role. By having people under those regional agencies, they have first-hand experience and knowledge of those particular files and how they can see Canadians in economic development.

The other issue is the mystery three ministers that we discussed. We talk about transparency. We need to see that transparency. If the current government wants us to support three more ministers, tell us why, tell us who, and tell us what they are going to be doing in the future and how they are going to benefit all Canadians.

Finally, on the issue of ministerial parity that I just wrapped up on, if we break down all of the issues involved and really look at them, I want all of the government members and every member here saying, "Is this the right bill to support?" I cannot support a bill when there are so many unknowns. I cannot support a bill when there is talk of parity that really is not parity. As well, I cannot support a bill when I know that as a result, we will be cutting the Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions agency, the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency minister, the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario minister, the Federal Economic Development Initiative in Northern Ontario minister, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency minister, as well as the Western Economic Diversification Canada minister. All of them have great tasks and great roles. I think it is very important that they continue to sit at the cabinet table to have that impact and to be able to advocate for their regions in the current cabinet and government.

•(1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will respond with a question so that the member will feel a bit more comfortable with the bill.

Government Orders

Let me be clear. The Government of Canada is not removing the regional development agencies. We believe in those agencies. That is a very important point to emphasize.

The member referred to the number of ministers and talked about transparency. I spoke to this in the introduction of the bill itself. We are being very transparent. There is an increase of eight. Six of the regional development ministers' positions are being taken away, and five positions being converted to full ministers.

The member appears to have some concern about the importance of the ministers. Virtually all members from different sides of the House have talked about small business being the backbone of Canada's economy and how important Canada's economy is. This legislation is elevating that particular minister into that equal strata that we just finished talking about, where all ministers are equal, including what used to be the minister of state for small business, who will now become the minister responsible for small business. The member should listen to what members on all sides of the House are saying about the importance of that particular ministry.

The member also referred to the three unnamed ministries. Those three unnamed ministries will provide future opportunities for future governments. We are not saying that we are increasing the size of cabinet. Rather, members will find that the current cabinet is actually smaller than the Harper cabinet.

I hope that provides some clarity on the issues the member raised, and I would ask her to provide her comments on that.

•(1655)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I have a great respect for all of the work that the member has done in the past, and he does enlighten us very often. I recognize what he is saying. Converting the five is one thing. I recognize how we do the math there, and that is great, but when we are talking about accountability, there are billions of dollars flowing through those economic development agencies.

In the city of London itself we have London Air Cargo, which is a new opportunity for more businesses to grow and to have international trade opportunities come into the communities. I believe it is important to have someone in that region who understand its needs and who advocates on behalf of the southwestern Ontario economic development agency. What I am asking for is accountability, to see how that money is spent, and to have a minister who is accountable for that.

I recognize that the Minister of Innovation does a good job. However, we are asking him to be in charge of not only his own role but also six other federal agencies that will be spending this money. We cannot put the needs of Atlantic Canada, western Canada, southwestern Ontario, Quebec, and northern Ontario into one bucket and say they are all the same. When I travel across this great country, things are different from place to place. Having the member from northern B.C. tell me how things are up there will be a lot different from what I find in southwestern Ontario. By having those ministers as a part of the dialogue in those communities, they will be able to connect with cabinet and share the concerns of all Canadians in their represented regions.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this bill makes it very clear that the Liberals are trying to correct a mistake. They said that they wanted to create a cabinet with an equal number of men and women. However, in the end, they realized that most of the women appointed to cabinet were appointed as minister of state and were therefore receiving a lower salary. They realized, from the public's reaction, that they had made a mistake. However, rather than admitting their mistake, they decided to make everyone a minister, despite the different responsibilities associated with the different positions.

I am the NDP critic for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

[*English*]

While I was on a two-week tour of Atlantic Canada this summer in New Brunswick, P.E.I., Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, I had a chance to speak with many Atlantic Canadians, and some of the people who were working at ACOA. One of the main concerns they have is that instead of the bottom-up approach that we are seeing right now, in which the people on the ground can act as spokespersons and champions for them, they feel it is becoming more centralized and that the department is adopting a top-down approach in which the main responsibility of the people on the ground will be to carry out the wishes of the top ministerial office.

I would like my colleague to respond to those comments I received this summer.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, FedDev Ontario was created in 2009. At that time, I worked very hard with the previous member of Parliament to ensure he was aware of the situation, because although it is southwestern Ontario, it is a large area.

I am from the city of St. Thomas, where 6,500 people lost their jobs because of the closure of not only the Sterling plant but the Ford plant, and all the secondary and tertiary plants. This minister lived one hour down the road, and was aware of what was happening. His role was to come down, and see the devastation that happened in our communities, and see how he could personally help and be a voice for southwestern Ontario.

We saw many changes, and I know within all of the ridings, whether in London—Fanshawe, London West, London North Centre, or Oxford, everyone was able to speak to that minister. Whether they were a mayor or warden, everyone had that ability to connect with the federal government. Therefore, it is just like the situation we see in Atlantic Canada. We need to have someone advocating.

I appreciate the member's comments about that because that is exactly what we need. We need someone to advocate at the cabinet table for all the different regions in Canada, recognizing their differences.

Mr. Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise and ask a question on the hon. member's eloquent speech. It was brilliant, as usual.

Government Orders

However, I do want to touch on some of the comments that were made by the member opposite, the member for Winnipeg Centre. He indicated we are not removing the agencies. However, within the agencies, there is still a deputy minister and many staff who work there. I can only imagine what they are thinking today, as the Liberals stand up time and time again saying they plan to abolish the ministers. Who is next in that role?

As I hear the member for Winnipeg Centre laugh at that, I would think that many of the people who work in those departments would be worried that their jobs are next.

Albertans are struggling. We have a job crisis in Alberta. To go in and cut these ministries, particularly Western and Economic Diversification, what type of message does that send to Albertans?

• (1700)

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question because something we have seen in the House of Commons is the representation from some of the western MPs, especially from Alberta. We have questioned them on different efforts, especially to do with the oil and gas sector, asking them to speak up.

Unfortunately, we have not seen that happen. Therefore, when we talk about Western Economic Diversification Canada needing a minister, if anything that is proof it needs a minister more now than ever because we have seen this happen to Alberta. We have seen it happen to different provinces, when they are going through this, and we do not have members sitting at that cabinet table who are talking about Alberta. Therefore, I am very fearful of what will happen.

We do have a Minister of Veterans Affairs who is from Alberta, and we have some other ministers who are from that area, but what is happening in this situation is they are focusing on their files sometimes. They are not focusing on what is best for Alberta. We need a minister, like we had in the previous government, that is focused on Alberta, focused on jobs, and focused on getting people back to work.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to contribute to the debate on Bill C-24.

I am always interested when governments present bills. We have to understand the motivation of a bill in order to really judge its worth. Part of my comments today are going to be about what I think the motivation for this bill really is, and hopefully in assessing that, we will be able to get a better sense of the worth of the bill.

The government would have us believe that there is an important principle of equality at stake in this bill, but in fact, the bill fails to manifest any greater equality between ministers or between men and women in cabinet, for that matter, than the existing legislative regime. It entrenches an important regional inequality created by the new Liberal government.

In the press release issued by the government when it introduced the bill, it said that the legislation is meant to show that “The Government of Canada is committed to creating a one-tier ministry that recognizes the equality of all Cabinet members.”

That statement strikes me as a little strange. I wonder how many governments regularly issue statements affirming that they do, in

fact, value the opinion of the people they put around the cabinet table. I cannot imagine that there are that many. I would think it goes without saying, that if prime ministers put people at the cabinet table, they do in fact value the opinion of those members of cabinet.

I found it passing strange that the government felt the need to let Canadians know that it does actually take cabinet members seriously. In the post-2015 world, I suppose anything really is possible.

In addition to being odd, the statement about a one-tier ministry is also vague. It is not exactly clear in what sense the legislation will make all cabinet ministers equal. For instance, there are a number of ways in which cabinet ministers might be found to be equal or unequal. They might be equal or unequal, as the case may be, with respect to pay, experience, title, resources, competence, and so on.

Some of these things are obviously not fixable by way of legislation and some are. It is clear to me that the bill, obviously, has to deal with those equalities or inequalities that could be established by legislation.

We still have to figure out what exactly is the relevant sense of equality that the government is trying to zero in on here. The kinds of inequalities between ministers that could be addressed through legislation are differences in resources, pay, level of responsibility, and in title. I want to come to those in a little bit.

First, I want to give members some of the context for the bill as I see it, and briefly explain the changes contained in the bill. The origin of the bill goes back to a year ago today, after the election, when the Prime Minister said, about building his cabinet, and having committed in the Liberal platform to include an equal number of women in cabinet.

When he announced the new cabinet, observers quickly noticed that, excluding himself, there were 15 male ministers, 10 female ministers, and 5 female ministers of state to assist other ministers. Ministers of state are not department heads, and before the election received less pay than ministers. This meant that five of the female cabinet members were to be paid less, and enjoy less responsibility than their male colleagues.

Despite having almost, but not quite, achieved his promise of including an equal number of men and women in cabinet, for the benefit of the Prime Minister and other members who may wonder, 16 is not equal to 15. Despite that, he had clearly not achieved gender equality in cabinet.

It is fair to say that this was an embarrassment for the Prime Minister. If he did not feel embarrassed, he probably should have. It was an embarrassment because the Prime Minister showed a lack of competence in simple math, failing to recognize that 16 men is not the same as 15 women, and that it does not balance.

It was also an embarrassment because the Prime Minister, who went out of his way to promote himself as a feminist, filled all his junior cabinet posts with women, thereby creating a gender gap in both pay and responsibility inside his cabinet.

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Either that is embarrassing because it exposes a rather superficial feminism, and shows that the Prime Minister is willing to do just enough to get credit for being a feminist and no more, or it is embarrassing because it shows a complete lack of comprehension of the different cabinet posts that were available to him, and the tools that were available to him to build a cabinet. He clearly did not understand, if he was sincere in his feminist intention, the difference between a minister of state and a minister.

It may, in fact, be a bit of both. That would be even more embarrassing. The bill, as it stands, seems to suggest that it is actually a little bit of both. I will get into why.

● (1705)

Consider that the Prime Minister could have avoided this embarrassment by simply adding, or eliminating, one minister of state, and ensuring that those positions were distributed equally between men and women. That would have solved the gender difference in cabinet.

He could also have avoided the embarrassment if he knew his options a little better, and apparently he did, or does, because the bill, I think, adds to the confusion about what the options are for building a cabinet. He could have established, under the authority of the existing Ministries and Ministers of State Act, ministries of state for the five ministers of state. These could have functioned, essentially, as mini-departments resourced by reallocating staff and funds from other departments.

A minister of state responsible for a ministry of state would be the head of that ministry of state and not assigned to assist another minister. Furthermore, under existing legislation, ministers of state responsible for a ministry state are already mandated to receive the same pay as ministers or department heads. That is another way that the Prime Minister could have avoided both the pay gap, and alleviated that gap in responsibility between those positions.

For those keeping score, now, in terms of cabinet positions, I have mentioned three. There are ministers, ministers of state for a ministry of state, and ministers of state to assist.

This bill purports to create a further type of cabinet member, currently referred to in legislation simply as minister. If Bill C-24 were to pass, cabinet members would now be referred to as ministers for a department. Then a new type of minister would be created called ministers for whom a department is designated. Those ministers who are currently ministers of state would be converted to this new kind of minister, minister for whom a department is designated.

Bill C-24 allows that:

The appropriate Minister for a department...may delegate, to a minister in respect of whom that department is designated, any of the appropriate Minister's powers, duties or functions...A minister in respect of whom a department is designated...may use the services and facilities of that department.

That might sound familiar, because I know all members are very familiar with the Ministries and Ministers of State Act, and they would have noticed, I am sure, that it sounds a lot like section 11 of the Ministries and Ministers of State Act that states that a minister of state to assist:

...shall exercise or perform such of the powers, duties or functions of any minister or ministers having responsibilities for any department or other portion of the federal public administration as may be assigned or transferred to him...shall make use of the services and facilities of the department or portion of the federal public administration concerned.

The language is very similar because the positions, at the end of the day, are very similar. They enjoy a similar level of responsibility, and are resourced in pretty much exactly the same way.

When we read it, it is a little bit like the first time we see an infomercial for a Snuggie, where they are saying, "Here's this blanket, with a lot of great conceptual innovation and new features". We are sitting there thinking, "Isn't that just a backwards bathrobe, really, made of fleece?" There is this awkward tension where we are thinking, "No, this is not really a new thing, it's just a repackaged old thing, and I've already got one, so I don't need to buy a new one".

There is no practical difference between ministers of state to assist and ministers for whom a department is designated.

If the government insists on having a new name for the same old thing, I would like to submit a different one. I think ministers formerly known as ministers of state would be a much catchier and probably more to the point title for these new ministers. Perhaps there will be an amendment at committee to that effect.

Bill C-24 is the government's response to the Prime Minister's awkward cabinet launch last fall where he pretty much fell flat on his face, but it is not clear how the bill really fixes anything. We know it is a response to that. We know that is where it comes from. The question is, "Does it fix any of that? Does it actually do the work that the government has identified as needed doing?"

If the idea is simply to close the gender wage gap, needlessly created by the Prime Minister, the bill is unnecessary.

First, the Prime Minister did not have to choose to appoint only women to minister of state positions. The gap could be closed by making more women full ministers and some men ministers of state. That would be fine.

● (1710)

Second, existing legislation allows the government to pay ministers of state the same as ministers. In fact, it has been doing that for years, so legislation is not required to do that.

Third, as I mentioned earlier, the Prime Minister could have created ministries of state out of the resources of existing departments, giving those ministers of state more authority and responsibility within the government and the current legislation would have required that the government pay them the same as ministers, not just choose to, but require them to do so.

If the idea of this bill is to close the gender responsibility gap needlessly created by the Prime Minister when he appointed only women to positions of ministers of state, then the bill is also unnecessary. This, too, could be solved simply by making more women full ministers and some men ministers of state or by establishing ministries of state.

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If the idea is to eliminate the difference in administrative responsibility between ministers and in that sense make them equal, then the bill fails to do that, too. There will continue to be a difference between ministers for departments, on the one hand, and ministers of state to assist ministers for whom a department is designated, ministers formerly known as ministers of state or whatever the government ultimately chooses to call them. There is still going to be a real difference of administrative responsibility between those positions. They will not be equal in that sense, so the bill, if that is the point, is a failure.

Keep in mind that what I am trying to do is identify the relevant sense of “equal”, in which this bill would make them equal. As everyone can see, I have given it a lot of thought and I have not been able to come up with anything. I do not think it is because it is there and I cannot find it. I think it is because the conclusion of my study of the bill shows that it is not there.

Moreover, there is nothing wrong with having people at the cabinet table who have different levels of administrative responsibility. When the Prime Minister fell flat on his face in his cabinet unveiling because he did not manage to create gender equality in the cabinet, people were not outraged at the fact that there were ministers of state and ministers. No one said, “I can't believe the ministers aren't equal.” They said, “I can't believe that the Prime Minister, who calls himself a feminist, is not treating female members of the cabinet equally, because he's giving them junior roles in cabinet instead of senior roles in cabinet.” That was the issue. The issue was not that there were legitimate differences in administrative responsibility and corresponding titles. Again, it is not clear what real problem the bill is trying to solve.

The fact that ministers of state do not have a department or are called ministers of state instead of ministers should not detract from their contributions to discussions about war and peace, budgets, or other policy issues around the cabinet table. They are all entitled to sit there and if other cabinet ministers do not take them seriously simply because of their difference in title, that is not a legislative problem, that is a problem in organizational culture, and this bill will not fix that either. That would require real leadership from the Prime Minister.

Somewhere deep down, I think the government actually knows this. That is why it is not repealing the Ministries and Ministers of State Act. It is keeping that option open. In fact, in the speech by the member for Winnipeg North, he made a point of pointing out that the government is not repealing that act. It is keeping the option of ministers of state around.

There is an awkward tension in the principle that it is stating there. On the one hand, the government is saying that there is something wrong with having ministers of state, because that creates an inequality in cabinet. If, in the future of this ministry, the government wants to appoint ministers of state, I think Canadians should rightly say that, by the government's own standards, it has now decided to have inferior cabinet ministers and superior cabinet ministers.

I do not think that would be right, because I think there is a role for legitimate differences in administrative responsibility, but the government is arguing against that and yet not repealing the act, which I find strange. It helps right now to make a grand show of not

having ministers of state, because what is driving the bill is this need to make up for and reduce the sense of shame and embarrassment by the Prime Minister for having failed to do something that he said he really wanted to do, which was to bring gender equality to cabinet.

If having ministers of state is not compatible with having a one-tier ministry, and having a one-tier ministry is an important matter of principle for the Liberals, I do not see why they would not just repeal the Ministries and Ministers of State Act, although, for the record, I want to say I think that would be a terrible idea. It is just a logical consequence of the arguments that they have been advancing on Bill C-24.

Interestingly, Liberals are locking in another choice they made: the choice not to have stand-alone ministers for regional economic development. This is another sense of equality we might talk about: regional equality.

• (1715)

Here the government is actually locking in a bad decision that goes hand in hand with the decision it made to centralize the management of the various regional economic development agencies in one minister. That means only one region of the country gets a minister from the region who understands the needs of the region, because he or she, and in this case it is a he, lives there and represents that area. All the other regions do not get that benefit and so they are not being treated equally.

Granted, it is the government's prerogative to experiment with new ways of doing this, but I think it made a poor decision. This kind of centralizing of decision-making for agencies that have a deliberately regional mandate does not make sense and ultimately is not helpful. The government wants to try something new and it is doing that, but I think the government will find that it does not work. Why are the Liberals closing the door behind them and making it harder to go back to a model which I think works better, which is actually having ministers from the regions in charge of the local regional development agencies? Particularly in tough economic times, the government may find in time that it is worth making it a full-time job of a cabinet minister to do that. That is what the government is taking away by doing this and that does not make sense.

The Liberals are leaving their options open with slush ministries or extra ministries that have not been designated yet. They are leaving their options open, even though they are saying there is some matter of principle at stake in not having ministers of state, but they are keeping the act around just in case they want to appoint some anyway. The Liberals embarked on a centralizing experiment when it comes to regional economic development, and they have decided instead to tie their hands. That does not make sense to me. They have their priorities backward.

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People in Elmwood—Transcona would prefer to have a minister from western Canada who knows and understands western Canada's economy making the detailed decisions about how the government is going to encourage western economic diversification. I believe that people in other parts of the country feel the same way about their own region. The government should leave itself with more options, not less, when it comes to managing regional economic development. The government is creating three as yet unspecified ministries in the name of flexibility, so why not retain the flexibility it already has with respect to regional economic development?

Where does this leave us? It seems to me this bill was drafted by the minister's personal communications team with the full dearth of understanding of legislative and parliamentary process that that implies. The bill is not really about furthering any principle of equality. For any of the government's proposed goals in the bill with respect to equality, and I have gone through an exhaustive list of different senses of equality that the government might mean, Bill C-24 either fails or is completely unnecessary.

The bill would create an expanded and more complicated set of cabinet-building options for a Prime Minister who already did not understand the options that were available to him, while tending to mask real differences in responsibility by maintaining the tradition of junior and senior cabinet posts, and let me be clear that is what a minister for whom a department is designated is, while conferring the same title on each cabinet member.

The Prime Minister wants to be lauded for bringing real gender equality to cabinet, but in order to do that, and instead of taking real action on that, he is just glossing over the fact that his ministers formerly known as ministers of state really are just ministers of state with a better salary and a better title.

It is no secret that where the Prime Minister is concerned, style trumps substance. It is shocking to see that tendency drilled down to the level where it is starting to interfere with a relatively straightforward administrative matter such as determining what act of Parliament would authorize the payment of ministers of state. That is something else.

The end result is that we are forced to consider a bill that is a colossal waste of time. The Liberal government has been criticized for having a notoriously light legislative agenda, but the goal of those critics was not to encourage it to produce nonsense bills that would not change anything but rather that we might spur the Liberals on to introduce meaningful legislation that would help move the country forward. For instance, if they want a quick short list off the top of my head, they could move to repeal Bill C-51. They could move to protect Canadian water by reinstating the Navigable Waters Protection Act which was decimated in the last Parliament. They could reinstate the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. That would get us back to a baseline of where we were before the last 10 years of government.

If the Liberals wanted to go further and begin improving on that baseline, they could bring forward legislation granting pay equity for Canadian women, which they have said they are going to wait until the end of 2018 to do. They could bring in a meaningful rail safety regime instead of continuing to rely on industry self-regulation, and the list goes on.

There are so many important issues facing the country that are crying out for government action and we are stuck with a bill that is really just about easing the Prime Minister sense of shame at having botched his own cabinet debut.

● (1720)

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I found it a little humorous when the member for Elmwood—Transcona referred to the names of the new ministries as ministries formerly known as something else. I found it quite rich coming from the party formerly known as the official opposition. I found it even more rich when his friends next to him were laughing coming from the party formerly known as the government. I appreciated the sense of irony.

Would the member explain to the House what he sees as unimportant and not to be a priority about La Francophonie, about small businesses, about science, about the status of women, and about persons with disabilities? Why does he think those ministries are not important to Canadians?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the party formerly known as the third party for his question. I would note that this is part of the fundamental dishonesty about the government's arguments on the bill. It is not that people do not think it is important. This is such a rinky-dink notion that all of a sudden, after a whole Canadian history of having ministers of state, in order to implement a portfolio, somehow all of a sudden, because the Liberals were elected that if a minister of state is put in charge of something it is not important. It is still important. Ministers of state are important people in the government. No one is disputing that.

The problem was not whether ministers of state are important or not. The problem was not whether ministers of state have a voice at the cabinet table or not. That is ridiculous. The problem was that out of five ministries of state, a Prime Minister, who is a self-professed feminist, decided to appoint women as all of those junior ministers. That is the problem. Let us talk about the real problem instead of these ridiculous claims by the government about what is important and what is not.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently and I want to thank our hon. colleague from Elmwood—Transcona for his brilliant speech. I thought it was very good and any speech that gets in the word “Snuggie”, and uses a comparison to a Snuggie is something else.

I come from Cariboo—Prince George and in the early 2000s our region, indeed the province of British Columbia, was decimated by the pine beetle infestation. At that time we had a government that had regional ministers there on the ground who knew the issues. As we looked to diversify our economy not only in my riding of Cariboo—Prince George, but across the province of British Columbia, we looked at what some of the natural advantages that we have.

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There was investment in the port of Prince Rupert, investment in the CN intermodal facilities, investment in the Prince George Airport Authority, investment in the Asia-Pacific gateway, but there was also investment in the hon. colleague's riding in Winnipeg with CentrePort and that connected Canada to the world. The reason that was done is that regional ministers were on the ground and could speak to the validity and the value of that investment.

What the government has done is less about gender equality in this decision and this bill, and is more about centralized government. The member so aptly mentioned the Prime Minister's sense of shame and falling flat on his face not only when he made his initial announcement, but the bungling of this last year. I wonder if the hon. colleague would like to comment on those two points.

• (1725)

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Cariboo—Prince George, a former seatmate of mine. We used to have more occasions to discuss the issues of the day, so I am glad to take up that habit once again and say that he is quite right.

It is not believable that in a country as large as Canada, we are going to have one minister on top of all the details and important things there are to know about the various regions, whose economies are quite different. They are based on different sectors, in some cases. They are based on different kinds of resources. They have different labour-market challenges. I would like to be able to go to a minister who knows my region.

It is the same reason we talk about electoral reform, for instance. There are two points. One is that it is important to Canadians to have someone represent their geographical area because it is important to have a connection to an area to represent that area well.

If a minister is going to be in charge of a regional economic development agency, then it stands to reason that for the same reason, Canadians would want a minister who comes from that region and represents that region to feel that sense of connection and have confidence that they do not have to tell them everything about the region. We need to know that when ministers are in a room and decisions have to be made, they already know this stuff so that they do not make a decision and then have to go back and reverse it because there was something they did not know. That is important.

It may be odd for the member, but I am thinking about this in terms of the feedback we got on electoral reform. One of the important arguments for proportional representation is getting regional voices in national caucuses. That is because we know that a national caucus, whether a government caucus or an opposition caucus, benefits from that kind of regional representation. Members from those areas can bring a voice to that caucus that helps it make better decisions that are more sensitive when rolling out government-wide decisions in particular regions. Opposition parties that understand better the needs of particular regions are able to hold the government to account for policies that do not necessarily make sense in a cookie-cutter way across all regions.

That is another area where we talk about the importance of regional representation. The arguments apply equally there.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Madam Speaker, in light of the Liberals' remarks, it is worth remembering that initially, when the cabinet was announced, there were ministers and ministers of state, and that was as it should be. Now the Liberals would have us believe that considering all ministers with equally important jobs to be equal is a revolutionary step forward. That was not how they saw it at first though. They made that decision only after they got caught trying to convince everyone that they had achieved parity with a gender-balanced cabinet.

I would like my colleague to comment on that. How can they claim to be progressive when they started off with a major misstep that they are trying to make up for now?

• (1730)

[*English*]

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Madam Speaker, I have often said that one of the things I find frustrating about Liberals is that their politics often seem to be informed by a desire simply to be in politics and to win as much as possible in politics, not to stand for any particular principle. The principle can change from day to day. What is important is that they are there because they want the status and the title and the things that come from that.

I talked about a lot of different senses of equality we might decipher in this bill. It turns out that if there is a sense of equality at stake, it is just the title. What is in a name? Only a Liberal government could feel that it was really creating a revolution for women. First, it should not be all women in minister of state positions or ministers for whom a department is designated or ministries formerly known as ministries of state. It should not just be women there. Only a Liberal government could think it was actually doing something of substance simply by changing the style. That is a recurring problem—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I am sorry. The member will have a minute and a half to answer additional questions should this matter come before the House again.

* * *

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code, the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act, the Public Service Labour Relations Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the third time and passed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): It is the same reasons we talk about electoral reform, for instance. It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-4

Call in the members.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

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

Government Orders

(Division No. 127)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Brosseau	Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings	Caron
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Chen	Choquette
Christopherson	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Donnelly
Dubourg	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saenich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette

Paradis	Pauzé
Peterson	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poissant
Quach	Rankin
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saganash	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Scarpaleggia
Schiefke	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Sohi	Spengemann
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Stewart	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Thériault	Trudel
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Virani	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesniewskyj
Young	Zahid— 204

NAYS

Members

Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Cooper
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genius
Gladu	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
MacKenzie	Maguire
McColeman	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)	Nater
Nicholson	Nuttall
O'Toole	Paul-Hus
Poilievre	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Wong	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 79	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I believe that during the vote, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell was not in his seat during the entirety of the vote.

The Speaker: Members are required to remain in their seats during the entirety of the vote. Does the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell wish to respond?

Mr. Francis Drouin: Mr. Speaker, that is correct. I was not in my seat the whole time.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Resign.

The Speaker: The member for Grande Prairie—Mackenzie is rather harsh in his attitude on this. I think we will not count the vote for that member this time instead. We will correct the record.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from October 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (firearm — definition of variant), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-230 under private members' business.

• (1820)

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

(Division No. 128)

YEAS

Members

Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boucher	Brown
Calkins	Carrie
Chong	Cooper
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Egliniski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kmiec	Lake
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Ludwig	MacKenzie
Maguire	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poillievre
Raitt	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saroya	Scheer
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet

Trost
Van Loan
Viens
Warawa
Waugh
Wong
Zimmer — 81

Private Members' Business

Van Kesteren
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Webber
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boissonnault	Boudrias
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Caron	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chen
Choquette	Christopherson
Cormier	Cullen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
DeCourcey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Donnelly
Dubourg	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duval	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fortin
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hughes	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Jolibois
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Long
Longfield	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Maloney	Masse (Windsor West)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau

Private Members' Business

Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
O'Connell
O'Regan
Paradis
Peterson
Philpott
Plamondon
Quach
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Saganash
Saini
Sangha
Sarai
Schiefke
Serré
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sohi
Ste-Marie
Stewart
Tan
Thériault
Vandal
Virani
Wilson-Raybould
Young

Mulcair
Nantel
Nault
Oliver
Ouellette
Pauzé
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Poissant
Rankin
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Sahota
Sajjan
Sansoucy
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Spengemann
Stetski
Tabbara
Tassi
Trudel
Vandenbeld
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid— 202

Boucher
Boutin-Sweet
Breton
Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes
Cannings
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Cormier
Cuzner
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Dion
Doherty
Dreeshen
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duvall
Ehsassi
Ellis
Falk
Fergus
Finley
Fisher
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gallant
Garrison
Genius
Gladu
Goodale
Gourde
Hajdu
Harder
Harvey
Hoback
Housefather
Hussen
Iacono
Johns
Jordan
Julian
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Kwan
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebel
Lefebvre
Leslie
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)
Monsef
Moore
Morrissey
Murray
Nassif
Nault
Nuttall
Oliver
O'Toole
Paradis
Peterson

Boulerice
Bratina
Brisson
Brown
Calkins
Caron
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chen
Choquette
Cooper
Cullen
Dabrusin
Dhalwal
Di Iorio
Diotte
Donnelly
Drouin
Duguid
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Fonseca
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Garneau
Généreux
Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Hardeastle
Hardie
Hehr
Holland
Hughes
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jolibois
Jowhari
Kang
Kent
Khera
Kniec
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière
Lebouthillier
Lemieux
Levitt
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacGregor
Maguire
Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCallum
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKenna
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
Mendès
Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Morneau
Mulcair
Nantel
Nater
Nicholson
O'Connell
O'Regan
Ouellette
Paul-Hus
Petitpas Taylor

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SAFE DISPOSAL OF LAMPS CONTAINING MERCURY ACT

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-238, An Act respecting the development of a national strategy for the safe disposal of lamps containing mercury, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-238 under private members' business.

• (1830)

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

(Division No. 129)

YEAS

Members

Albrecht
Alghabra
Allison
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Aubin
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bennett
Bergen
Bezan
Bittle
Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
Boissonnault

Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Anderson
Arseneault
Ashton
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Beech
Benson
Berthold
Bibeau
Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block
Bossio

Private Members' Business

(Division No. 130)

YEAS

Members

- Allison
- Arnold
- Aubin
- Barsalou-Duval
- Benson
- Berthold
- Blaikie
- Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)
- Boucher
- Boulerice
- Brousseau
- Calkins
- Caron
- Chen
- Choquette
- Cooper
- Diotte
- Donnelly
- Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
- Eglinski
- Fast
- Fortin
- Garrison
- Genuis
- Gladu
- Hardcastle
- Hoback
- Jeneroux
- Jolibois
- Kelly
- Kitchen
- Kwan
- Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
- Lebel
- Lobb
- MacKenzie
- Malcolmson
- Mathysen
- McColeman
- Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
- Mulcair
- Nater
- Nuttall
- Paul-Hus
- Plamondon
- Quach
- Ramsey
- Rayes
- Rempel
- Ritz
- Sansoucy
- Scheer
- Shields
- Sopuck
- Ste-Marie
- Stewart
- Stubbs
- Thériault
- Trudel
- Van Loan
- Viersen
- Warawa
- Waugh
- Wong
- Zimmer— 130

- Philpott
- Poillievre
- Quach
- Rankin
- Reid
- Richards
- Ritz
- Rodriguez
- Rota
- Ruimy
- Saganash
- Saini
- Sangha
- Sarai
- Scarpaleggia
- Schiefke
- Schulte
- Sgro
- Shields
- Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
- Sikand
- Sopuck
- Spengemann
- Stewart
- Stubbs
- Tabbara
- Tassi
- Trudel
- Van Loan
- Vandenbeld
- Viersen
- Wagantall
- Waugh
- Wilkinson
- Wong
- Young
- Zahid
- Picard
- Poissant
- Raitt
- Rayes
- Rempel
- Rioux
- Robillard
- Romanado
- Rudd
- Rusnak
- Sahota
- Sajjan
- Sansoucy
- Saroya
- Scheer
- Schmale
- Serré
- Sheehan
- Shipley
- Sidhu (Brampton South)
- Sohi
- Sorenson
- Stetski
- Strahl
- Sweet
- Tan
- Trost
- Van Kesteren
- Vandal
- Vecchio
- Virani
- Warawa
- Webber
- Wilson-Raybould
- Wrzesnewskyj
- Yurdiga
- Zimmer— 274

NAYS

Members

- Barsalou-Duval
- Boudrias
- Gill
- Plamondon
- Thériault— 9
- Beaulieu
- Fortin
- Paupé
- Ste-Marie

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[English]

EXCISE TAX ACT

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-241, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (school authorities), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-241, under private members' business.

• (1835)

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

- Albrecht
- Anderson
- Ashton
- Barlow
- Beaulieu
- Bergen
- Bezan
- Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
- Block
- Boudrias
- Boutin-Sweet
- Brown
- Cannings
- Carrie
- Chong
- Christopherson
- Cullen
- Doherty
- Dreeschen
- Duvall
- Falk
- Finley
- Gallant
- Généreux
- Gill
- Gourde
- Harder
- Hughes
- Johns
- Julian
- Kent
- Kniec
- Lake
- Laverdière
- Liepert
- MacGregor
- Maguire
- Masse (Windsor West)
- May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
- McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
- Moore
- Nantel
- Nicholson
- O'Toole
- Paupé
- Poillievre
- Raitt
- Rankin
- Reid
- Richards
- Saganash
- Saroya
- Schmale
- Shipley
- Sorenson
- Stetski
- Strahl
- Sweet
- Trost
- Van Kesteren
- Vecchio
- Wagantall
- Warkentin
- Webber
- Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

- Aldag
- Alleslev
- Anandasangaree
- Arya
- Badawey
- Bains
- Beech
- Bibeau
- Alghabra
- Amos
- Arseneault
- Ayoub
- Bagnell
- Baylis
- Bennett
- Bittle

Private Members' Business

Blair	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Breton	Brison
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Drouin
Dubourg	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Foote	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKenna	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mihychuk (Soeurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des- Morneau)
Monsef	Murray
Morrissey	Nault
Nassif	Oliver
O'Connell	Ouellette
O'Regan	Peterson
Paradis	Philpott
Petitpas Taylor	Poissant
Picard	Robillard
Rioux	Romanado
Rodriguez	Rudd
Rota	Rusnak
Ruimy	Saini
Sahota	Sangha
Sajan	Scarpaleggia
Sarai	Schulte
Schiefke	Sgro
Serré	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sheehan	Sikand
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Spengemann
Sohi	Tan
Tabbara	Vandal
Tassi	Virani
Vandenbeld	Wilson-Raybould
Wilkinson	Young
Wrzesnewskyj	
Zahid— 157	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

● (1840)

[Translation]

**PROTECTION OF PREGNANT WOMEN AND THEIR
PREBORN CHILDREN ACT (CASSIE AND MOLLY'S LAW)**

The House resumed from October 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-225, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (injuring or causing the death of a preborn child while committing an offence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-225 under private members' business.

● (1845)

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

(Division No. 131)

YEAS

Members

Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Arnold
Barlow	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Brown	Calkins
Carrie	Cooper
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Finley	Gallant
Généreux	Genuis
Gladu	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Jeneroux	Kelly
Kitchen	Kmiec
Lake	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel	Liepert
Lobb	MacKenzie
Maguire	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Nater	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Toole
Paul-Hus	Poilievre
Raït	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Ritz	Saroya
Scheer	Schmale
Shields	Shipley
Sopuck	Sorenson
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Waugh
Webber	Wong
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 76

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Algebra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ashton
Aubin	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Beech	Bennett

Private Members' Business

Benson
 Bittle
 Blair
 Boissonnault
 Boucher
 Boulерice
 Bratina
 Brison
 Caesar-Chavannes
 Caron
 Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
 Chagger
 Chan
 Chong
 Christopherson
 Cullen
 Dabrusin
 Dhaliwal
 Di Iorio
 Donnelly
 Dubourg
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Duvall
 El-Khoury
 Eyolfson
 Fillmore
 Fisher
 Foote
 Fragiskatos
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Fuhr
 Garrison
 Gill
 Goodale
 Graham
 Harcastle
 Harvey
 Holland
 Hughes
 Hutchings
 Johns
 Jones
 Jowhari
 Kang
 Khalid
 Kwan
 Lamoureux
 Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
 Leboutillier
 Lemieux
 Levitt
 Lockhart
 Longfield
 MacAulay (Cardigan)
 Malcolmson
 Masse (Windsor West)
 Mathysen
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 McCrimmon
 McGuinty
 McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
 Mendès
 Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
 Monsef
 Moore
 Morrissey
 Murray
 Nassif
 O'Connell
 O'Regan
 Paradis
 Peterson
 Philpott
 Plamondon
 Quach
 Rankin
 Robillard
 Romanado
 Rudd
 Rusnak
 Sahota
 Saijan
 Sansoucy
 Scarpaleggia

Bibeau
 Blaikie
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Bossio
 Boudrias
 Boutin-Sweet
 Breton
 Brosseau
 Cannings
 Carr
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Champagne
 Chen
 Choquette
 Cormier
 Cuzner
 DeCoursey
 Dhillon
 Dion
 Drouin
 Duguid
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Ehsassi
 Ellis
 Ferguson
 Finnigan
 Fonseca
 Fortin
 Fraser (West Nova)
 Fry
 Gameau
 Gerretsen
 Goldsmith-Jones
 Gould
 Hajdu
 Hardie
 Hehr
 Housefather
 Husen
 Iacono
 Jolibois
 Jordan
 Julian
 Kent
 Khera
 Lametti
 Lapointe
 Laverdière
 Lefebvre
 Leslie
 Lightbound
 Long
 Ludwig
 MacGregor
 Maloney
 Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
 May (Cambridge)
 McCallum
 McDonald
 McKenna
 McLeod (Northwest Territories)
 Mihychuk
 Morneau
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nault
 Oliver
 Ouellette
 Paupé
 Petitpas Taylor
 Picard
 Poissant
 Ramsey
 Rioux
 Rodriguez
 Rota
 Ruimy
 Saganash
 Saini
 Sangha
 Sarai
 Schiefke

Schulte
 Sgro
 Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
 Sikand
 Spengemann
 Stetski
 Tabbara
 Tassi
 Trudel
 Vandenbeld
 Wilkinson
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Zahid — 209

Serré
 Sheehan
 Sidhu (Brampton South)
 Sohi
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Tan
 Thériault
 Vandal
 Virani
 Wilson-Raybould
 Young

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

CANDIDATE GENDER EQUITY ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-237, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (gender equity), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-237 under private members' business.

● (1855)

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

(Division No. 132)

YEAS

Members

Anandasangaree
 Ashton
 Bagnell
 Beech
 Blaikie
 Boulерice
 Brosseau
 Caron
 Chan
 Christopherson
 Dabrusin
 Donnelly
 Duvall
 Fortin
 Garrison
 Gill
 Hughes
 Jolibois
 Jordan
 Kang
 Kwan
 Laverdière
 MacGregor
 Masse (Windsor West)
 May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
 Mulcair
 Nassif
 Paupé
 Quach
 Rankin
 Sahota
 Ste-Marie
 Stewart
 Vandenbeld

Arseneault
 Aubin
 Beaulieu
 Benson
 Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
 Boutin-Sweet
 Cannings
 Casey (Charlottetown)
 Choquette
 Cullen
 Dhaliwal
 Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
 Fillmore
 Fraser (Central Nova)
 Gerretsen
 Harcastle
 Johns
 Jones
 Julian
 Khalid
 Lapointe
 Lefebvre
 Malcolmson
 Mathysen
 Moore
 Nantel
 Oliver
 Petitpas Taylor
 Ramsey
 Saganash
 Sansoucy
 Stetski
 Trudel
 Zahid — 68

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Albrecht	Alghabra
Alleslev	Allison
Amos	Anderson
Arnold	Arya
Ayoub	Badawey
Bains	Barlow
Barsalou-Duval	Baylis
Bennett	Bergen
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis)	Block
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boucher	Boudrias
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Brown
Caesar-Chavannes	Calkins
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Chong	Cooper
Cormier	Cuzner
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Dion	Diotte
Doherty	Dreeshen
Drouin	Dubourg
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fergus
Finley	Finnigan
Fisher	Fonseca
Footé	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gallant
Garneau	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Gourde
Graham	Hajdu
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Hoback
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Jeneroux
Jowhari	Kelly
Kent	Khera
Kitchen	Kniec
Lake	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebel
Lebouthillier	Leslie
Levitt	Liepert
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Maloney	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKenna
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mihychuk	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)	
Monsef	
Morneau	Morrissey
Murray	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	O'Connell
O'Regan	O'Toole
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Peterson
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poillievre
Poissant	Raith
Rayes	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rioux	Ritz

Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Saini	Sajjan
Sangha	Saroya
Scheer	Schieffe
Schmale	Schulte
Serré	Sgro
Sheehan	Shields
Shipley	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sohi
Sopuck	Sorenson
Spengemann	Strahl
Stubbs	Sweet
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Thériault
Trost	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vandal
Vecchio	Viersen
Virani	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Waugh	Webber
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wong	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 209	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The Speaker: It being 6:55 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

NATIONAL MATERNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STRATEGY ACT

The House resumed from May 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-243, An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak in support of Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act. My hon. colleague has done a fine job with this bill, and I want to commend him for that. This is an incredibly important topic. I am glad that he has focused on it, and has given me the opportunity to speak to it.

In particular, I was impressed to learn the story behind this bill. It was inspired by the story of a female welder in his community. He listened to the concerns and personal experiences of his constituent, Melodie, and took action by presenting a solution in the form of a private member's bill. That is how politics should be done. We are elected to this House to represent our constituents and the issues they bring forward, and this bill is a perfect example of that.

The purpose of the bill is to remove barriers to women's full and equal participation in all sectors of the labour force. This is absolutely fundamental to the principle of gender equality. The provisions in this bill would greatly benefit current and future women who work in the skilled trades: construction, engineering, resource extraction, manufacturing, and many other fields.

Private Members' Business

This is why it should be no surprise that it has been supported by a diverse list of stakeholders from across the country, and I would like to take this opportunity to name a few. They include women's advocacy groups, such as the National Council of Women of Canada, the Canadian Women's Foundation, the Canadian Federation of University Women, the NSERC Chairs for Women in Science and Engineering, the Office to Advance Women Apprentices, Women in Science and Engineering Atlantic, and Women Building Futures.

They all recognize that this bill is a positive change toward achieving gender equality. The Canadian Women's Foundation, for example, said that this bill advances women's equal participation in all sectors of the labour force and helps to ensure that the decision to become a parent does not exacerbate women's economic inequality. This is indeed a positive step to improve gender equality in Canada.

Representatives of the construction, skilled trades, and engineering community have also come out to enthusiastically support this initiative, including the Canadian Construction Association, Canada's Building Trades Unions, Engineers Canada, Women in Work Boots, Engineers without Borders, Canadian Welding Association, National Trade Contractors Coalition, and Canadian Apprenticeship Forum.

Collectively, these groups represent tens of thousands of members from across the country. Their support stands as a true testament to how this bill is resonating with stakeholders. The bill has earned this support because its objectives are very clear. Overall, it seeks to prevent a situation where a woman has to choose between having her dream job and having a family. This is an objective that I and, I am sure, all members of this House can support.

It achieves this important goal in two parts, which together address both an immediate issue and the need for a long-term, comprehensive maternity assistance strategy. The first part proposes a modest change to the Employment Insurance Act that would greatly improve the flexibility of maternity benefits.

In particular, Bill C-243 proposes an amendment to the EI Act which would allow women, like Melodie, who work in dangerous jobs, to begin their 15 weeks of EI maternity benefits as early as 15 weeks before their due date. This is seven weeks earlier than the current rules permit. The other component of maternity leave, the 35 weeks of parental benefits, is effectively unchanged by this bill. These hours would still be available once the child is born, and are still available to both parents to use as they see fit.

The combined 50 weeks of total benefits does not change in length or cost. Instead, women in dangerous jobs would have the opportunity to use more of their existing hours during their pregnancy rather than after the child is born, if this is something they choose to do.

This measure would not expand the number of maternity weeks or the amount of benefits that one is entitled to. Similarly, it would not reduce the eligibility threshold for receiving benefits.

Getting a slightly earlier start to maternity leave would help women who are currently in the terrible situation of having to choose between working in an environment that might be hazardous, and protecting the health of their unborn child. This is a decision no one

should have to make, and I am glad to see a bill that would make EI flexible enough to accommodate these situations.

● (1900)

Easing the rules on when someone can begin their maternity leave is a good start, but it obviously does not remove all of the barriers to women's equal participation in the labour force. That is why I am pleased to see that the bill also calls on the Minister of Employment to consult with Canadians and provincial stakeholders on the prospect of developing a comprehensive national maternity assistance strategy.

The bill lays out some specifics for what these consultations would cover, including an assessment of the demand for such a program, existing programs, potential costs and benefits, and any legal, constitutional, or jurisdictional implications.

If the bill passes second reading, which I hope it does, these are areas that the committee could look into. As chair of the human resources committee, I would be interested in studying these areas, and hearing from my colleagues on the committee to see if there are other areas that we could add to this list.

The bill purposely leaves the parameters of the study broad. It calls on the government to study the issues of maternity assistance without prescribing what the outcome should be.

In summary, the issue identified by the member is a serious and important one. The idea of a national maternity assistance program deserves to be studied, and that is exactly what the bill calls on the government to do. I agree wholeheartedly with the objectives of both parts one and two, and urge my colleagues to support the bill, so that they may be studied further at committee.

When we think about gender equality in the workplace, we should not limit that decision to politicians, lawyers, and the business world. We need to recognize that many women want to be welders, construction workers, or engineers. Every career option should be open to all Canadians whether they are a woman or a man, and no one should have to choose between having a family and having a job.

Our labour market is changing and we need to take a hard look at our EI system, and see if it is keeping pace in 2016. Frankly, in 2016, it is simply unacceptable that the decision to have a family should be a barrier or financial disincentive to a woman entering her chosen profession. It is shocking and disturbing to think that this decision could lead to financial hardship to the point of losing one's home. Clearly, this happens and, in fact, it did happen in the case that inspired the bill.

Private Members' Business

In mid-2014, Melodie was working as a welder in Kingston, Ontario, when she became pregnant. She consulted with her medical practitioner, and they agreed it would be unsafe to continue welding during her pregnancy as her work environment would be unsafe for her unborn child.

My colleague has put forward this bill to prevent this from happening to others, and I am proud to strongly support him and Bill C-243, a national maternity assistance program.

I hope all members will think hard about Melodie's compelling story, and how this important bill can improve gender equality throughout Canada and in their communities.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-243, which would provide for the development and implementation of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amend the Employment Insurance Act in order to allow a claimant to begin using her maternity benefits 15 weeks before the week in which her confinement is expected if her employer is unable to reassign her to a job that does not pose a risk to her health or to that of her unborn child.

It is interesting to take a closer look at this private member's bill. Two aspects of the preamble to Bill C-243 really jump out at me.

First, in 2014, women represented 47.3% of the labour force compared to 31% in 1976, which is an increase of over 10%. The most interesting aspect of that increase is that it involves more women participating in skilled and non-traditional occupations previously held by men.

Second, a woman's pregnancy should not act as a barrier to full participation in the workforce, adversely affect her employment, inflict financial hardship, or compromise the pursuit of her chosen career. I believe that women should be able to choose. Personally, I did not take all the maternity leave I was entitled to. That was my choice, but that is not the issue.

Many factors are at play. First of all, the bill already has some restrictions. I would like to see the 15 weeks become transferable, and not added to the 35 weeks that women are already entitled to after having a baby. As everyone in the House knows, a private member's bill must be cost neutral for taxpayers. If this bill were to result in any additional cost, it would be out of order.

The main thing that would make me support this bill would be for the 15 weeks to be transferable and not added to the 35 weeks already available. Let me explain. If a pregnant woman cannot continue working because of her pregnancy and she decides to take her leave 15 weeks before her due date, I have no problem with that as long as, after the delivery, that same woman does not take more than 20 weeks of maternity leave. That would give her a total of 35 weeks of leave, as is the case under existing legislation. Similarly, I have no problem with a pregnant woman taking 10 weeks before the delivery and 25 weeks after the delivery, or 12 weeks before and 23 weeks after.

In short, I see this as a 35-week period that can be shifted around the due date as long as the total number of benefit weeks does not exceed 35. When these conditions are met, I can give my full support to this bill. It is vital that we protect the health of the biological mother, the pregnant mother, as well as that of the unborn child. There can be different reasons for going on maternity leave early, for example, a job that requires sustained physical effort that can pose a risk to the mother, or the mother's inability to meet the physical demands of the job, which prevents her from functioning normally. These are situations where she should be able to take her maternity leave before the birth. Furthermore, going on leave earlier because her health prevents her from doing various duties allows the employee to return to work before the end of the 35 weeks of maternity leave after the child is born.

● (1910)

This improves the employer's profitability and the woman's job performance. What is even more important is that she will be healthy while doing her job and she will be able to do it.

I am repeating myself only because I really want members to understand why I am supporting this bill. In fact, I will only support it if we are going to move the benefit weeks and not add benefit weeks.

First, this will ensure the health of both the mother and child. Second, shifting the benefit weeks improves the productivity of the employee, who can make the most of her capabilities. Third, this optimizes the production and profitability of the various companies. Finally, and probably what is most important, it ensures that the woman is free to make her own decisions based on her own situation and needs during her pregnancy.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to participate in this debate.

I agree that Bill C-243 is a step in the right direction. However, it has a number of serious flaws.

I like the idea of giving women who work in hazardous work environments more flexibility with regard to their preventive withdrawal and maternity leave. That being said, I think it is short-sighted and inhumane to require women to choose between having a safe pregnancy and taking time to adjust to life with a new baby.

I would like to point out that the Liberals promised to hold public consultations to determine the specific terms and conditions of this new program. Although we appreciate the fact that organizations and stakeholders will be consulted, it would have been better if they had been consulted sooner. The government is asking us to vote on a bill that is not yet complete.

Private Members' Business

The bill cannot really be finalized until the consultations set out in the preamble of this bill are complete. However, we do not have any information on these consultations or the consultation strategies. What is more, the member for Kingston and the Islands admitted from the outset that the bill we are debating today is not sufficient to meet the objective of establishing a comprehensive program.

I would like to remind the House that the member for Kingston and the Islands' predecessor voted against the NDP bill introduced in the previous Parliament. The bill would have extended Quebec's safe maternity experience program to Quebec women working under federal jurisdiction. As a result, some female workers in risky workplaces in Quebec were unable to benefit from a program whose merits Bill C-243 actually praises. The NDP is asking the government to make the safe maternity experience program available to Quebec women in federally governed workplaces.

I get the sense that the Liberals are sending up a smoke screen on this file and several others. They are not proposing a comprehensive strategy to ensure safe workplaces for pregnant and nursing women.

On the surface, this bill seems like a good thing for expectant mothers, but women are not actually gaining any new benefits. The benefit period will not be any longer. The bill merely lets women decide when to collect their benefits, but even that is not really up to the women themselves; it is up to doctors.

There is one thing that concerns me about this. A pregnant woman who does not get reassigned to more appropriate work will have to sacrifice some time spent with her child. All it takes is complications arising during delivery for the health of the mother and the baby to be at risk. Consider an emergency C-section or an irregular heartbeat. Many complications can arise. If a woman takes her maternity leave 15 weeks before the delivery, she will have only two weeks to rest, recover, spend time with her baby, and enjoy the early stages of family life.

As a young new mother myself, I can assure the House that that is not enough. Bonding with one's newborn is crucial, as all the studies now show. For many women, it can also take several weeks to recover from the delivery. Adjusting to becoming a parent, getting everything you need, these things do not just come to you by snapping your fingers. The more time babies can spend with their mothers and their parents, the better it is for everyone.

The Liberals like to brag about being feminists, but integrating women into the workforce also means adapting high-risk work environments. We are calling on the government to take the necessary steps to get concrete commitments from employers.

Transferring pregnant women becomes even more important considering that they do not receive their full pay when they are on maternity leave. Most of the time, employment insurance parental benefits cover only 55% of the weekly salary. That is just over half. Forcing women to stop working instead of transferring them is condemning them to uncertainty.

It is imperative that we encourage employers to assign pregnant women to tasks that pose no danger to them or their fetus. The health and safety of pregnant and nursing women is a collective responsibility, and business leaders, as well as legislators, have an active role to play in this.

●(1915)

The legislation currently stipulates that “the onus is on the employer to show that a modification of job functions or a reassignment that would avoid the activities or conditions indicated in the medical certificate is not reasonably practicable”.

The expression “not reasonably practicable” is rather nebulous. All the employer has to do is claim that he could not manage to find tasks that did not pose a risk and the pregnant woman will be forced to stop working. She has to choose between a healthy pregnancy and quality time with her newborn. It seems contradictory to me to force women to make such a difficult choice without forcing the employers to make every effort to assign them to other tasks. It is time to stop absolving business leaders of this responsibility.

Another major problem that this bill fails to address is the fact that not all women get parental leave. To get parental leave one must first be eligible for employment insurance. This excludes a number of workers, including self-employed, seasonal, and part-time workers.

What is more, this bill further highlights the polarization of the labour market: female workers with a permanent job will get parental leave, whereas women working on contract will be excluded. We are creating more uncertainty for working pregnant women.

Generally speaking, women are over-represented in the category of workers with precarious jobs. Two-thirds of part-time jobs are held by women. Furthermore, the vast majority of workers who earn minimum wage are women.

In 2014, only 29% of unemployed women received regular employment insurance benefits, whereas 44.8% of men, almost 45%, qualified for benefits. That means that women with precarious jobs are at an even greater economic disadvantage because of their pregnancy.

Revenue-neutral policies are not a solution. To maintain our social safety net, we must invest in social programs. We must ask the right questions and establish the best priorities. All women should have access to proper maternity benefits. It is a societal choice.

Rather than introduce half measures, it would be worthwhile using the Quebec model for both workplace health and safety and maternity leave.

The government is proposing to address a workplace health and safety issue with a tool that provides parental leave. The NDP is calling on the government to introduce a real national maternity assistance program, rather than hijacking the parental leave system.

Private Members' Business

I am disappointed by this bill's lack of ambition. The employment insurance system is discriminatory because it does not reflect the realities of all women. They should not have to bear the cost of child bearing alone. Children are our future. In order to ensure that future babies develop properly and are in good health, all women who work in hazardous work environments must be able to avail themselves of preventive withdrawal and have a decent maternity leave. That is why the NDP is calling on the government to adopt a real maternity assistance program for women in high-risk occupations.

The NDP would also like women from Quebec in the federal workplace to have access to the safe maternity experience program.

Quebec's preventive withdrawal program allows women to take leave from work as early as the first weeks of pregnancy, whereas this bill does not allow them to take leave until their 25th week.

However, we know that miscarriages often occur during the first and second trimesters or before the 25th week of pregnancy. This bill therefore does not cover that crucial period for pregnant women.

I hope that many major improvements will be made to the bill so that it really meets the needs of pregnant women working in high-risk occupations.

● (1920)

[*English*]

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kingston and the Islands for putting forward this very important bill, which I was proud to support and second.

This bill was inspired by Melodie Ballard's story. This is a story of a hard-working lady. Working as a welder, she suffered extreme financial hardship when she had to stop working due to potential health risks to her unborn child. She was unable to be accommodated by her workplace and access that maternity leave. The current EI benefit rules do not allow for her situation, so she was denied employment insurance maternity leave coverage because she did not meet the current eight weeks before the due date limit.

This bill has been brought forward to provide the much needed flexibility that women need when working in hazardous places of employment. For example, some roles in the military, some trades, resource extraction jobs, and even roles that are not normally considered hazardous, such as pilots, flight attendants, and frequent flyers, do pose a risk to pregnant women. This is an issue that is becoming more prevalent as more women are taking on non-traditional roles in the workplace and need a precautionary leave of absence during pregnancy. The bill seeks to raise awareness of the issue and would allow workers to access maternity benefits earlier, up to 15 weeks before delivery, rather than the allowed eight weeks, .

I am proud to support Bill C-243, which takes crucial steps toward advancing gender equality in the workplace of Canadians. Most importantly, Bill C-243 would ensure that pregnancy is not a barrier to a woman's full and equal participation in our Canadian labour force. I believe that no woman should have to choose between the health of her baby and putting food on the table or a roof overhead. The system today leaves women who are advised to stop working due to potential health complications with long periods of no income. We have already heard about the very distressing situation

that Melodie faced, which ultimately resulted in her losing her home and creating much personal stress. Our EI system failed Melodie just when she needed it most.

Canadians pay into the employment insurance system to ensure that they can get the help they need when they are temporarily out of work. Women like Melodie need to know the employment insurance system can be there for them when they need it. I believe when the EI system was set up to assist pregnant women in the workforce, it was not foreseen that women would be employed in roles that might put their health or their baby's health at risk during pregnancy. It is about time we took a new look at the needs of our workforce and the EI system and updated it to accommodate the realities of today.

I can personally attest to the challenges encountered while applying for EI maternity benefits 20 years ago. I am pleased to see that today's EI benefits are much better than before, with more flexibility not only for mothers, as it was in my day, but fathers too. I believe it is now time to review the EI program again to make sure that it is keeping up with the realities of the workforce today. We need to ensure that our EI policies are not seen as a barrier to a woman's full and equal participation in all sectors of the workforce, including potentially hazardous jobs.

There are those who may be concerned about abuse of the system. However, the bill outlines two basic conditions that must be met in order to be eligible for this exemption: a woman must provide a medical certificate attesting that she cannot perform her usual current duties because it may pose a risk to her health or to that of her unborn child, and the employer must be unable to provide accommodations or reassignment that would mitigate that risk. This bill is not proposing to extend EI benefits but to allow flexibility as to when women can begin receiving benefits if they meet these requirements.

This bill has the support of many organizations, including those beyond the skilled trades and construction. I was pleased to see it being endorsed by several from my profession of engineering: Women in Science and Engineering Atlantic Region, the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia, Engineers Nova Scotia, and Engineers Canada.

Private Members' Business

The second part of the bill is addressing the need for a comprehensive strategy to ensure that pregnancy is not a barrier to working women. It requires the Minister of Employment, in collaboration with other federal ministers, representatives of the provincial and territorial governments, and other relevant stakeholders, to conduct consultations on the prospect of developing a national maternity assistance program to support women who are unable to work due to pregnancy.

● (1925)

There are many examples of how this issue has been addressed here in Canada and around the world. Many advanced industrialized countries have recognized the importance of maternal care and have taken action to ensure that women in all professions receive adequate support throughout pregnancy and child care.

Since 1981, the Province of Quebec has offered the option of preventive withdrawal as part of its safe maternity assistance program. Under this program, an employer may opt to eliminate the hazard represented by the employee's work or assign her to other tasks. If neither of these alternatives are doable, the employee is entitled to benefit from a preventive withdrawal and to receive compensation in the amount of 90% of her average pay.

In Finland, for example, there is a class of special maternity benefits that are provided when conditions may cause a particular risk to a woman's pregnancy and the hazard cannot be eliminated by the employer. In Australia, if there is no appropriate safe job available, an employee is entitled to take paid no-safe-job leave for the risk period. There are similar programs that protect expecting mothers in France, Hungary, Denmark, and elsewhere.

Therefore, it is appropriate for Canada to undertake a review and bring forward a policy that is more supportive of pregnant women who are working in environments that may pose a risk to a pregnant woman and/or her unborn child.

While the private and not-for-profit sector is doing incredible work encouraging more women to enter trades, government must do its part to support those who enter the workforce in these traditionally male-dominated occupations. Data shows that while overall labour force participation among women has increased, from 37% in 1976 to 47% in 2014, women remain drastically under-represented within many traditional male occupations. For example, in 2012, women represented only 4% of those working in construction.

If Canada is to thrive in the global market, we will need to improve the representation of women in our workforce. Gender balance and diversity is but one key to making Canada's economy stronger and more competitive. However, we will not be able to achieve this if we do not develop the necessary programs to support this transition.

We have seen an opportunity for improvement. Let all MPs in the House support this step in the right direction for gender equality and ensure that the Melodies in the future have better outcomes for themselves, their families, and our country.

● (1930)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, each day seems more like the last. For the past two days, we have been debating private members' bills that directly affect the status of women. I am therefore pleased to once again rise in support of this cause.

At the same time, I feel a little bit resentful because, yesterday, there was an excellent bill on the table that would have quickly implemented essential conditions for ensuring gender equity in the House. However, as we saw from today's vote, a majority of parliamentarians decided that it was not yet time for us to achieve gender equality.

The bill before us today obviously does not deal with gender equality because it talks about pregnancy. However, we need to ensure that pregnant women are treated fairly.

As a Quebec MP, I am doubly proud to speak to this bill because Quebec has long led the way on this issue. I also think that the federal government should follow its lead because I find it unacceptable that women in my province who do similar work are treated so differently depending on whether their jobs are governed by the Quebec Labour Code or the Canada Labour Code.

The member for Kingston and the Islands' bill is a sign of just how long and drawn-out the battle for gender equality in the job market is. That battle has not yet been won, though much ground has been gained over the years.

Despite their skills, their experience, and even their knowledge, many women still work under less favourable conditions and for less pay than men doing the same work. In 2016, that is totally unacceptable. It has been unacceptable for a long time now, but the problem has to be fixed one day.

For example, I toured a community in my riding where women clearly held more jobs than men.

For instance, the Liberal tax reduction program will not help most of these women, because in the community services sector, a salary of \$45,000 or more is extremely rare. As a result, women are often penalized on every level.

Bill C-243 raises the issue of women's working conditions and proposes creating a federal strategy to protect the health of pregnant and nursing women who work in high-risk occupations. Under this legislation, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour would be tasked with conducting a series of consultations with her federal colleagues and provincial counterparts to set out the parameters of a new program for women, another consultation from the same government that, two weeks prior to October 2015, told us that it had a plan for just about everything.

Private Members' Business

I think the time for consultation is over. If consultations had been done before this bill was introduced, we could have benefited from what I call best practices. The Quebec model is an excellent example of this.

Of course we must examine the spirit and the letter of the bill, as we do when studying the text of any collective agreement or law. It is definitely difficult to oppose the spirit of this bill. I often say that it is difficult to be against virtue and apple pie. Most people agree with that. However, this bill has significant flaws, which I hope will be addressed if it is referred to a committee.

In fact, the bill only shifts the maternity leave that a woman can take. The difference is that instead of being able to leave eight weeks before the due date, she can leave 15 weeks before. We are taking the same period of time and allowing women to move it around. Nevertheless, it is a start.

This does not make a big difference, especially if a woman has to leave work early for her own safety or that of her unborn child, because she has exactly the same number of weeks. She would just be cutting short the time she could devote to this new relationship after the child is born.

•(1935)

Everyone knows that. All the analyses, all psychologists agree on how important a mother's presence is in the first weeks, months, and even years of a child's life.

What is worse is that, in order for a pregnant woman to benefit from this measure, she must be eligible for employment insurance, and therein lies the rub.

Who are the people in our society who have the most difficulty getting employment insurance benefits? It is women. Most often who are the ones with precarious jobs? Again, it is women. Who are the ones who get fewer hours of work or split-schedules in a work week? Again, it is women.

With the Conservatives' employment insurance reforms, which have not all been reviewed and corrected by the Liberals, only about 39% of people who contribute to employment insurance are able to get benefits when they need them. Again, I would like to remind members that women find it harder to meet the EI eligibility requirements than men.

Again, our proposal, for which we are still awaiting a response from the Liberals, was on qualifying for employment insurance and was quite simple. I think that instating a universal standard of 360 hours to qualify for employment insurance will help many people, including quite a few women who might, by extension, benefit from the bill we are talking about here today.

I would also like to make the link between the bill that the NDP introduced and the one being introduced by the Liberals. Although this bill gives the impression that the Liberals are trailblazers, we must remember that when they were in the opposition, the Liberals joined forces with the Conservatives to vote against an NDP proposal introduced by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie that raised the same issues. Our bill sought to allow pregnant and nursing women who work in federally regulated businesses in

Quebec to have the same benefits provided under Quebec's safe maternity experience program.

Talk about best practices. The Liberal government would do well to take its cue from the safe maternity experience program. Better still, if the Liberal government were to follow that lead, the member who introduced this private member's bill could convince his own caucus to walk the talk by making it a government bill complete with the necessary funding.

I should note that the main objective of Quebec's program is to keep pregnant and nursing women working safely. There is a big difference. The main objective is not to secure employment insurance benefits or preventive withdrawal. The main objective is to keep women in the workplace but under working conditions that do not pose a risk to their health or that of their unborn child. Quebec's safe maternity experience program is a preventive program for pregnant or nursing workers that is designed to keep women at work safely.

The Speaker is telling me that I have just one minute left, so I will say no more about the Quebec program. Everyone can read up on it because it is an existing program.

As a final point, we in the NDP appreciate the spirit of the bill. However, what ultimately happens with this bill will depend on the consultations conducted by the government. Those consultations have not yet begun, as far as I know.

Even if the government passes this bill, it will be too early to determine whether the final product of this strategy will be worthwhile.

As the member for Trois-Rivières, I urge the government to take the necessary steps to bring the federal legislation in line with Quebec's workplace health and safety legislation, so that women working in Quebec have access to the same rights and protections, regardless of the jurisdiction they fall under.

I am sorry I do not have time to say more. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

•(1940)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-243, an act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy and amending the Employment Insurance Act (maternity benefits), an initiative of my colleague, the member of Parliament for Kingston and the Islands. I would like to applaud and congratulate my colleague for his strong efforts and advocacy in this matter. I commend him for his commitment to his constituents, particularly the individual who inspired this particular bill, and for his leadership in bringing this issue forward.

Private Members' Business

The health and safety of pregnant and nursing workers is an important issue for this government. In fact, through Canada's employment insurance program, we continue to explore ways to support Canadians, including pregnant workers, when they need it most.

The intent of the bill aligns well with our own intention to improve the EI program and to provide more flexible EI support to families.

In fact, just recently we launched consultations with Canadians to introduce more flexible and inclusive support for parents and family caregivers. This government is seeking views from Canadians on the design of more flexible maternity and parental benefits and leaves and a more inclusive caregiving benefit and leave that would support more Canadians who provide care to a family member.

Bill C-243 would actually bring forward several other issues, such as health and safety, gender equality in the workforce, and the notion that a woman's pregnancy could act as a barrier to full participation in the workplace or as an impediment to career development.

These are some of the very issues we intend to discuss with members of this House, provincial and territorial governments, and other stakeholders with the primary intention of developing more flexible EI parental benefits to meet the unique needs of Canadian families.

At the same time, this is also a government that wants to act as fast as possible to bring real change to Canadians, and a great deal of that work has already begun.

Over the course of the government's mandate, we will continue to make EI better. We will make compassionate care benefits more inclusive and easier to access. The government will also work to remove the barriers to achieving full gender equality in the workforce. We have made progress in this regard, but it is well-recognized that we have to do more.

We will also amend the Canada Labour Code to allow employees in the federally regulated private sector to formally request flexible working arrangements.

However, while the government supports the general direction of the bill, it will not be supporting Bill C-243 in its current form.

I would now like to tell members about those changes that are required in this legislation. I will not go through the whole list, but I will mention the main impediments.

First, the bill lacks a specific coming into force provision to avoid any problematic situations. By coming into force upon royal assent, the bill could present substantive challenges for implementation. For example, the bill must enter into force on a day of the week that aligns with the concept of an EI week. Otherwise, it could result in problems with benefit calculations and payments. This would also allow time to make necessary system changes.

Second, the consultations and reporting provisions are problematic, as the bill would actually create obligations for provinces and territories to report to the federal government on matters related to provincial labour codes. The bill would also create misalignment between the Employment Insurance Act and maternity leave

provisions in the employment standards statutes of some provinces and territories.

Third, an incremental expenditure is expected because of the fact that the bill would provide earlier access for maternity benefit claimants who do not make use of the maximum number of maternity and parental benefit weeks available.

It is important to consider changes to EI special benefits in broader terms to avoid unintended consequences with respect to other related benefits.

Our consultations on more flexible parental and more inclusive caregiving benefits were launched on October 6 and are open to all Canadians until November 4. We have started a process that we hope will change the landscape for parents and families.

● (1945)

We believe that every working Canadian deserves our encouragement and our support, particularly in those times when they need it most: when they lose their job, when they are having a baby, when they are welcoming a new child to the family, when they fall sick, or are providing care to a family member.

I commend the work of the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, for his dedication to his constituents, and his determination to improve the EI program. It is important to note that amending the Employment Insurance Act is a complex endeavour and we want to make sure we do it right. Any changes to EI deserve the benefit of further study and consultations with key partners to ensure that the program better responds to the needs of hard-working Canadian families.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know I only have four or five minutes for my speech, so I will try to be as fast as I can.

Does this bill represent progress? Yes, it represents a small step forward, but any weeks taken ahead of time will only be taken back afterwards. Thus, anything more you get now, you have to give back later.

We keep hearing about the safe maternity experience program, and we have to ask ourselves whether the measure proposed in this bill compares to that program. It most definitely does not. For instance, when it comes to eligibility, a woman can get a preventive withdrawal any time during the pregnancy with a medical certificate and when the employer cannot find other suitable work. That could happen at five weeks, and about 90% of her salary is covered. Quebec's preventive withdrawal program is therefore far more effective.

Private Members' Business

Under the QPIP, a person is allowed to earn \$2,000 during the qualifying period. Of course, if you earn only \$2,000, the benefits will not be as high. What is more, the main focus of the safe maternity experience program is to relocate the workers. In fact, the benefits are not as high when the employer manages to relocate the workers. In the case of employment insurance, the employer has no interest in keeping an employee who is unable to perform all her tasks. People are therefore being forced into employment insurance.

The safe maternity experience program does an analysis of each job. A worker with three jobs might have one where she is reassigned, one where she is in preventive withdrawal, and one where she continues to work as though she were not pregnant because there is no impact in this case. In order to receive employment insurance benefits a woman with three or four jobs would have to give them all up, or she would be penalized for working. Also, as I said, one of the big problems has to do with preventive withdrawal. A woman can go on preventive withdrawal as soon as she becomes pregnant. She is covered for her entire pregnancy if the job is too dangerous. Under employment insurance, a woman has to wait until her 25th week of pregnancy. The highest risk for miscarriage occurs precisely in the period during which she has to work if she wants to keep earning an income and survive during this time. There are also problems when it comes to benefits and the lack of coverage.

The Quebec program is much better designed and more advantageous. This bill makes some progress, but it is a far cry from the other program. We should take a look at what Quebec does and ensure that women will not have to choose between continuing to work to survive and to eat, and risking having a miscarriage, and staying at home with all that entails for living conditions.

Sometimes it takes women 10 to 15 years to get pregnant. After 15 years of trying, these women are told they are pregnant and they are not entitled to anything. They have to continue working even though they have waited 15 years to become pregnant, or they can go home and live on no money.

Therefore, the problem has not been solved. We should really introduce a program modelled after the safe maternity experience program for employees under federal jurisdiction. Women would really be the winners.

I am pleased to have been able to use the few remaining minutes in the debate.

● (1950)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who spoke to my private member's bill, Bill C-243, both today and in the first hour of debate that took place a number of months ago.

I also want to give great thanks to Melody, the welder in my community who inspired the bill and her now 16-month-old son, Ezra. I understand they are sitting in my constituency office in Kingston watching this. I believe it is past Ezra's bedtime right now, but maybe this is a special occasion for him.

I also want to thank the over 20 organizations, both those that specialize in getting women into the workforce and into particular

sectors of the workforce, and the much broader group of organizations, such as the Engineers of Canada, and the various other organizations that saw merit in the bill and decided to support it.

There are really two parts to the bill. It was structured in this way because as a private member's bill, certain costs were not allowed to be incurred in the bill. Quite frankly, in this regard, all three of my NDP colleagues who spoke to it raised the issue of the bill not going far enough. I could not agree with them more: it does not go far enough.

However, with the first part of the bill I was able to specifically address a short-term fix to the employment insurance system to create a bridge toward a more fulsome, long-term solution.

Let me be absolutely clear. There will be no additional cost to the EI system from implementing the bill. It would solely move some of the EI funds that a woman would get after giving birth and transfer them to her before she gave birth. That is all it would do. It would not create any new costs.

The other part of the bill that goes beyond that deals with having a strategy, talking about what we are doing in other parts of the country, particularly in Quebec. I appreciate my NDP colleagues bringing that up. In Quebec there is an extremely good maternity assistance program.

I want to look at how we can take that program and make it more holistic, coming from the perspective of a national strategy. That was always the intention with the second part of the bill, to have that discussion so we could go further and make recommendations to the government for realistic long-term changes and long-term solutions for this.

I want to thank my colleagues who have contributed to the debate. I remind people that this is about creating opportunities for women which do not currently exist.

A woman, Melody from my riding, should not have to choose between being a welder and having a family. We live in one of the best countries in the world, if not the best, and I cannot see a reason why we cannot be performing and making sure we have the right tools and policies in place to take proper care of women so that when they choose to get involved in a line of work, they do not have to consider if it will be hazardous to their health if they then choose to become pregnant and have a family.

Again, I thank everyone who took the time to invest some research into the bill to contribute to the debate, and I hope I can ask all members of the House to support the bill when it comes up for a vote next week.

● (1955)

[Translation]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Adjournment Proceedings

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 26, 2016, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure of talking briefly about child care in the federal public service.

In the 1980s, the union began exerting pressure on the government to provide workplace day care centres for federal public servants.

In 1986, the Special Committee on Child Care tabled its report entitled "Sharing the responsibility". The committee recommended that day care centres be set up in federal buildings and that led to the federal workplace day care policy. We are talking about a policy that has been in place since 1986. Personally, I find it rather strange that the government is not aware that such a policy has been in place since 1986. It has been 30 years after all.

The objective of the Government of Canada policy is to assist employees who are parents and need day care to pursue careers in the public service. The policy statement clearly indicates that it is the policy of the employer to establish workplace day care centres where such centres are financially and operationally practicable. The policy applies to all departments.

I think it is reasonable to have day cares in the workplace. I think it is feasible financially and operationally in most places. We should therefore have more of them, and we should protect the ones that already exist.

Day cares in the workplace are highly beneficial. For one thing, they reduce absenteeism. After all, how embarrassing to take one's child to the workplace day care and then not go to work. Ease of access means that people are much more present while working. It improves productivity because people do not have to worry or think about all kinds of things. People do not have to wake up an hour and

a half earlier to get their child to day care, fight traffic, and then get to work, only to do it all over again in reverse at the end of the day. Morale improves. People feel more motivated and less stressed. Labour relations are more harmonious. It helps attract new employees. Some people are even willing to accept somewhat less pay when they have access to quality services, but maybe not \$100 a day less. It is also good for employee retention because people are getting a good service and their kids make friends at day care.

Workplace day care centres have a very positive impact. When the day care centre is further away, it causes more stress. Sometimes parents are called and told that their child is not feeling well. They have to rush out of the office and drive 30 minutes to get to the day care and drive another 30 minutes to get back. The parent will have wasted an hour and a half of their day, just to see what was going on. When day care is in the workplace, it takes 15 minutes to walk there. Parents can take their break and go see what is going on. Sometimes the child is just fine, and maybe he or she was just a bit sad. The parent can then go back to work. Workplace day care is extremely helpful. That is why the government needs to believe in workplace day care centres, in retaining employees, and in the effectiveness of government when good policies are in place.

I really want the government to understand the importance of workplace day care centres.

I would now like to hear the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement.

● (2000)

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to take part in this evening's debate on the first anniversary of our government's election. Our government was elected on the promise of helping to boost the middle class and those working hard to join it. On the issue of daycares in federal government workplaces, we have done just that.

Our government recognizes that Canadian families need support and that all Canadian children are entitled to an equal opportunity to succeed. Within the federal public service, the Treasury Board policy on workplace day care centres aims to assist employees who are parents and require child care to pursue careers in the public service.

The policy states that the decision to subsidize day care centres resides with government departments who have employees within the same building. When departments no longer wish to subsidize a day care centre, day care operators are informed of the change and are required to pay market rates if they wish to keep operating in the same location.

[*Translation*]

Public Services and Procurement Canada's role is to support the department in acquiring and setting up facilities intended to be used for child care, as well as reaching licensing agreements with the day care operators.

Adjournment Proceedings

If called to intervene, Public Services and Procurement Canada works with the day care operators to come up with ways to facilitate the transition towards paying rent at market prices. This could include extending rent subsidies while the day care centre works with parents and develops a new business model that takes the cost of rent into account.

[*English*]

In the case of Garderie Tunney's Daycare, its rent subsidy ended in 2014. The daycare then entered into a five-year commercial lease agreement with Public Services and Procurement Canada. For the first 18 months of the lease, Public Services and Procurement Canada significantly reduced the rent compared with fair market values. This transition period was meant to allow the daycare to develop a viable business model taking into account rental costs.

[*Translation*]

When the day care advised Public Services and Procurement Canada that it would have difficulty meeting its rent obligations, even after the 18 month transition period that ended on April 1, PSPC extended the rent subsidy for an additional three months.

● (2005)

[*English*]

Public Services and Procurement Canada recently reached an agreement with client departments and Garderie Tunney's Daycare to ensure a long-term viable solution.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, perhaps arrangements have been made in the case of Garderie Tunney's Daycare, but the day care at the Guy-Favreau complex is still in trouble.

I do not believe that constantly transferring day care centres to the private sector is the right long-term solution for maintaining a network of day care centres for federal public servants. The government needs to get more involved, it needs to get out there, and it needs to do everything it can to make these day care centres accessible, rather than hoping they will move to the private sector and become magically accessible.

We also need to remember that, although the Canada child benefit and tax cuts may help families, they do not create day care spaces. If the services are not accessible, families will still be stressed and will still have to go all over town trying to find day care.

The government needs to take the policy that was put in place 30 years ago seriously and make quality services available to federal public servants.

[*English*]

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Madam Speaker, we are committed to reaching a resolution in the case of the daycare located at Complexe Guy-Favreau daycare. In this case, Public Services and Procurement Canada continues to work with the client departments located at Guy-Favreau—the day care centre, the unions, and the provincial government—to find ways to ensure its continued long-term viability. We were successful with Garderie Tunney's Daycare, and we will continue to work to achieve the same result for Guy-Favreau.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:07 p.m.)

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